



J-PAL

ABDUL LATIF JAMEEL POVERTY ACTION LAB

Lessons from the Teaching at the Right Level Evidence

What we know and what we still need to learn

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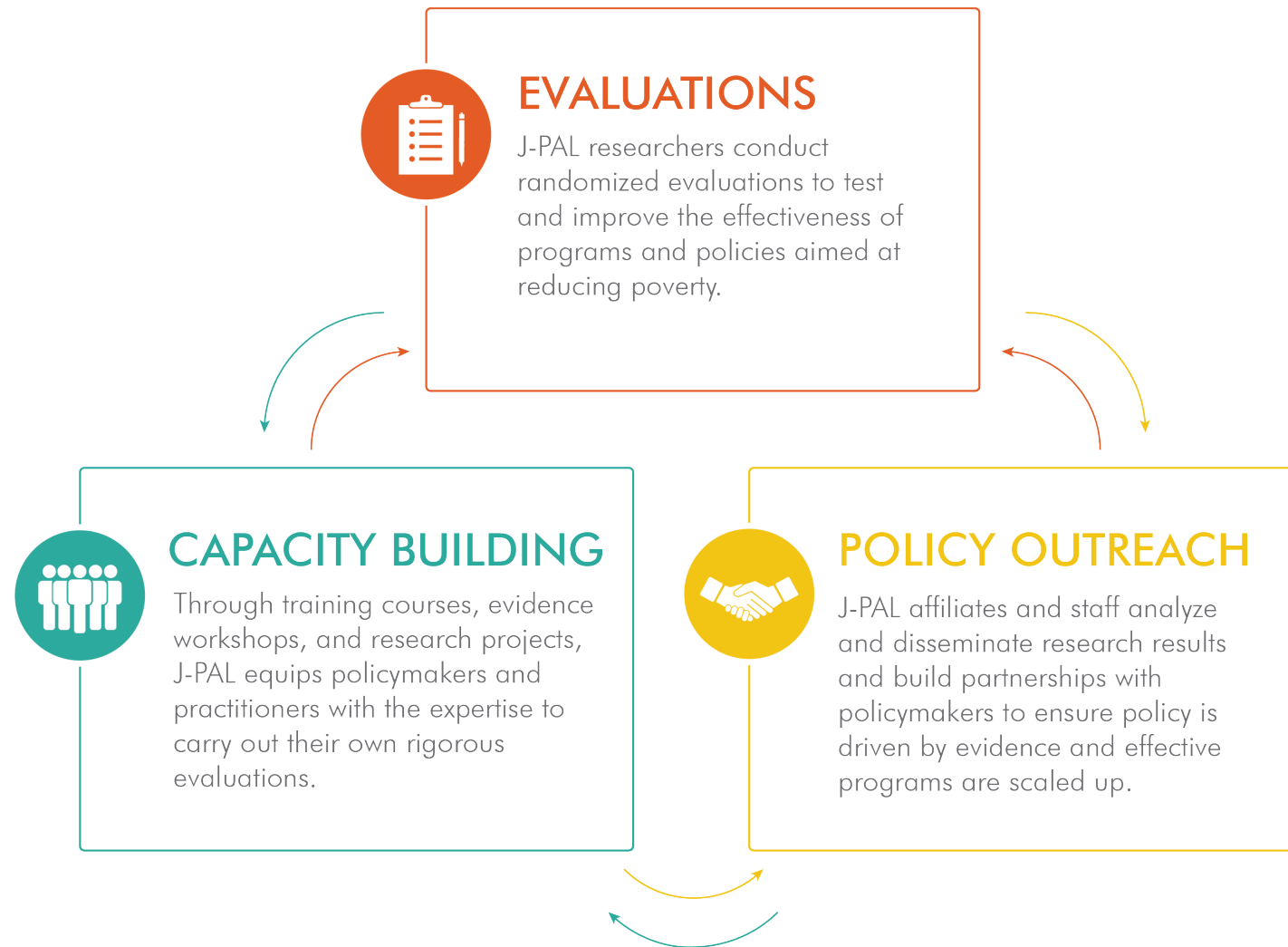
Outline

1. Who is J-PAL?
2. Schooling for all and learning for few
 1. The learning crisis
 2. Evidence on inputs
 3. Education Systems
3. Schooling for all and learning for all
 1. Teaching at the Right Level evidence
4. New contexts
5. TaRL learning agenda

