

WELCOME! We will begin momentarily.

Note: all participants have been muted. Please use the chat function to ask questions throughout.





J-PAL Education, Technology and Opportunity Innovation Competition Webinar

J-PAL North America (MIT)

February 26, 2018

povertyactionlab.org/edtech



Who we are



Vincent Quan
Policy Manager
J-PAL North America

Initiative Manager



Peter Bergman
Professor of Economics and
Education
Columbia University
Teachers College



Vincent Baxter
Deputy Chief of Family
Engagement DC Public Schools

WebEx housekeeping

- You have all been muted.
- We encourage you to use the chat function!
- We will answer your chat questions at the end of the webinar
- We are recording this presentation and will post it on the website within a week.

Agenda

- I. Introduction to J-PAL
- II. The J-PAL Education, Technology, and Opportunity Initiative (ETOI)
- III. Opportunities for Randomized Evaluations
- IV. Randomized Evaluation in Practice
- V. How to Apply
- VI. Q&A

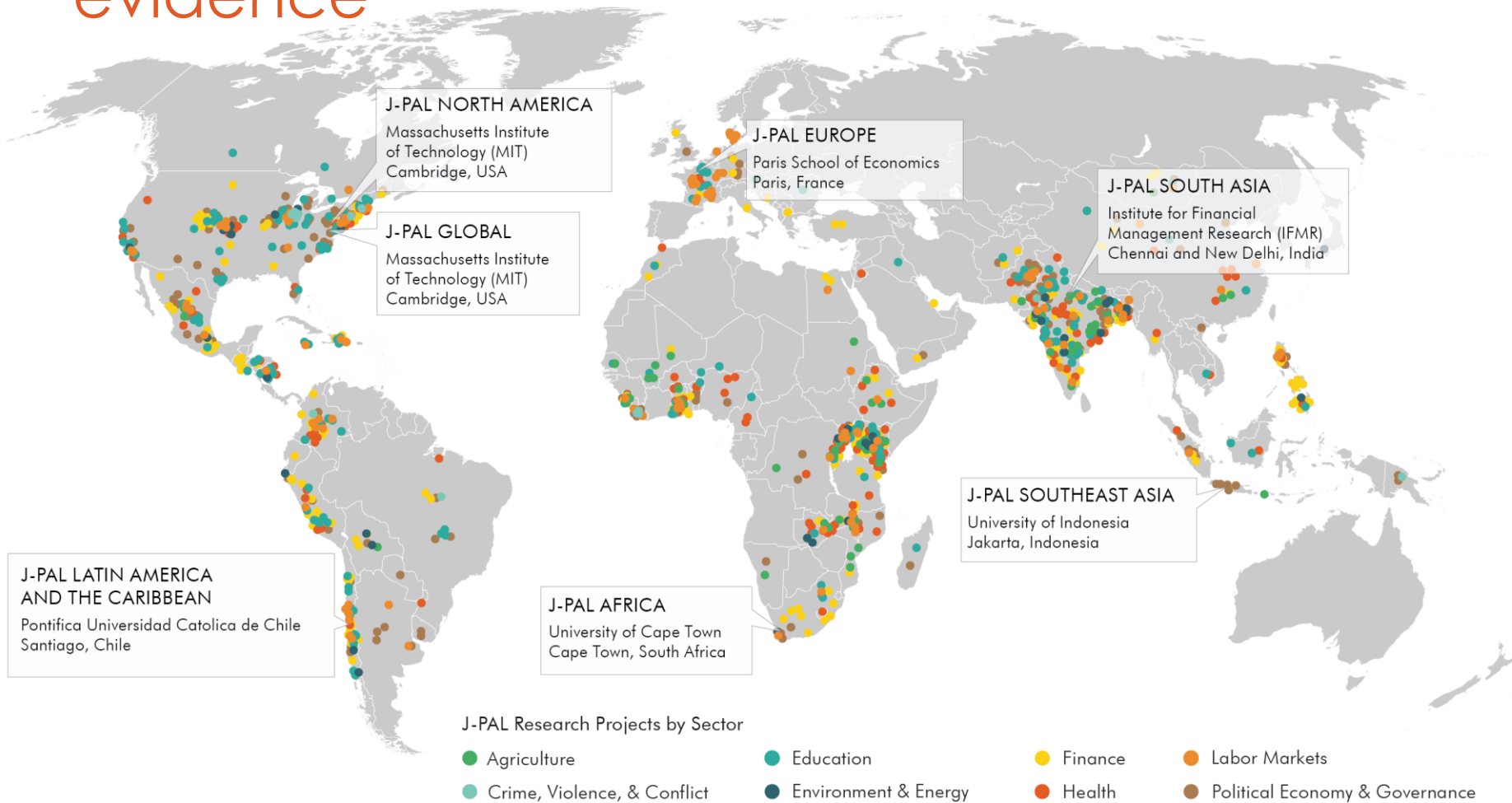


Agenda

- I. Introduction to J-PAL**
- II. The J-PAL Education, Technology, and Opportunity Initiative (ETOI)
- III. Opportunities for Randomized Evaluations
- IV. Randomized Evaluation in Practice
- V. How to Apply
- VI. Q&A



