The 2022 FLN Academy
Evidence-Based Principles for Effective Parental Engagement

Hosted by J-PAL under the FLN Initiative

February 2, 2022

Agenda

- Welcome & session objectives
- Brief overview of J-PAL
- Evidence on community engagement
- Evidence on parental engagement
- Break
- Introduction to the implementation guide
- Overview of implementation and contextual principles
- Q&A/Discussion
- Closing remarks

Guide to optimize our experience

- Please note that the session is being recorded. A link to the recording will be circulated after.
- Feel free to input questions and comments in the Q&A function at any time.
- Your microphones and cameras will be muted – please let them remain muted unless you are speaking.
- Interpretation is available – please select the English, French or Spanish channel using the interpretation icon at the bottom of your screen.
- Panelists and others who speak should only do so in the language of the channel they have selected.
- **Please introduce yourself in the Chat!**

Session Objectives

- Learn about the role community and parental engagement play on student learning outcomes, and the related implementation constraints to keep in mind

- Walk through the parental engagement implementation playbook, specifically the key findings emerging from global case studies and the related contextual and implementation considerations when bringing to new contexts

Overview of J-PAL

J-PAL takes a scientific approach to **innovate, test, and scale up solutions.**

We work with a global network of over 500 talented researchers

Connecting the dots from research to action

Research
We fund innovative new research and help carry out affiliates' projects on the ground.
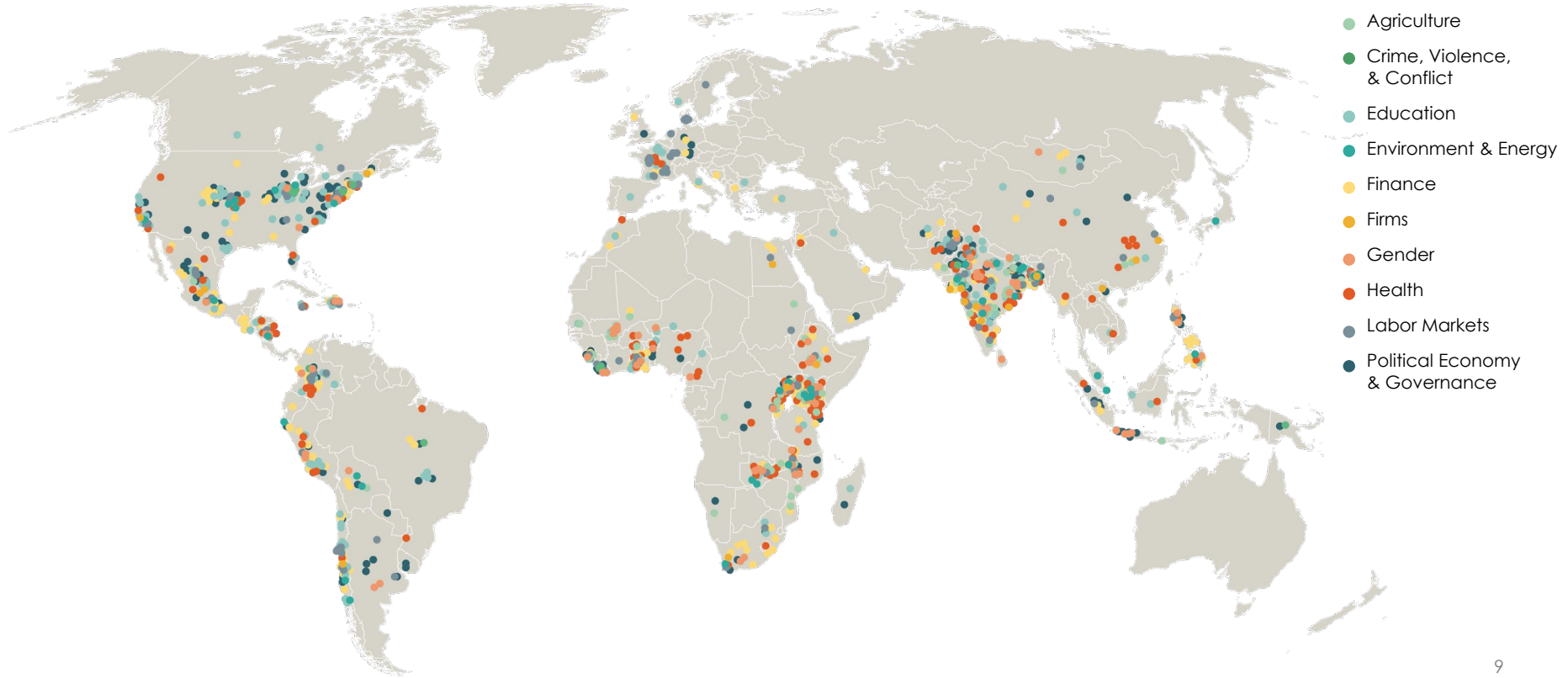
Policy outreach
We synthesize research results, build partnerships, lend technical assistance, and embed staff.
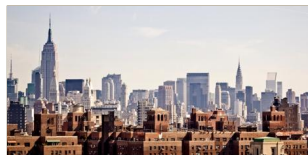
Capacity building
We lead executive trainings and develop rigorous online education to build sustainability.