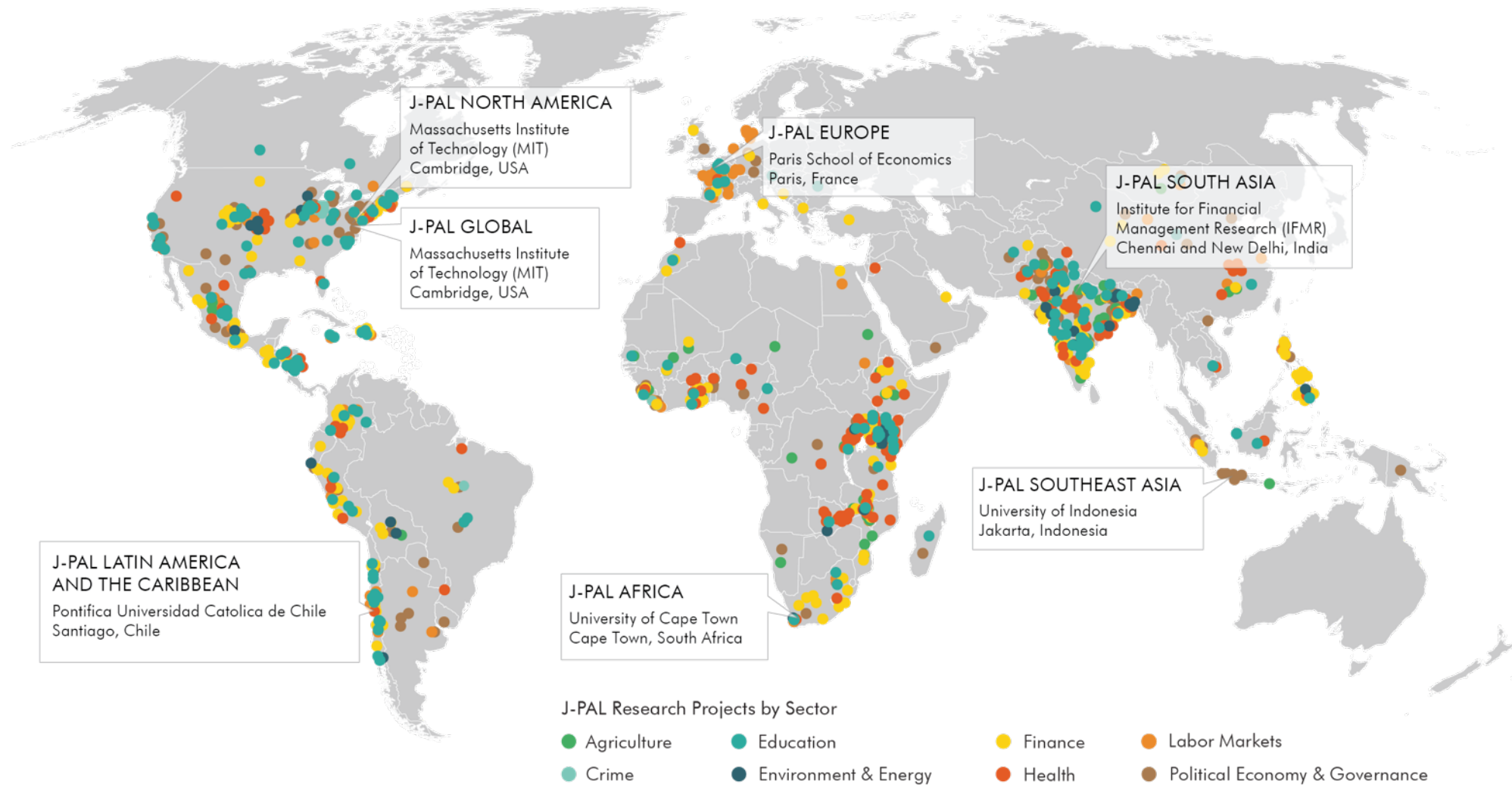


Who is J-PAL?

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



J-PAL's Global Reach: Over 940 evaluations with over 230 completed or ongoing evaluations in education