J-PAL's mission is to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence



890+ ongoing and completed randomized evaluations in 80 countries

J-PAL's network of affiliated researchers



Agenda

- I. Introduction to J-PAL
- II. The J-PAL Education, Technology, and Opportunity Initiative (ETOI)**
- III. Opportunities for Randomized Evaluations
- IV. Randomized Evaluation in Practice
- V. How to Apply
- VI. Q&A



The J-PAL Education, Technology, and Opportunity Initiative



A new initiative at J-PAL North America that supports US education leaders in generating evidence on how and to what extent uses of technology and innovation can improve student learning

Why Education Technology?

Tremendous disparities in educational achievement exist

Technology has the potential to help overcome existing challenges in education

Massive investments in ed tech – projected to reach **\$21 billion** by 2020 (*New York Times*, June 2017)

But many programs are untested and not everything we try works – evidence is needed to harness potential of ed tech

Important to get it right: Identifying and investing in what works can help us make inroads for student achievement



Goals of the J-PAL Education, Technology, and Opportunity Initiative (ETOI)

- Catalyze randomized evaluations of promising uses of education technology and innovation
- Build the capacity of education leaders to use data and evaluation
- Create a cohort of leaders who advance the use of rigorous evidence in education
- Share rigorous evidence with leaders who can act on research to generate solutions to critical challenges in education

Agenda

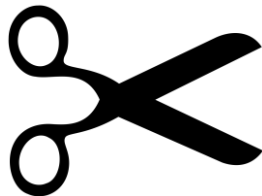
- I. Introduction to J-PAL
- II. The J-PAL Education, Technology, and Opportunity Initiative (ETOI)
- III. Opportunities for Randomized Evaluations**
- IV. Randomized Evaluation in Practice
- V. How to Apply
- VI. Q&A