1,000+ randomized evaluations by more than 200 academic researchers in 88 countries and 10 sectors

- ● Agriculture
- ● Crime, Violence, & Conflict
- ● Education
- ● Environment & Energy
- ● Finance
- ● Firms
- ● Gender
- ● Health
- ● Labor Markets
- ● Political Economy & Governance

Local grounding: Seven regional offices and hundreds of local partnerships

J-PAL North America
Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
Cambridge, USA

J-PAL Global
Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
Cambridge, USA

J-PAL Latin America and the Caribbean
Pontifica Universidad Catolica de Chile
Santiago, Chile

J-PAL Middle East and North Africa
American University in Cairo
Cairo, Egypt

J-PAL Europe
Paris School of Economics
Paris, France

J-PAL Africa
University of Cape Town
Cape Town, South Africa

J-PAL South Asia
Institute for Financial Management & Research
Chennai & New Delhi, India

J-PAL Southeast Asia
University of Indonesia
Jakarta, Indonesia

People reached by programs and policies informed by evaluations conducted by J-PAL affiliates

23 million
2008

63 million
2012

202 million
2014

300 million
2016

400 million
2019

540 million
2021

2003
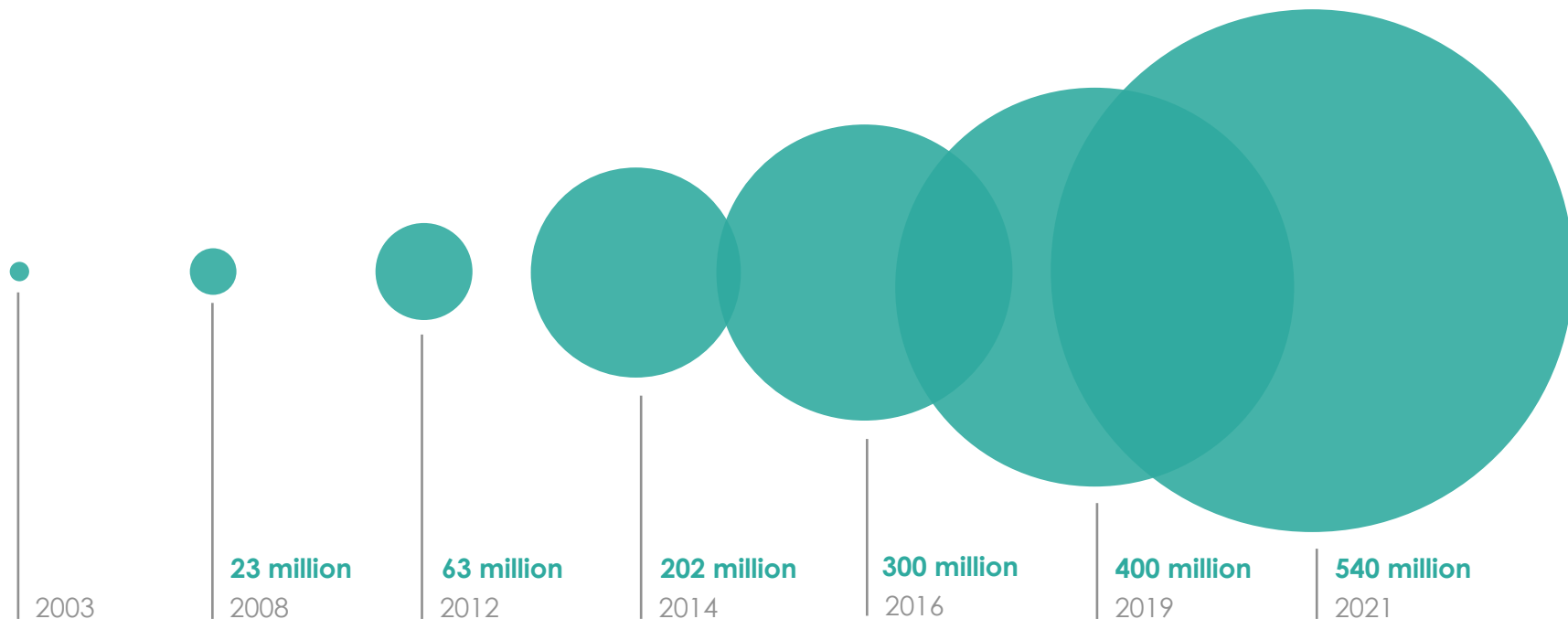
15-year collaboration between J-PAL and Pratham reaching children in India and African countries