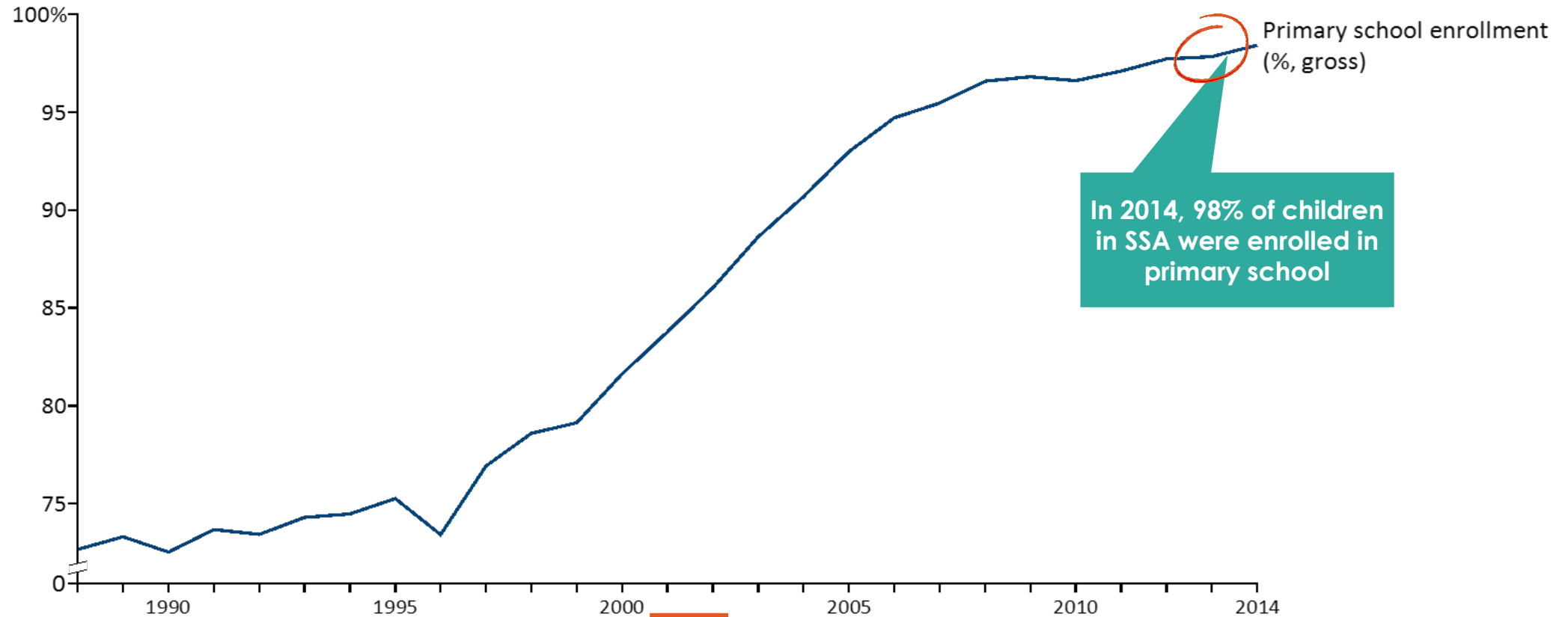




Schooling for all and learning for few

Focus on increasing schooling has led to high enrollment rates across Africa

PRIMARY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT LEVELS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, 1970-2014



“By 2008, the average low-income country was enrolling students in primary school at nearly the same rate as the average high-income country.” – World Development Report, 2018

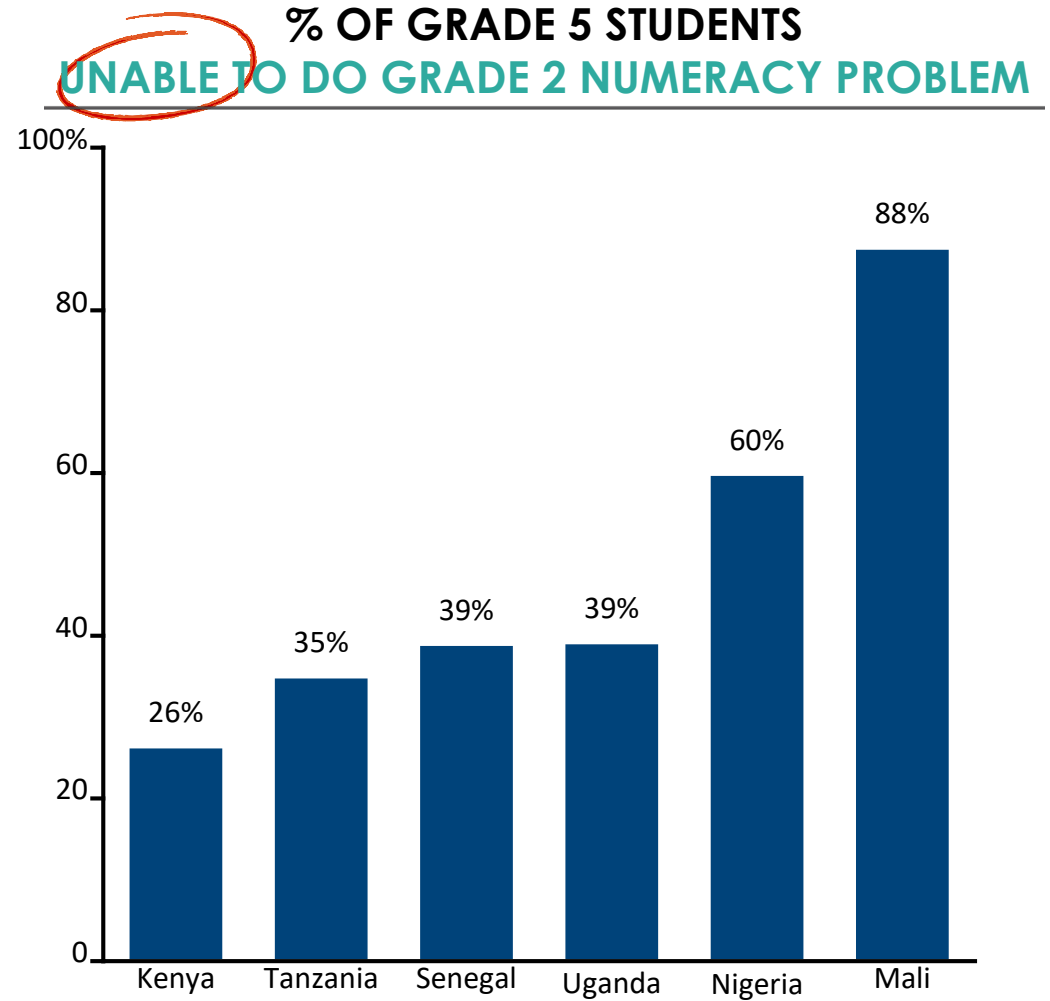


But learning levels remain shockingly low

EXAMPLE

$$7 \times 9 = ?$$

The PAL Network's ASER-type assessments find that a substantial portion of **Grade 5 students across Africa are not able to do basic arithmetic tasks**



