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NORTH AMERICA
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
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Good afternoon,

This fall, we usher in a new school year and the resumption of learning for students across the country. As students, parents, and teachers alike adjust to a new year, school districts and education leaders seek to accelerate learning after significant disruptions during the pandemic. This is a complex problem demanding creative solutions and expertise. One solution that has been proven to help is high-dosage tutoring, which our recent evidence review has shown to have large positive effects on student learning.

Here at J-PAL North America, we have focused not only on helping decision-makers understand the value of tutoring, but also on supporting education leaders in scaling up tutoring with evidence-based principles in mind. Findings from J-PAL's tutoring review have informed multiple states' efforts to pass legislation allocating funding to supplemental education programs.

It is heartening to see the drive among education leaders to help students during this critical time. As I reflect on the beginning of the school year, I am struck by the incredible amount of teamwork to implement high-impact tutoring at scale in California. The state's education structure includes layers of support organizations, focusing both statewide and for specific groups within California. Local expertise is an essential piece of adapting tutoring to work in as many schools as possible. Through this work, it is also clear how essential it is to leverage the collective expertise of a wide range of experts, including departments of education, evidence-based providers like Saga Education, and research institutions like Brown University's National Student Support Accelerator to scale up high-quality tutoring. We spotlight some of this work in our featured story below.

Beyond preK-12 education, we also share an op-ed from J-PAL affiliated professor James Sullivan arguing that comprehensive wraparound support programs for community college students—which evidence shows increase graduation rates—deserve increasing funding and attention to accelerate pandemic recovery and education equity. Finally, staff working on our housing and homelessness research outline the dual need for investment in evidence-based housing security strategies and more rigorous research to generate evidence on new solutions.

Vincent Quan
Associate Director of Policy, J-PAL North America



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Scaling up evidence-based tutoring: Impact through collaboration

Policymakers and school leaders continue to grapple with how to address unfinished learning caused by Covid-19, as students begin another school year. Rigorous research, including [an evidence review by J-PAL North America](#) of a 96-RCT meta analysis, highlights high-dosage tutoring as a [critical tool](#). Governments and agencies are incorporating this evidence in their [implementations of tutoring programs](#) to combat learning lags, and J-PAL North America is working to support those scale ups. For example, in California, J-PAL North America's presentation of evidence influenced the inclusion of tutoring in the state's \$4.6 billion Covid-19 relief and school reopening bill. Colorado passed a bill creating a high-impact tutoring program, with the bill's advocates drawing from J-PAL's evidence review to identify key characteristics of effective tutoring. Recently, J-PAL staff and affiliate Susanna Loeb [shared practical insights for implementing high-impact tutoring](#) with education leaders from across California. In coming months, stay updated on J-PAL's collaborative work to support tutoring expansions by visiting J-PAL's [tutoring evidence and resources landing page](#).



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As community college students return to class, let's help them graduate

Wraparound support services offer a promising path to boost community college graduation rates and should be a priority for education leaders, J-PAL affiliate James Sullivan argues in a [new op-ed](#) in *The Hill*. Most students who enroll in community college never graduate, and data from 2020 suggests enrollment and completion rates declined further during the pandemic. A body of rigorous evidence has found that [comprehensive, wraparound services help students persist and complete their degrees](#). Expanding them, whether through the \$62 million reserved for community college retention and completion programs in the proposed American Families Plan or through another mechanism, would be an important investment in the advancement of economic equity for millions of students.



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What research says about the best way to spend money now to solve homelessness long-term

Following the Supreme Court's decision last month ending the national eviction moratorium, households across the country face increased risk of homelessness and housing instability. Whether or not temporary moratoria are extended, people facing housing instability need effective, evidence-based solutions, [write J-PAL North America's Rohit Naimpally and Laina Sonterblum](#). Rigorous research has demonstrated the effectiveness of strategies like subsidizing rent with Housing Choice Vouchers and providing housing without preconditions, known as Housing First. Further, randomized evaluations can help answer two essential questions: How do we improve programs that we know work, like vouchers? And what new strategies are effective at boosting housing stability?

FEATURED EVALUATION SUMMARY

FEATURED RESEARCH RESOURCE



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The impact of medical debt forgiveness on financial outcomes in the United States

An estimated 18 percent of Americans have at least some medical debt in collections, and medical debt in collection is larger—at an estimated \$140 billion—than all other debt in collections in the United States combined. In [this study](#), researchers are evaluating the impact of a medical debt forgiveness program, which purchases and abolishes individuals' medical debt balances, on financial well-being across different financial and demographic characteristics. The researchers are also working on a related project analyzing the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on medical debt.



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Quick guide to power calculations

This [research resource](#) provides guidance to researchers on identifying inputs for power calculations and walk through a process for incorporating power calculations into study design. Statistical power is a key component, alongside sample size, that determines an evaluation's ability to detect a meaningful impact of a program. This resource is intended for researchers who are designing and assessing the feasibility of a randomized evaluation with an implementing partner; it assumes some background in statistics. In addition to key principles of power calculations, there are additional resources and sample code for performing power calculations with software programs at the end of the document.

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