- 6 evaluations over 15 years to rigorously test and iterate on the TaRL approach; 2 models for scale

- Expansion of TaRL into Africa in 2017 with 80-school pilot in Zambia, now reaching 1800 schools

- TaRL Africa: Joint initiative between Pratham and J-PAL to adapt, pilot, and scale across Sub-Saharan Africa

Partnership with NGO Breakthrough and Gov't of Punjab to scale a gender equality curriculum

- Evaluation of Breakthrough's school-based gender equality curriculum showed impacts on **adolescents' gender attitudes, aspirations, and behaviors** in Haryana, India

- J-PAL shared the results with the Punjab Department of Education in 2019 given low gender outcomes in the state

- Punjab Department of Education, Breakthrough, and J-PAL launched a partnership in 2021 to **scale the program to all state government schools**
    - Aiming to reach more than 600,000 students annually

Global Evidence: Community engagement

Parents and the community may lack information or capacity to hold education systems accountable

- Lack of information on school quality or tools for accountability may limit ability to exert influence

- Programs involve parents and community in monitoring school performance and management
  - Often provided with training, grants, or both

- Information plus collective action may improve governance and educational outcomes

- Parents may be able to demand greater accountability and pressure decision makers to make decisions in the best interests of the students.

Variable impacts on learning by barriers such as parental literacy, bandwidth, and influence

- Flexible cash grants did not improve learning in Bolivia, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Niger, The Gambia, Senegal, and Tanzania

- Informing school committees about their roles and responsibilities was not sufficient to improve learning in India and Indonesia

- Comprehensive school-based management reforms did not improve learning in India, The Gambia, and Mexico

References: Banerjee et al. (2010), Beasley and Huillery (2017), Blimpo et al.(2020), Barrera-Osario et al. (2020), Carneiro et al. (2016), Das et al. (2013), Garcia-Moreno et al (2019), Muralidharan et al. (2020), Newman et al. (2002), Pandey et al. (2009), Pradhan et al. (2014)

Community engagement has been very cost-effective when successful but is difficult to get right

- More successful programs empowered committees to take direct action, raised their social status, or increased their level of monitoring

- Examples include:
  - Training community volunteers to teach children in India
  - Strengthening ties between school committees and village councils in Indonesia
  - Extra Teacher Project in Kenya

References: Banerjee et al (2010), Duflo et al (2015), Pradhan et al (2014)

Key takeaways

- Implementation constraints may include:
  - Levels of adult education or literacy
  - Time available to parents to be involved in community engagement programs
  - Power imbalances between communities and schools

- In contexts where barriers to affecting school governance are high, direct individual action may be more effective than information sharing

Menti Question 1

Are you currently designing or implementing community engagement programs in your contexts? / Concevez-vous ou mettez-vous actuellement en œuvre des programmes d'engagement communautaire dans vos contextes / ¿Actualmente está diseñando o implementando programas de participación comunitaria en sus contextos?