Source: PAL Network Citizen-led Assessment for Basic Learning, http://palnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/2017_PAL_FourPager_Learning_EN.pdf

Inputs alone are not sufficient

Evidence suggests “business as usual inputs” are not enough to increase learning outcomes



- [Flipcharts in Kenya](#), [flexible grants in Niger](#), [libraries in India](#), [text books in Kenya](#) and [anticipated grants in Zambia](#) and India all had no impact on test scores



- [Extra teachers in Kenya](#) which reduced the class size has no impact on test scores



- Providing [extra computers in Columbia](#) and Peru had no impact on test scores



Input study reveals that education systems tend to serve top performing learners

- Text book provision **did not** increase **average test scores**, or reduce repetition rates or dropout rates
- Textbook provision **did increase** test scores for those in **top 40% of the class**



Education systems tend to serve top performing learners

- Systems serve top performing learners
 - High stakes primary leaving exams
 - Teachers must target their lessons to large classes with wide range of learning levels
 - Emphasis on covering official material rather than learning basic competencies
- Top students receive the attention
 - Parents and teachers focus effort on top students
 - Self-fulfilling prophecy: kids who miss something early on never catch up





Schooling for all is on its way to being achieved, but what about every child learning?



Small fraction of the student population is being well served

All children learning well

This change seems obvious but is incredibly hard to bring to fruition in schools and systems across the world.

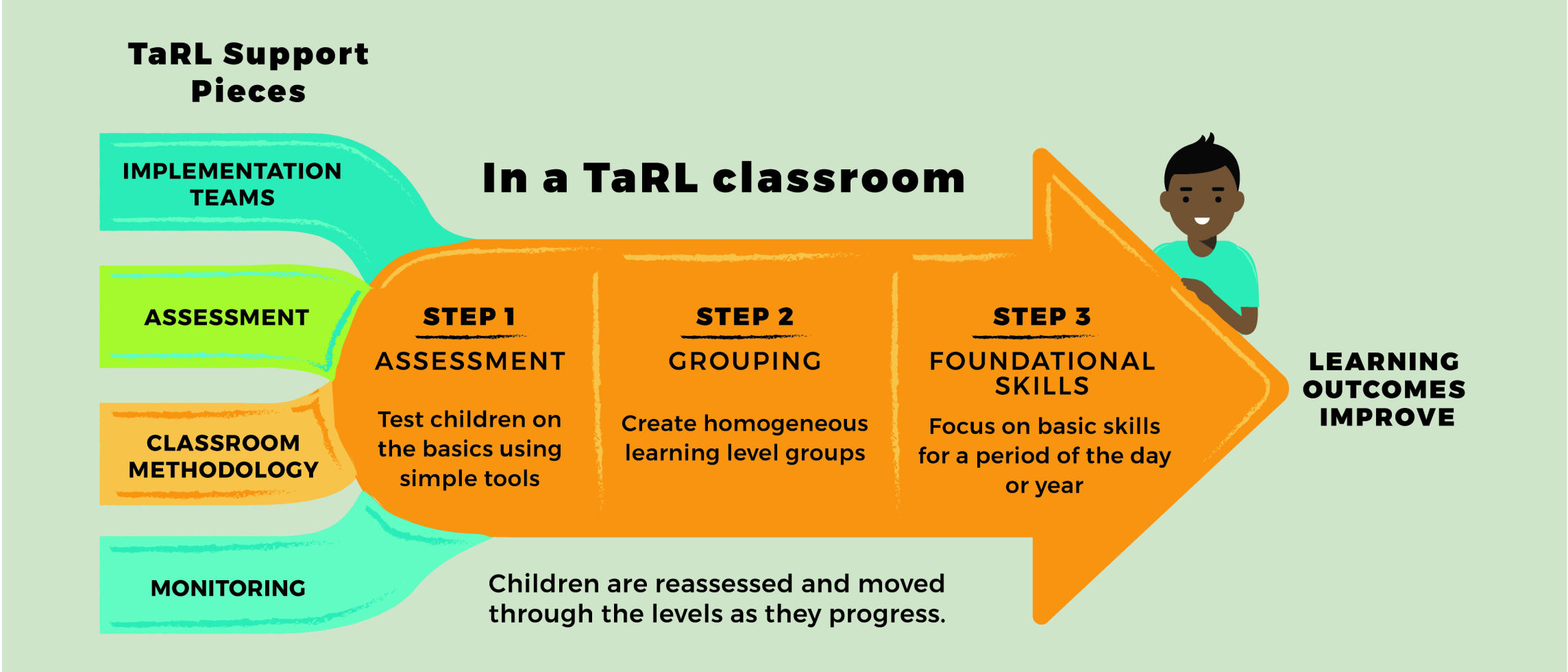
Note: Diagram of students (orange & gray) is illustrative
Source: For detailed figures on SSA student proficiency, see: UNESCO Institute for Statistics: Fact Sheet No. 46 September 2017 UIS/FS/2017/ED/46








