

NEW THP PAPERS FOR RELEASE IN MARCH 2016
EDUCATION: NEW METHODS TO PROMOTE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

New evidence has shown that technological innovations and individualized tutoring can be both effective and cost efficient in raising student achievement. Three new papers will outline proposals to scale up and fund innovative approaches to K-12 education reform. The proposals aim to improve flexibility and to more precisely target interventions to students who will benefit most from them.

Improving High School Outcomes for Poor Adolescents: Scaling up the Match/SAGA Tutorials

Authors: Roseanna Ander (University of Chicago), Jonathan Guryan (Northwestern University), and Jens Ludwig (University of Chicago)

By high school, some students can be multiple years behind grade level in math achievement. Yet schools and classrooms are not well set up to handle such disparate skill levels in the same grade. The Match/SAGA tutorial program is an academic intervention in which low-cost tutors provide daily individualized instruction during school hours to pairs of students scoring below grade level in math. Evidence from a pilot evaluation in the Chicago Public Schools showed substantial impacts on standardized test scores and classroom performance. Because the test-score impacts are large, and the labor costs are relatively modest, additional expansion of the Match/SAGA program would be highly cost-effective.

Increasing Targeting, Flexibility, and Transparency in Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to Help Disadvantaged Students

Author: Nora E. Gordon (Georgetown University)

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act distributes over \$14 billion in federal funds to school districts to help disadvantaged students. Over its 50-year history, the aid formulas have become more complex, and the perceived restrictions on permissible uses of the funds have limited the ways that schools use the additional resources. The program is widely perceived as funding ineffective practices at the local level, and spreading federal funds too thinly. Gordon proposes reforms to make the Title I formula more transparent, streamlined and progressive by distributing additional resources to the neediest areas. In addition, she suggests improvements in federal guidance and fiscal compliance outreach efforts so that local districts understand the flexibility they have to spend the resources effectively.

Learning What Works in K-12 Education, with a Case Study of EDUSTAR

Authors: Aaron K. Chatterji (Duke University) and Benjamin F. Jones (Northwestern University)

Despite much fanfare, new technologies have yet to fundamentally advance student outcomes in K-12 schools or other educational settings. The system that supports the development and dissemination of educational technology tools is falling short because it does not incorporate rigorous evaluation. As a result, no one knows what works and for whom. This policy memo articulates general principles that should guide the evaluation of educational technology, which has the promise to fill in critical information gaps and leverage the potential of new technologies to improve learning. Chatterji and Jones also present a case study of a new platform the authors conceived and implemented with a national non-profit organization. The results from the platform pilot evaluations reveal several lessons for the future of educational technology.