- Yes / Oui / Si
- No / Non

Menti Question 2

Does the evidence align with your experiences? / Les preuves correspondent-elles à vos expériences? / ¿La evidencia se alinea con sus experiencias?

-
  - Yes / Oui / Si
  - No / Non
  - Maybe / Peut-être / Quizás

Menti Question 3

Will the evidence be useful as you design or implement community engagement programs? / Les données probantes vous seront-elles utiles lors de la conception ou de la mise en œuvre de programmes d'engagement communautaire? / ¿Será útil la evidencia al diseñar o implementar programas de participación comunitaria?

- Yes / Oui / Si
- No / Non
- Maybe / Peut-être / Quizás

Global Evidence: Parental engagement

Parents and students often lack key information to make education-related decisions

- **Picking a school** requires knowledge of all available options

- Students may not have examples to demonstrate the **wage returns to education**
  - The cost of staying in school may feel higher than dropping out to get a job

- Less than 25% of parents in the U.S. could name a **basic educational milestone** their child should meet this school year

- 25% of surveyed parents in Chile didn't know their **child's grades**
  - Similar gaps in parental knowledge in Malawi & the U.S.

References: Kraft and Rogers (2015); Dizon-Ross (2019); Bergman (2015)

Giving parents actionable guidance on how to be involved in their child's education increased learning

- U.S. program sent texts with **literacy activities**
  - 2x/week, during summer
  - Example: *"Take turns reading OUT LOUD... You read a page, then your child reads a page... "*
  - Increased learning in grades 3 - 4

Photo: Paul Smith | J-PAL/IPA

- Botswana program sent instructions for learning activities
  - **Weekly** texts and phone calls
  - Cost-effective **learning gains**

References: Kraft and Monti-Nussbaum. (2017), York et al. (2019), Doss et al. (2019), Angrist et al. (2020)

Sending parents texts with literacy activities improved their children's learning

- A similar U.S. program sent texts with **activities & encouragement**:

  - **Three** per week, during school year

  - **Increased literacy** for preschool students

  - More effective when **targeted** to the learning level of the child

  - More effective when sent on **weekends**

References: York et al. (2019), Doss et al. (2019)

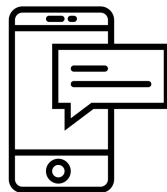# Example text messages from Tips by Text in the US

FACT: *Letters are the building blocks of written language. Children need to know the letters to learn how to read & write.*

TIP: *Point out the first letter in your child's name in magazines, at the store & on signs. Have your child try. Make it a game. Who can find the most?*

GROWTH: *Keep pointing out letters. You're preparing your child! Now when you point out a letter, ask: What sound does it make?*

Telling parents about their child's performance in school has increased learning

- **Information shared:** Academic progress, missing assignments, attendance, behavior
- **Delivery methods:** Emails, texts, take-home report cards, phone calls: weekly, bi-weekly, yearly
- **Mechanism:** Changes in parental behavior improved student effort or quality of education at school
- Effective programs in Bangladesh, Chile, Mozambique, Pakistan, U.S.

References: 1. Islam, Asad. (2019.) 2. Berlinski et al (2017) 3. de Walque and Valente (2018) 4. Andrabi et al (2017) 5. Bergman and Chan (2019), 6. Bergman (2015), 7. Kraft and Rogers (2015), 8. Bergman et al (2018)

Potential barriers to implementation

- **Mobile phone access**:
    - Do parents have electricity, phones, phone credit?
    - Are parents' phone numbers stored somewhere?
    - Evidence that [influential people](#) can spread messages
- **Literacy**:
    - Can parents read text messages or their children's schoolwork?
    - Adult literacy rate may be lower for mothers, rural families
    - Parental info programs in low-literacy settings have been effective
- **Time and resources**
    - Parents may be busy with work, have children of different ages
    - May not own books or other learning resources

References: Abhijit Banerjee, Arun G. Chandrasekhar, Esther Duflo, and Matthew O. Jackson. 2019. "Using Gossips to Spread Information: Theory and Evidence from Two Randomized Controlled Trials." The Review of Economic Studies 86 (6): 2453-2490.