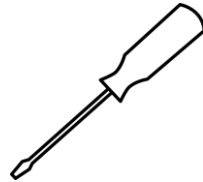
Methods as tools



Pre-post



Simple
Difference



Difference-
in-
Difference



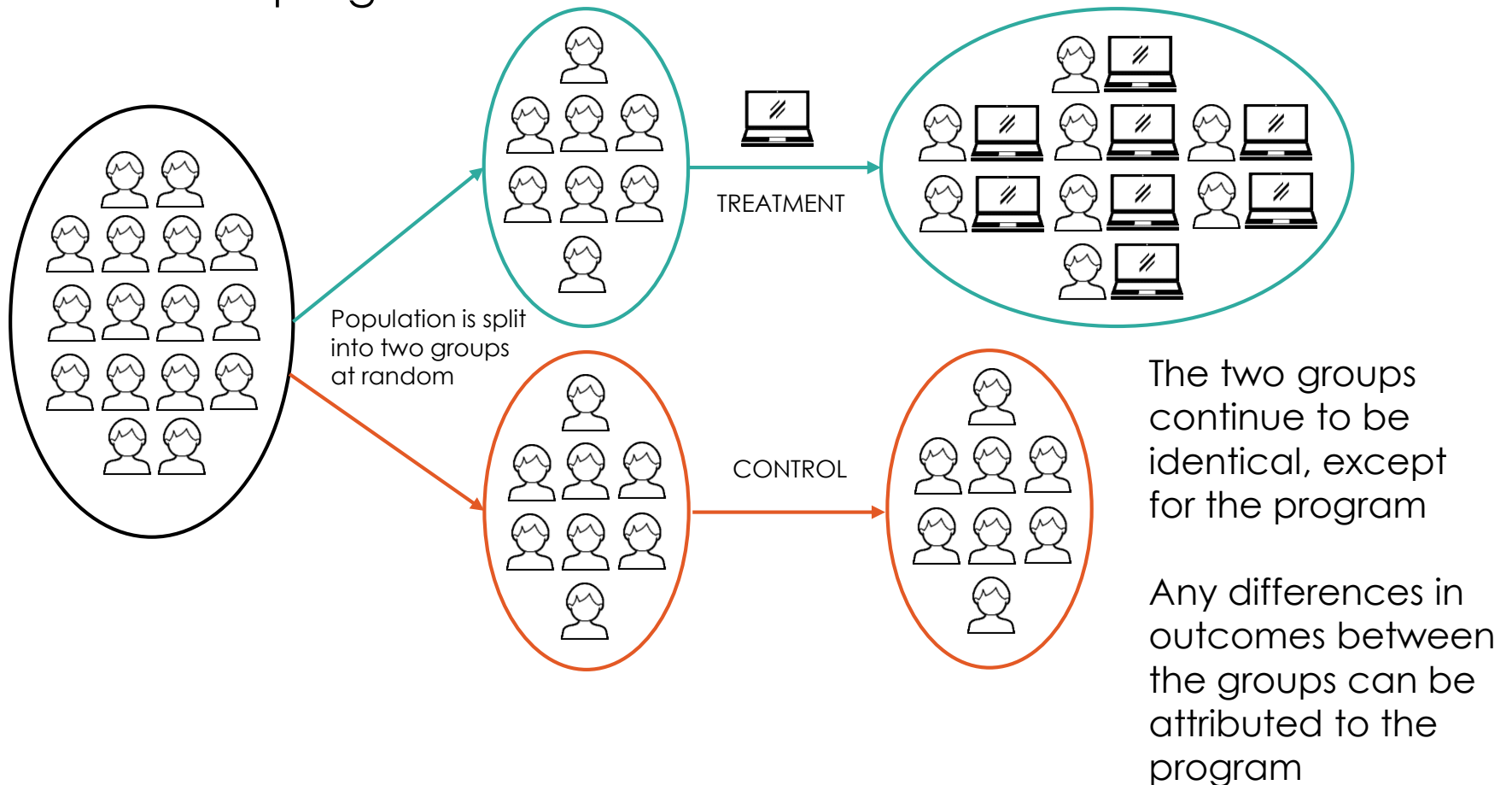
Regressions



Randomized
Evaluation

What is a randomized evaluation?

Before the program starts, eligible individuals are randomly assigned to two groups so that they are statistically identical before the program.



When to consider randomizing

- An **unstudied** or **understudied** program
 - e.g. a program that has not yet been rigorously evaluated
- Program or service is **over-subscribed**
 - If you can't serve everyone who is eligible, what is the optimal way (e.g. lottery) to allocate spots?
- Program **expansion**
 - e.g. moving into a new location or target population
- **Adding** a new **feature**
 - Can you roll out the new feature to some people and not others in order to measure its impact?
- Program **thresholds/cutoffs**
 - Those just below the cutoff (e.g. SAT score) could be randomly given a program

When does a randomized evaluation **not** make sense?

- **Too small:** sample size is too small to detect a meaningful differences in outcomes
- **Too early:** still ironing out logistics
- **Too late:** already serving everyone who is eligible, and no random assignment was built in
- When **a positive impact has been proven**, and we have the resources to serve everyone

Agenda

- I. Introduction to J-PAL
- II. The J-PAL Education, Technology, and Opportunity Initiative (ETOI)
- III. Opportunities for Randomized Evaluations
- IV. Randomized Evaluation in Practice
- V. How to Apply
- VI. Q&A



Family Engagement in DCPS



Peter Bergman

Professor of Economics & Education
Columbia University

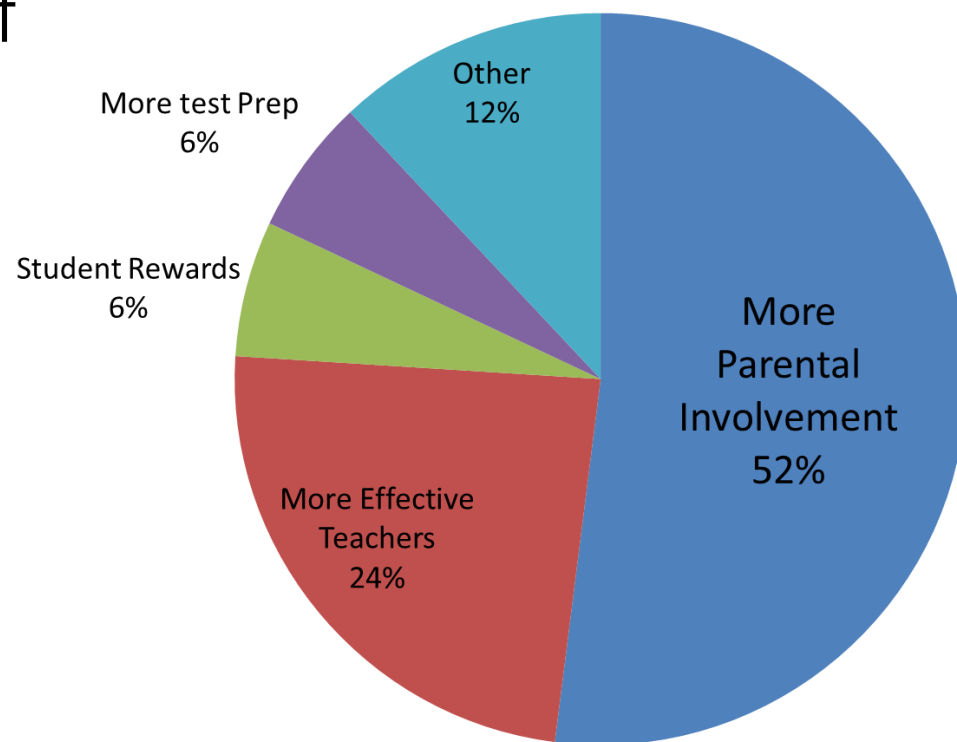


Vincent Baxter

DC Public Schools Deputy Chief
of Family Engagement

Need for research on Family Engagement

- Greatest source of educational inequality
- Powerful determinant of student achievement
- Surprisingly little evidence-based practices



