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Teaching at the Right Level

Too many children in India are in school but aren't learning. While 97 percent of children ages 6–14 are enrolled in school, 65 percent of Std III students cannot read a Std I text (2011 Annual Status of Education Report).



One intuitive remedy would be to spend more on educational inputs, such as textbooks, but there is little evidence that this, by itself, is an effective way to improve learning. Some of the most successful interventions tested by randomized evaluations have addressed the problem of low learning by providing instruction that is geared towards a student's actual learning level rather than completing a rigid curriculum.

Pratham has pioneered various models across India based on this idea, several of which were evaluated by J-PAL affiliates. A programme in Mumbai and Vadodara, which recruited young women from the local community to [provide basic education](#) to struggling students in Std I–III, significantly improved students' math and language test scores. Another programme in eastern Uttar Pradesh, which trained local volunteers to start [after-school reading classes](#), had similarly positive impacts on students' learning levels. A [summer camp programme](#) in Bihar improved students' learning levels after just one month and had a sustained impact over the next two years.

A similar evaluation in Kenya found that [placing students in different classes](#) by learning level ('tracking') improved test scores across the board.

Providing instruction that matches children's initial learning levels is a proven reform that is inexpensive and scalable.

Improving Early Grade Reading in India through the Use of Evidence

Upcoming Webinar: Evaluation Methods

Friday, November 23

As host of the CLEAR South Asia Regional Centre, J-PAL South Asia hosts a webinar series on fundamental topics in monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The upcoming session will cover quasi-experimental and experimental evaluation methods.

Learn more or register for the webinar [here](#).

Upcoming Course: Advanced M&E Management

**New Delhi, India
April 1–5, 2013**

J-PAL's advanced four-day training programme will focus on rigorous monitoring and evaluation (M&E) techniques including various quantitative and qualitative methods. The topics covered will include: theoretical foundations of M&E; tools for conducting M&E; quantitative and qualitative research methods; and data management, including digital and non-digital collection, and data cleaning and analysis.

For more information, contact Priya Arora at priyajeet.arora@ifmr.ac.

**J-PAL Evaluations
in South Asia**



J-PAL South Asia recently summarized the existing evidence on effective methods to improve early grade reading skills, including teaching at the right level. Based on the summary findings, J-PAL laid out a set of basic recommendations to be incorporated into future early grade reading programmes and defined specific areas where there is a need for further innovation and experimentation.

The recommendations will be used to inform a new [USAID India](#) initiative, which focuses on reading as the foundation for all other learning activities in the classroom. The initiative will fund promising early grade reading programmes, which incorporate and expand upon the existing evidence, with the aim of improving the reading skills of over 5 million young learners in India by 2015.

To announce the new initiative, USAID India partnered with J-PAL South Asia to host a one-day workshop in July. Read the list of recommendations in the [workshop booklet](#) or on the [workshop website](#).



J-PAL currently has 88 completed and ongoing evaluations in South Asia. These evaluations span seven programme areas: agriculture, education, environment, finance, health, governance, and labour markets.

See all of J-PAL's evaluations in South Asia [here](#).

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The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (**J-PAL**) is a centre within the Economics Department at MIT, with a South Asia regional office at the Institute for Financial Management and Research (IFMR), Chennai and in Delhi. J-PAL's mission is to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is based on scientific evidence. J-PAL works to achieve this by conducting rigorous impact evaluations, building capacity, and informing policy. Copyright (C) 2012 Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab All rights reserved.