Menti Question 1

Are you currently designing or implementing parental engagement programs in your contexts? / Concevez-vous ou mettez-vous actuellement en œuvre des programmes d'engagement communautaire dans vos contextes / ¿Actualmente está diseñando o implementando programas de participación comunitaria en sus contextos?

- Yes / Oui / Si
- No / Non

Menti Question 2

Which barriers are most relevant in your contexts? / Quels obstacles sont les plus pertinents dans vos contextes? / ¿Qué barreras son más relevantes en sus contextos?

- Mobile phone access / Accès au téléphone portable / Acceso de teléfono móvil
- Adult literacy / L'alphabétisation des adultes / Alfabetización de adultos
- Time/resources / Temps et ressources / Tiempo y recursos
- Other / Autre / Otro

Menti Question 3

Will the evidence be useful as you design or implement parental engagement programs? / Les données probantes vous seront-elles utiles lors de la conception ou de la mise en œuvre de programmes d'engagement parental? / ¿Será útil la evidencia al diseñar o implementar programas de participación de los padres?

- Yes / Oui / Si
- No / Non
- Maybe / Peut-être / Quizás

Break

Guidance on Evidence-Based Parental Engagement Approaches

Developed by J-PAL and Delivery Associates under the FLN Initiative

Preface

- The guide aims to provide education actors with information about the effectiveness, implementation principles, and contextual considerations related to parental engagement programs

- The implementation playbook can support education actors with different use cases, including:

    – Aligning parental engagement policies or strategies with guide's evidence-based principles; and

    – Determining the viability and relevance of parental engagement programs for specific contexts and deciding whether worth investing resources to adapt new programs.

Introduction

- Parents play an important role in a child's learning, providing motivation, guidance, and supervision.

- However, psychological, informational, and time constraints often prevent greater parental engagement.

- Programs which address these barriers by providing relevant information about parents' roles in education, school quality, students' academic levels, students' health problems, financial aid, and wage returns can increase parent engagement, student motivation, and learning.

- Three case studies:
  - Young 1ove
  - Papás al Día
  - Tips by Text

Section 1: Theory of Change

- **Problem:** Parents face diverse demands on their time and are uninformed about their children's performance in school and unable to adequately participate in their learning

- **Input:** Text messages and/or phone calls to share information on school progress and tips on learning activities they can perform with their child text messages, with content adapted to learning level of the child

- **Output:** Parents gain awareness of their child's progress and are involved in the learning process; children perform better in school

- **Outcome:** Parents gain agency and can more confidently support their child's learning; children's learning levels are increased

Section 2: Targeting and Participant Selection

- **Building trust:** Engaging in credibility and trust-building activities before program rollout; sensitizing participants to the program in advance; and understanding how enrolled participants might perceive the messages and adapting accordingly.

- **Enrollment:** Maximizing program participation through government-led implementation and choosing an enrollment strategy that includes collecting phone numbers and ensuring backup channels.

- **Targeting:** Prioritizing the lowest-performing children and tailoring content if there's learning variance among students.

- **Participant:** Identifying which caregiver is best positioned to actively participate in the child's learning outside of school.

Section 3: Program Components

- **Standardized versus tailored content:** Standardizing content streamlines staff training, generally requires fewer technological inputs, and less staff time to implement, while adaptive or tailored pedagogy may increase program effectiveness.

- **Materials/Resources:** Consider what technological platform to use based on available resources, contextual realities, and alignment with the program's goals, such as using a one-way messaging platform versus two-way messaging or phone calls.

- **Timing:** Implementers may want to draw from a pilot implementation phase or routine participant feedback to identify the frequency and times of day and days of the week in the local context that maximize likelihood of parents and children being available to engage with learning content.