Motivation

- Many parents...
 - ...are unsatisfied with school-to-parent communication
 - ...don't understand A-F grading system
 - ...understate their child's missed assignments
 - ...understate their child's absences
 - ...don't know how many report cards they should get
 - ...hear from their child's school less than 1 time every 3 months

The Technology Intervention

- Provide parents timely, actionable information about child's missed assignments, class absences, and low grades
- Send this information via automated, weekly text messages
- DCPS using this system in 12 schools
- **Issue:** Schools and parents not using it!
Can we promote usage and efficacy?

The RCT partnership

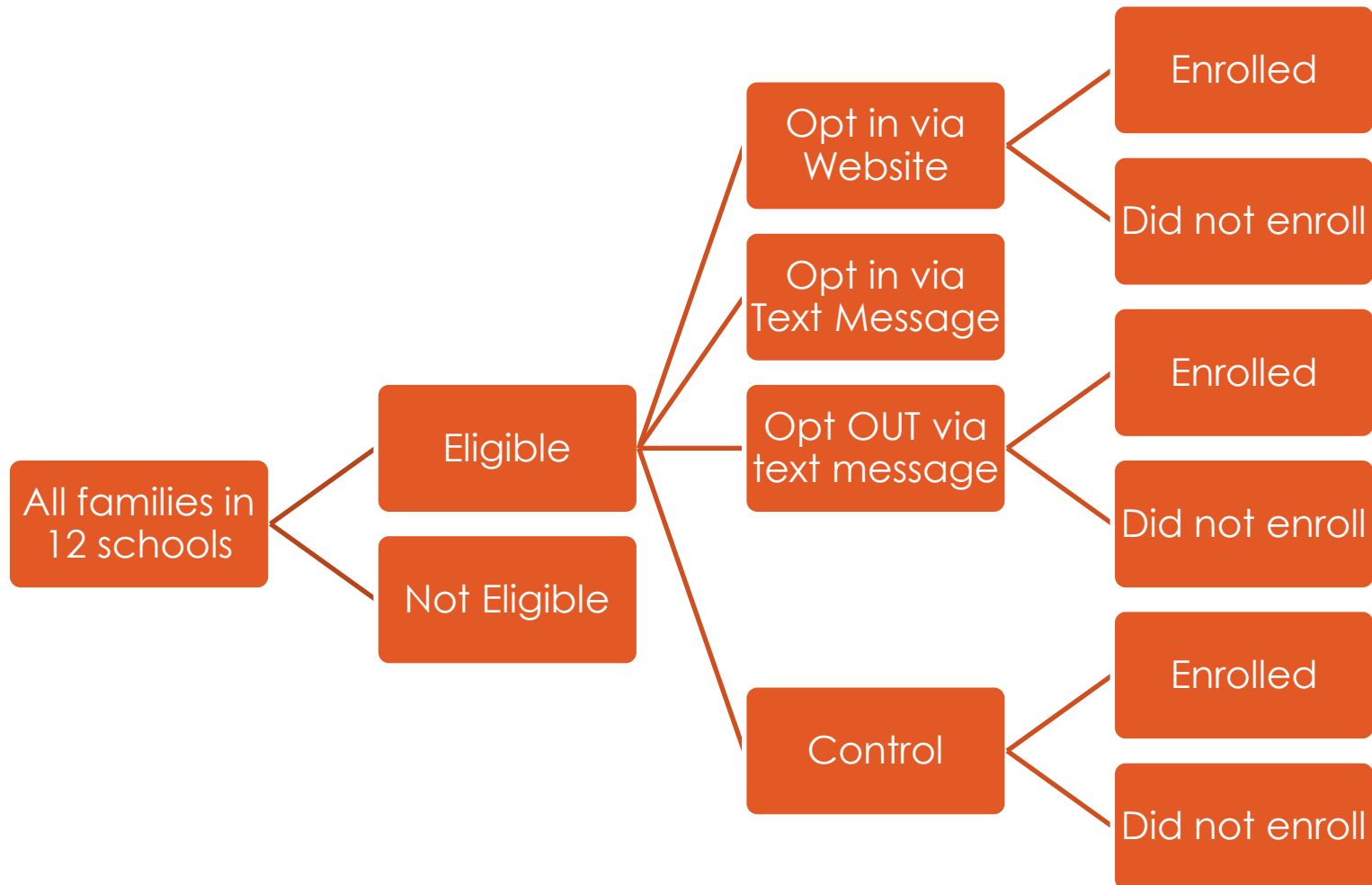


DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TEACHERS COLLEGE

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Evaluation design



[School Name] is testing a service that texts you if your child has a low grade, missed assignment or missed class.