Schooling for all and learning for all



The Teaching at the Right Level Approach



Moving from a “Schooling for all” mindset to “Learning for all”

	Business as usual		Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL)
GOAL	Goal is to complete the grade level textbook.		Clearly articulated goals for basic reading and arithmetic. Goal is to ensure basic foundational skills for all .
TRAINING & MENTORING	Resource persons as trainers. Hardly any follow up after training.		“Leaders of practice” created via “learning by doing. Select Government cadre “practice” the approach for 20-25 days and taste “success”, then train teachers and provide ongoing on-site monitoring and mentoring.
GROUPING	Full class teaching at grade level.		Children grouped by level rather than by grade for instruction. Children move quickly from one group to next as they progress. “Teaching at the Right Level” .
TEACHING & ACTIVITIES	“Chalk and talk”. Textbook driven.		Simple framework of daily activities that can be adapted as children progress. (CAMaL – Combined Activities for Maximized Learning) . Activities in big groups, small groups and individually. Children learn to work in groups.
ASSESSMENT – MEASUREMENT – DATA – REVIEW	Pen-paper grade level test done at the beginning of a phase and at the end.		Simple quick one-on-one oral assessment used at start for grouping. Similar assessment used periodically to track progress. Data discussion and review at all levels. Aggregate school or class-level data used to propel program not child-wise data.

For 15+ years, J-PAL and Pratham have collaborated to evolve a strong TaRL approach through experimentation and learning



Proof of concept

2001-2003

"Balsakhi" program; Pratham community volunteer "pull out" remedial program in urban schools

2008

In-school one month gov't teacher-led summer camp with support by rural village volunteers



2012-2013

Teacher-led model; onsite mentoring by gov't academic officials

2012-2013

2000



2005

2005-2006

Village volunteers conducted community classes for rural primary school children



Scalable Solutions

2010

2008-2010

In-school gov't teacher-led learning improvement program & support by Pratham volunteers (rural)



2015

2013-2014

"Learning Camps" in gov't primary schools; led by Pratham teams supported by village volunteers



Proof of Concept

- Idea of targeted instruction found to be effective in different contexts through different implementation models.
- Challenges of “take-up” running the program out of school

Aim to develop a model that can be implemented through government school system

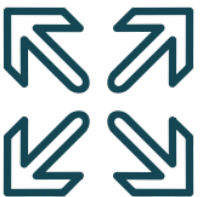




Scalable Solutions : Teacher led, during & after school Bihar and Uttarakhand, India (2008 -2010)

- Teachers provided with TaRL Material (Bihar & Uttarakhand)
 - Results: No impact
- Teachers provided with TaRL training and material (Bihar & Uttarakhand)
 - Results: No impact
- Teachers provided with training, material and volunteers for two hours a day
 - Uttarakhand: adopted in school → no impact
 - Bihar: adopted afterschool → 0.13 sd

Teaching at the Right Level is not just a teacher training program.

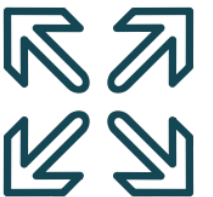




Scalable Solutions : Teacher led holiday camp

Summer Camps –Bihar, India (2008)

- One-month holiday camp for children grades 3-5, organised by initial learning levels ([Duflo et al 2010](#))
- Approximately 40 hours of instruction
- Special characteristics :
 - Teachers free from normal curriculum
 - Dedicated time and space
 - However, low take-up
- Result: 0.09 s.d. increase in Hindi despite only 23% student attendance

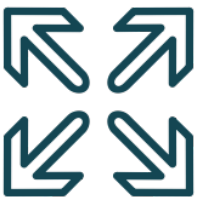




Scalable Solutions : Teacher led, during school

Regrouping by ability not age –Haryana, India (2012-2013)

- For one hour a day students in grades 3-5 were re-grouped according to ability level not age and taught Hindi at their ability level. ([Duflo et al 2013](#))
- 130 hours of instruction for language
- Special characteristics:
 - Intensive monitor training
 - Dedicated time
 - Grouping across grades 3-5
 - Pratham provides training and additional monitoring
- Results:
 - 0.15 standard deviation increase in Hindi reading test scores
 - Gains were the largest for the weakest students

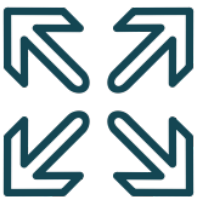




Scalable Solutions: Tutor/Volunteer Approach

Pratham Volunteers provide short burst of TaRL tuition –Uttar Pradesh India (2013-2014)