- **Languages:** Providing intervention content in the broadest range of languages that beneficiaries may be most comfortable in may be most useful.

Section 4: Implementation Conditions

- **Family and societal context:** Parental engagement programs have been found to be most effective in contexts where families are facing stressful circumstances or where parents have severe bandwidth constraints.

- **Data availability:** Programs that involve providing parents information on student progress depend on metrics collected through report cards, attendance books, and student behavior records. Implementers should consider the availability of this data or plan for creating systems to track student progress metrics.

- **Implementation staff:** Feasibility, staffing levels, and effectiveness of the intervention can vary depending on the staff engaged depending on the incremental demands placed on their time.

- **Cultural factors:** Consider cultural factors based on information provided to parents about their poor grades or attendance.

Section 5: Monitoring and Evaluation

- Collecting qualitative and quantitative data along the program's theory of change

- Can help ensure implementation fidelity and progress towards overall outcomes

Specific metrics will vary depending on the program

Parental engagement	• Call completion rates • Response rates to text messages • Changes in parent knowledge, behavior at home, and/or feelings of empowerment to support their child's learning.
Parent/child satisfaction	• Program dropout rates • Parent/child satisfaction with the program through surveys or messages sent back from parents
Implementation fidelity	• # calls made and parents reached • # text messages delivered or opened/read (depending on the capabilities of the chosen platform)
Learning outcomes	• Performance on math and reading assessments (adapted for mode of implementation, e.g. text or phone)

Section 6: Cost Considerations

- Potential to be low-cost given inexpensive delivery methods such as phone calls or text messages
  - Especially if there are existing system-wide communication channels with households

- Varies based on context, existing resources/educational content in the system, and the mode of delivery

- Common categories: technology, delivery model, and collecting contact information

Key takeaways

- Research indicates parental engagement can be a low-cost approach to supporting learning
  - Including to combat Covid-induced learning loss

- Effective implementation contingent on many factors including
  - Enrolling the right learners
  - Identifying ideal times of day and days of the week to engage parents

- If parental engagement seems right for your context, consider:
  - Connecting with implementers to learn the granular details of the program
  - Developing or gaining access to content from partners
  - Adapting programs, e.g. from an NGO model to gov't-ld model, and piloting

Menti Question 1

For what purpose would you use the Guidance on Evidence-Based Parental Engagement Approaches on the FLN Hub? / Comment utiliseriez-vous Conseils sur les approches d'engagement parental fondées sur des données probantes du FLN Hub? / ¿Con qué propósito usaría Orientación sobre enfoques de participación de los padres basados en la evidencia en FLN Hub?

- Research / Recherche / Investigar
- Training / Formation / Capacitación
- Policy-making / Élaboration de politiques / Formulación de políticas
- Other / Autre / Otro

Menti Question 2

Are these resources relevant for your contexts? Ces ressources sont-elles pertinentes à vos contextes? / ¿Son estos recursos relevantes para sus contextos?

- Yes / Oui / Si
- No / Non
- Maybe / Peut-être / Quizás

Menti Question 3

If you were to implement parental engagement in your contexts, which other types of resources would you like? / Si vous deviez mettre en œuvre des programmes d'engagement parental dans vos contextes, quels autres types de ressources aimeriez-vous? / Si tuviera que implementar programas de participación de los padres en sus contextos, ¿qué otro tipo de recursos le gustaría?

- Videos / Vidéos / Vídeos
- Case studies / D'études de cas / Estudios de casos
- Technical documents / Documents techniques / Documentos técnicos
- Sample materials / D'exemples de matériels / Materiales de muestra
- Other /Autre / Otro

Q&A and Discussion

Closing remarks

- We encourage you to visit the following resources:
  - Parental engagement implementation playbook
  - J-PAL parental engagement policy insight

- As a follow up, we plan to circulate a feedback survey with today's webinar recording and slide deck

- Please feel free to reach us at JPAL_Education@povertyactionlab.org to stay in touch

Thank you

JPAL_Education@povertyactionlab.org