Standard (Opt-in)

You may enroll by logging in at xyz.com; call school for account info.

Enroll?

Simplified (Opt-in)

You may enroll by texting "Start" to opt in.

Enroll?

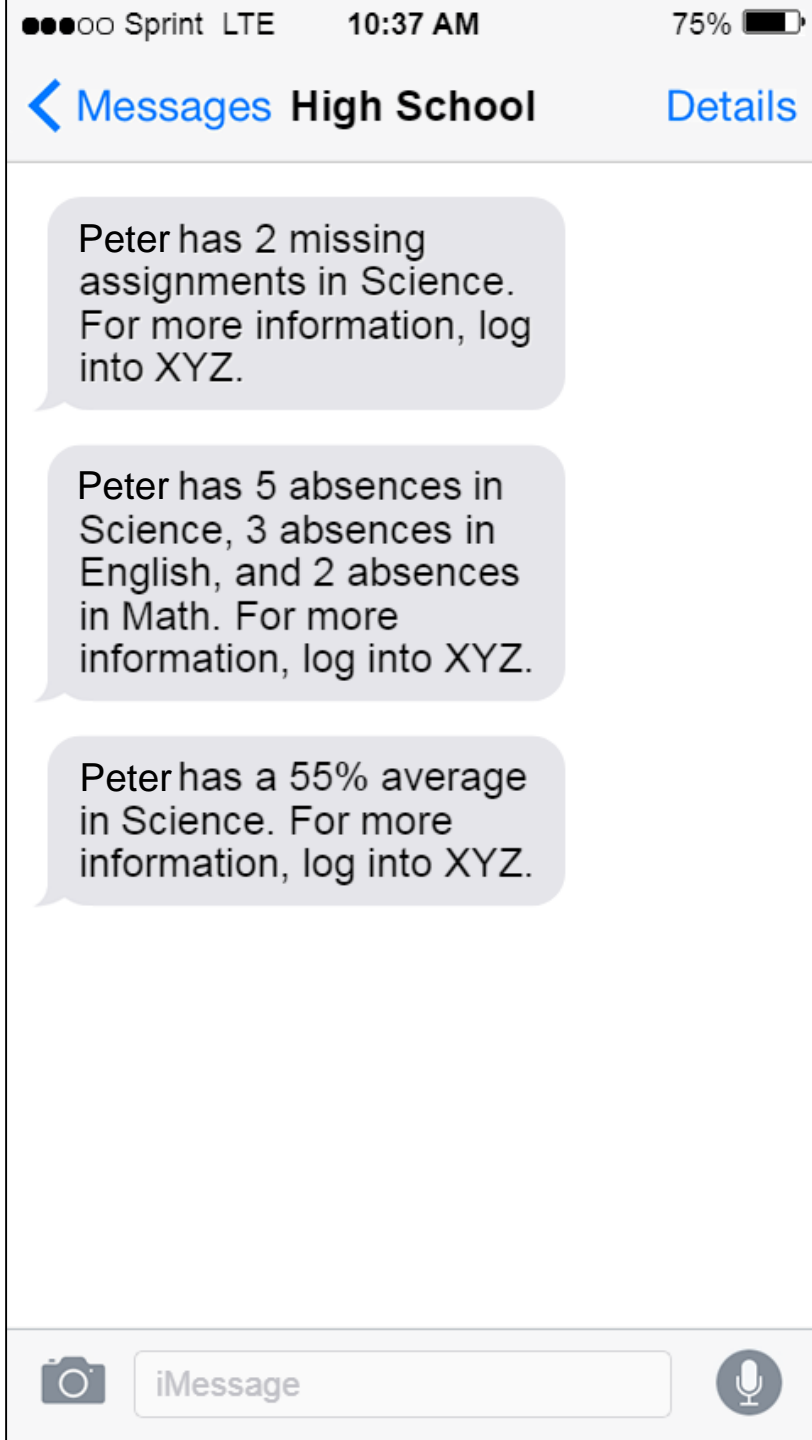
Opt-out

You are automatically enrolled: text "Stop" to opt out.

Enroll?