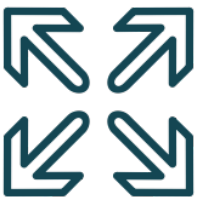
- The programmes took place for bursts of time (two sets of 20 day bursts or 4 sets of 10 day bursts for 3 hours a day during school time.)
- 75 hours of instruction for reading and 75 hours of instruction for maths
- Results:
 - Huge gains(0.7 s.d.in Hindi and math)
 - Effect of “pure” TaRL model
 - Cost effective (driven by huge gains)
- Special characteristics:
 - Intensive camp model
 - Dedicated time
 - Grouping across grade 3-5





Sustainable & Scalable Models

- Teacher can be effective implementers
 - if provided with a dedicated time for TaRL lesson and a lot of mentoring and monitoring support
 - Material and teacher training is not enough
 - You may need to build in more time
- Bursts of TaRL focused time throughout the year provided by volunteers and experienced staff can have a large impact on learning outcomes





Mubotu-
Muana
Ci Si
Kulobota
Baleendo
Basiako
Kujia
Cikob

Kulobota Cesu

New Contexts

TaRL's applicability to new contexts

1. Children learn faster when the level of instruction is at their level.
2. Teachers find it hard to teach across many levels in one class.



LOCAL
CONDITIONS
AND FAILURES



GENERALIZED
LESSONS ON
BEHAVIOR



LOCAL
IMPLEMENTATION



LEARNING LEVELS
RISE

1. Children in school but poor learning.
2. High variation of learning.
3. Teachers focus on completing curricula.
4. Many children far below curricula.

1. Children grouped by learning levels for part of day or year.
2. Teachers teach to the level of group.
3. Children are assessed and move to new group when mastered a skill.

Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) Africa

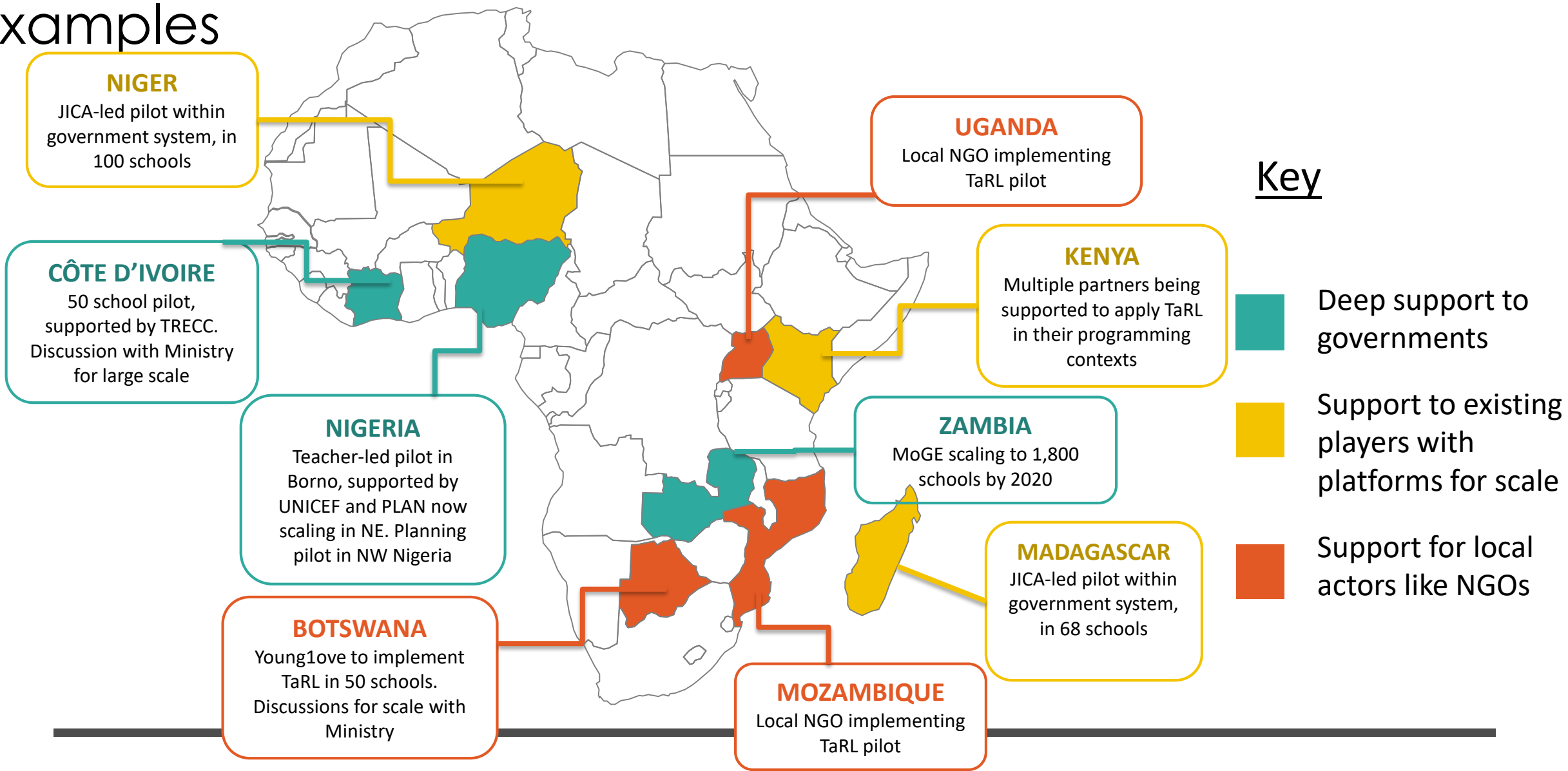
Supporting partners working to address the learning crisis in primary schools in Africa through the evidence-based TaRL approach.



