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NORTH AMERICA
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

June 2022

Good afternoon,

I was born and raised in Mexico, and previously worked as a policy advisor and research assistant in Mexico and the United States. One thing important to me and my career is doing work that reflects the full diversity and geography of “North America”—for example, by supporting research projects that center and can help the millions of people in the region who speak Spanish. Not long after I started working at J-PAL North America, I learned about one such [ongoing project](#) with the Department of Education in Puerto Rico (PRDE). The PRDE was developing a leadership and management training program for principals across the Puerto Rico school system, with the goal of boosting student achievement and school quality. They wanted to know if this program would work. It caught my attention because we were also looking for projects that would be a good fit for [research management support](#). We decided to reach out to J-PAL affiliate Gustavo Bobonis, a researcher at the University of Toronto and one of the project's principal investigators, to explore how we could support this project. That is how I first became involved in what is now a five-year-long relationship between J-PAL North America, PRDE, and a group of researchers working to expand the body of evidence to inform policy decisions to help young people in Puerto Rico.

I am fortunate to have met and to collaborate with this team of extremely dedicated people that includes Gustavo, Orlando Sotomayor from the University of Puerto Rico, Damarys Varela from the PRDE, the embedded evaluation officer Emily Goldman, the embedded research manager Alina Amador, the project director Olgamary Rivera, and many other researchers and personnel from the Department of Education. They are working passionately to run research projects with the support of the Department of Education, such as the project ATEMA, a training program for teachers to incorporate computer-assisted learning techniques in their lessons. (Later in this newsletter we share more about ATEMA in an interview with two project leads.) Together these research studies have the potential to generate valuable evidence on how to effectively support the students of Puerto Rico.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to work with this team of highly dedicated partners who truly care about improving education in Puerto Rico and who have made me feel closer to my home, Mexico. It has been far from easy to implement these projects, but with the determination of the team, it has been worth it—their work makes it possible to generate valuable evidence to support educators and students even in the [most](#)

challenging of circumstances. I look forward to continuing to collaborate with this team as they explore vital policy and research questions, on these and future projects.

Daniela Gómez Treviño
Research Manager, J-PAL North America



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Navigating implementation challenges: The ATEMA project in Puerto Rico

The Puerto Rico Education Department, in cooperation with the University of Puerto Rico and J-PAL North America, is evaluating the impact of a program that trains and supports teachers to use computer-assisted learning tools in their lessons. This project explores whether mentoring for teachers is an effective strategy to scale up the use of computer-assisted learning tools to boost student achievement. The team has navigated unexpected technological hurdles, brainstormed solutions to low participation rates, and worked through academic setbacks facing students including natural disasters and Covid-19. In an [interview](#) on the J-PAL blog, Olgamary Rivera from the University of Puerto Rico and Alina Amador from the Puerto Rico Department of Education take us through the project implementation process and the lessons they've learned so far.

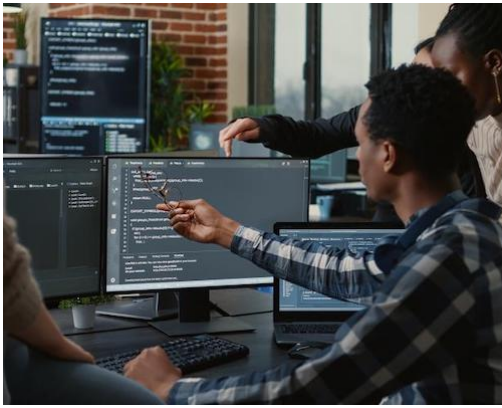


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Health Care Hotspotting replication data

This month, our team published [de-identified data](#) needed to replicate the results in the 2020 J-PAL-funded [randomized evaluation of Health Care Hotspotting](#). The evaluation found that an intensive care transition program for patients who frequently accessed health care resources had no impact on subsequent hospital readmissions. On the J-PAL blog, Research Manager Jesse Gubb [explains how replication data enables](#) transparency, credibility in research, and future exploration of other questions that can be answered with the same data. He also offers practical suggestions about data publication drawn from this and similar projects.



Photo: J-PAL North America

Alumni Spotlight: Mary Ann Bates

We catch up with [Mary Ann Bates](#), former executive director of J-PAL North America, in her new role directing California's [Cradle-to-Career System](#), a state-wide, longitudinal data system focusing on education and workforce outcomes from early learning through higher education. Mary Ann reflects on her eleven years at J-PAL and the lessons she is bringing to her new role, chief among them the importance of being open to changing your mind when presented with evidence and the value of a workplace that celebrates families as a key part of employees' identities.

FEATURED EVALUATION SUMMARY



FEATURED RESEARCH RESOURCE



Health Care Hotspotting

A research team led by Amy Finkelstein, co-scientific director of J-PAL North America, [evaluated the impact of a well-known care transition program](#) that provides intensive, time-limited clinical and social assistance to “super-utilizers” of the health care system with complex medical and social needs. The program had no detectable impact on the rate of six-month hospital readmissions among participants. Following the evaluation, partners from the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers continued to adapt their service models and explore additional questions about the best ways to support patients with varied needs.

Evaluating technology-based interventions

Technology-based interventions can offer many benefits, in particular the ability to standardize treatment across participants and site, making it easier to replicate the interventions with fidelity. Examples of technology-based interventions might include automated alerts embedded into an Electronic Medical Record or computer-assisted learning tools. [This research resource](#) provides guidance for evaluations that use technology as a key part of the intervention being tested and discusses challenges that J-PAL North America has seen across several studies and approaches to mitigate them.

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