Control

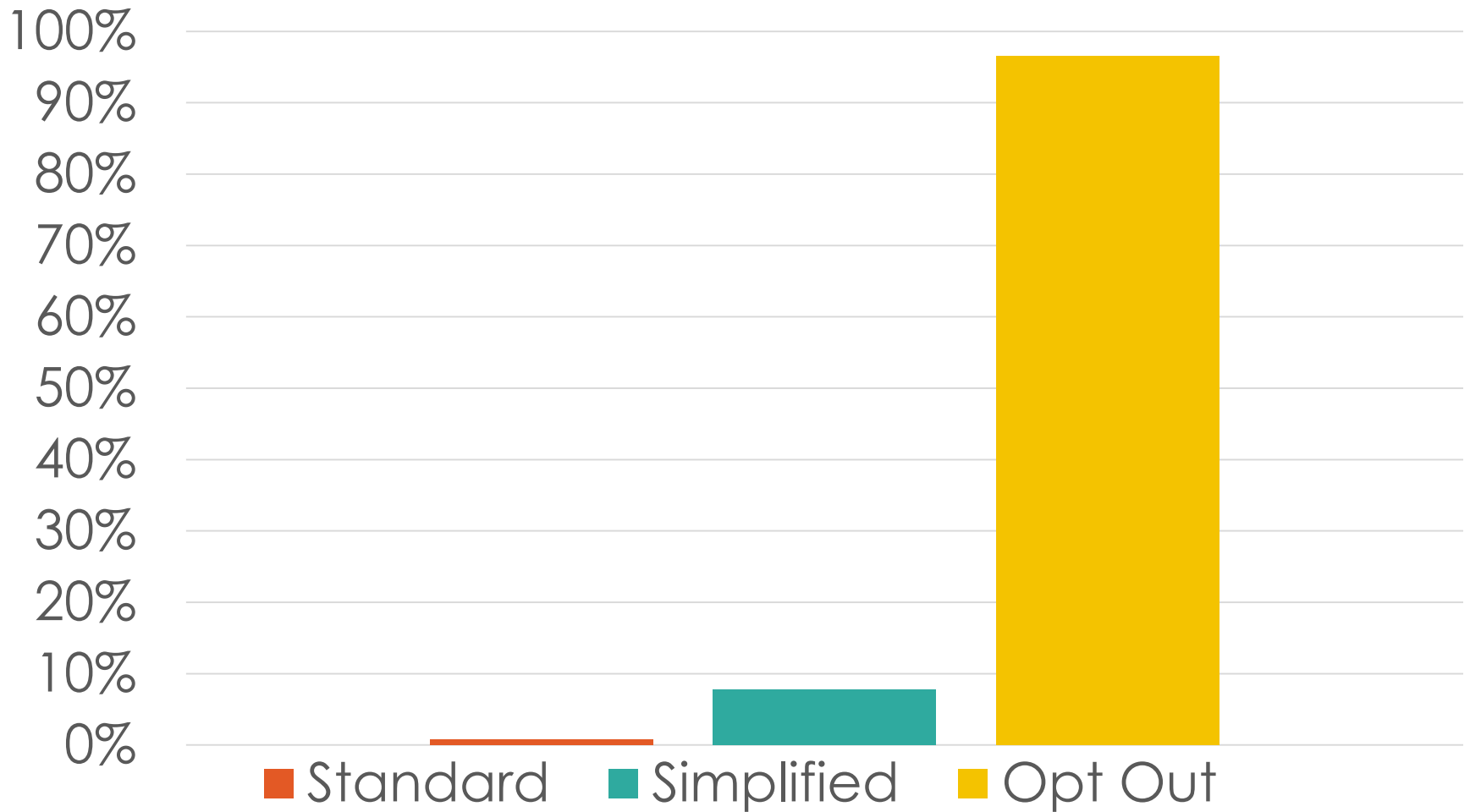
Avg # of alerts for enrolled students = ~19