- Joint TaRL Africa central team to support across countries
- Three types of country-level support
 1. TaRL Africa country teams in select countries directly supporting governments
 2. Supporting partners working with governments
 3. Growing network of NGOs working on TaRL
- Creating a platform for governments & other partners to share lessons across countries
- Building a learning agenda to support efforts and improve effectiveness



TaRL Africa support already spread to 10+ countries, some examples



Contextualizing TaRL

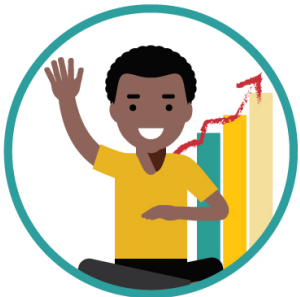
Working on getting the programmatic details right



- In the classroom
 - Lesson preparation and structure
 - Class size and space



- Support
 - The importance of the coach of the coach
 - Transportation barriers



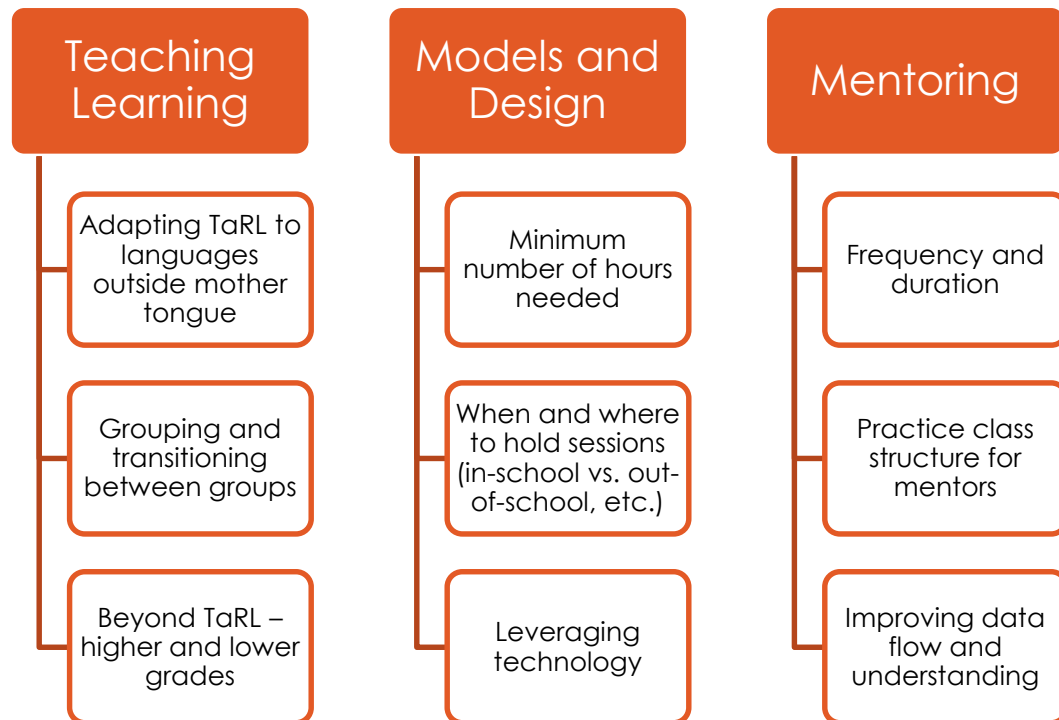
- Data, reflection and review
 - Data entry and flow challenges