Administrative data

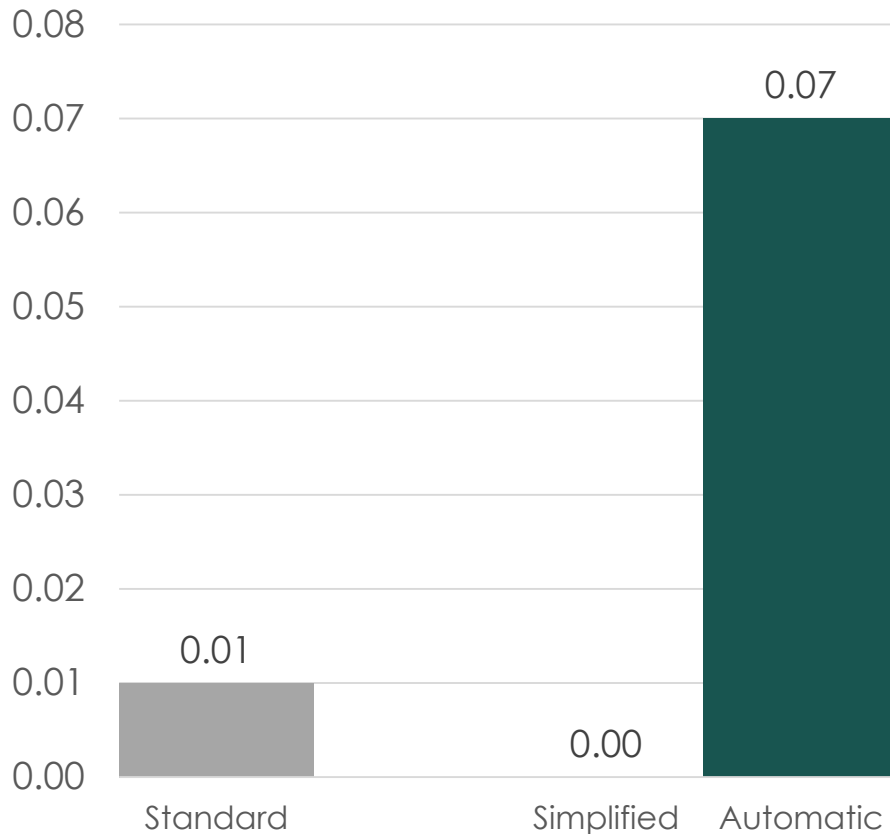
- DCPS Learning Management System
 - Phone numbers
 - Enrollment
 - Text message delivery
 - Course grades
 - One-question follow-up survey

What have we learned?

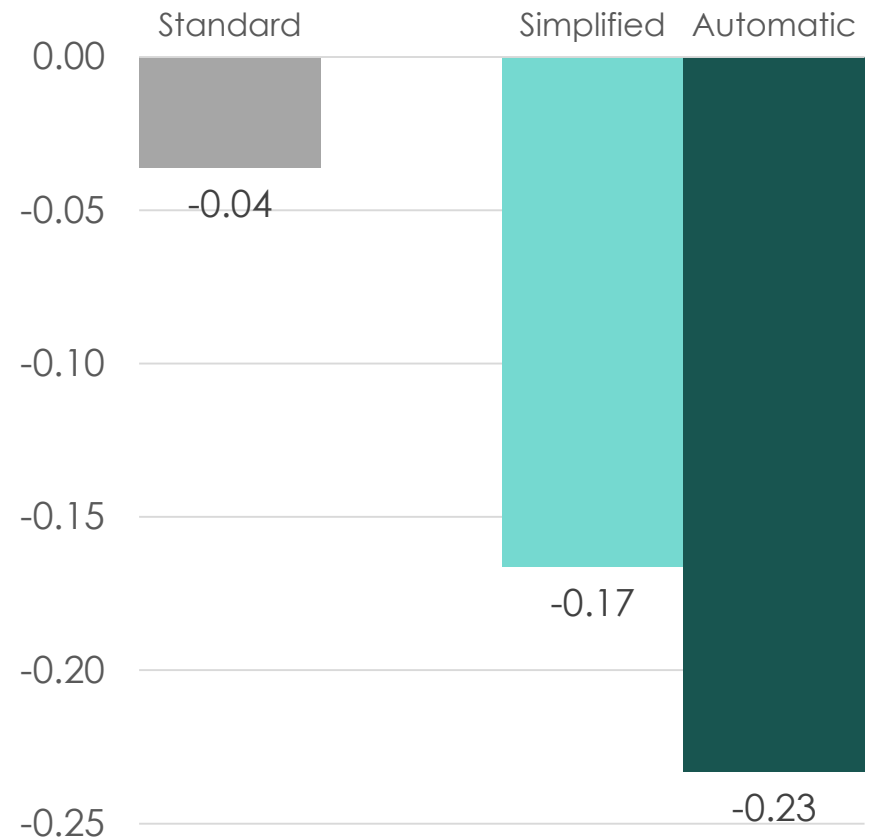


Effects on course grades

Effect on GPA



Reduction in courses failed



What have we learned?

- How technologies are rolled out matters
 - Affects both usage and efficacy
- Low usage doesn't necessarily mean low demand!
 - **Follow up survey:** parents in opt out and simplified groups *more* likely to want to continue the service than the standard opt in group
- We also surveyed education leaders to assess their beliefs about take up in each group
 - Many overstate opt-in take up and understate opt-out take up
- **Next steps:** DCPS adopts new LMS—can we adapt our findings to this new system?

Agenda

- I. Introduction to J-PAL
- II. The J-PAL Education, Technology, and Opportunity Initiative (ETOI)
- III. Opportunities for Randomized Evaluations
- IV. Randomized Evaluation in Practice
- V. How to Apply**
- VI. Q&A



Education, Technology, and Opportunity Innovation Competition

- Education leaders can apply for:
 - Pro-bono technical support to develop an evaluation
 - Trainings about data and evaluation
 - Connections with J-PAL's network of leading academic researchers
- May also be eligible for up to \$50,000 in funding
- Who is eligible to apply? School districts, school networks, local/state education agencies, CMOs, post-secondary institutions, education non-profits

J-PAL is now inviting Letters of Interest from education leaders

- J-PAL defines ed tech and innovation broadly
 - Some potential topics include computer-assisted learning software, low-cost technologies (e.g. mobile apps), learning management systems (LMS), online learning
- To apply, submit a 3-5 page **letter of interest** describing
 - The policy question or challenge that motivates your application
 - The program you would like to evaluate
 - How many people are currently reached
 - Potential opportunity for a randomized evaluation
 - Access to data for measuring outcomes

Timeline

- **April 13, 2018** – Deadline to submit letters of interest
- **Late April – Early May 2018** – Finalists invited for interviews and asked to submit additional information (including proposed budget)
- **June 2018** – Winners announced
- Go to povertyactionlab.org/edtech for more information

Characteristics of a strong application

- Potential to meaningfully improve education through technology and innovation
- Focus on helping disadvantaged students
- Clearly defined program and outcomes of interest
- Feasibility
 - Potential sample size
 - Availability of data, particularly administrative data
 - Willingness and feasibility of randomization
- Organizational capacity and commitment

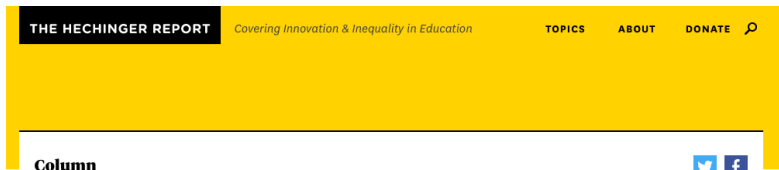
Agenda

- I. Introduction to J-PAL
- II. The J-PAL Education, Technology, and Opportunity Initiative (ETOI)
- III. Opportunities for Randomized Evaluations
- IV. Randomized Evaluation in Practice
- V. How to Apply
- VI. Q&A**



Other Resources

Education Technology: An Evidence-Based Review



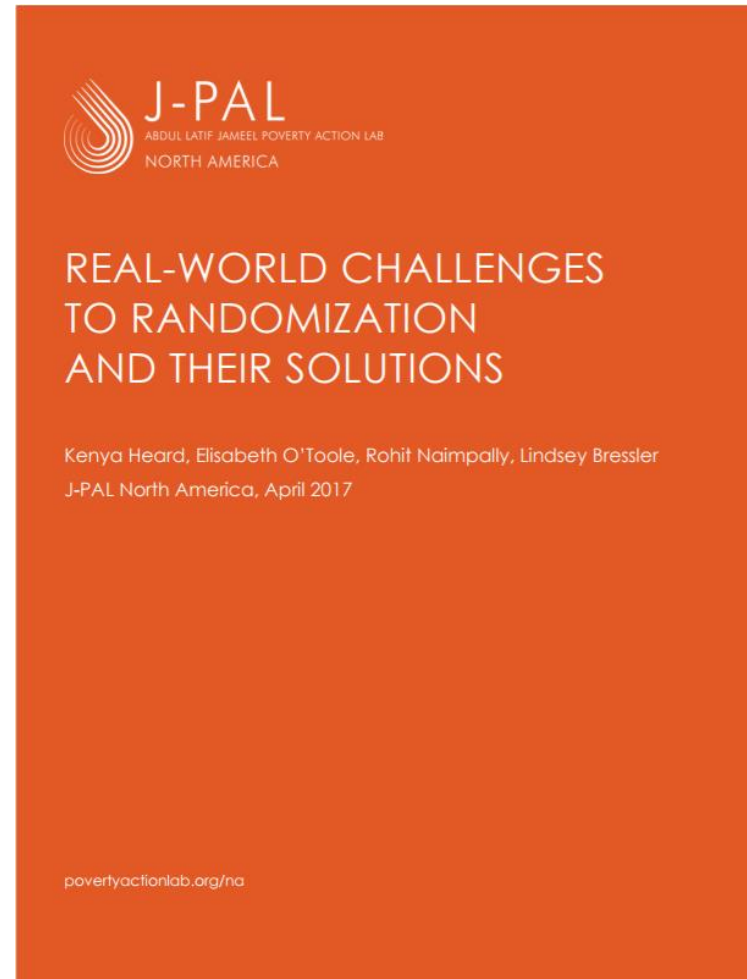
Three lessons from rigorous research on education technology



T/4

News

Texting, Personalization, Free Computers for All: New Report Tells Where Ed Tech Works — and Fails



www.povertyactionlab.org/edtech



J-PAL

ABDUL LATIF JAMEEL POVERTY ACTION LAB

Thank you

Send any additional questions to:

Vincent Quan

quanv@mit.edu