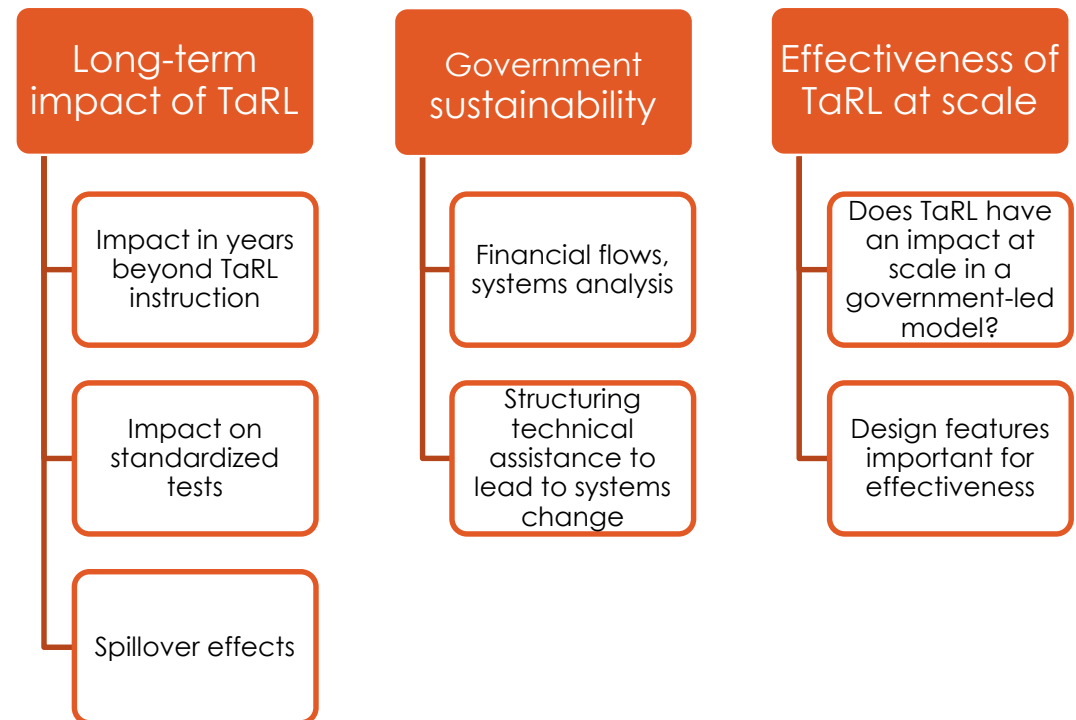
Learning agenda

Learning topics

Programmatic themes



Systems-level themes

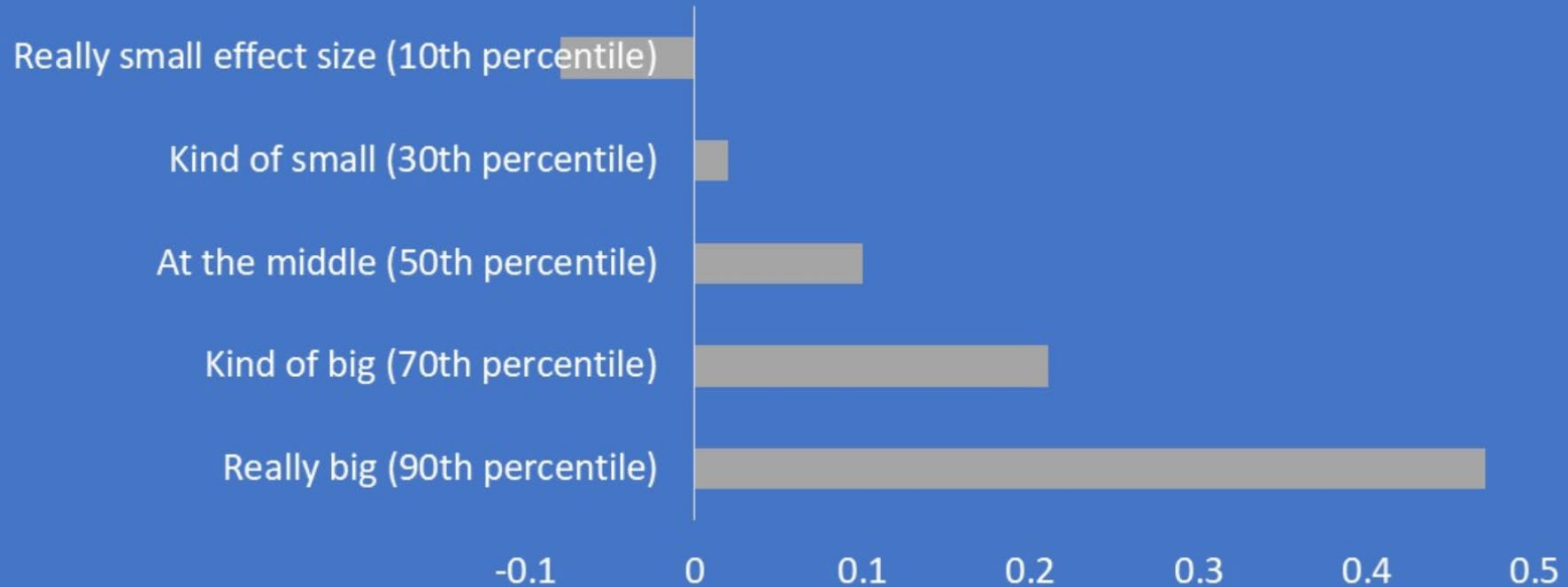


Thank you

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How Much of a Difference Do Most Education Interventions Make?



Source: Adapted from Kraft, "Interpreting Effect Sizes of Education Interventions," EdWorkingPaper No. 19-10, 2019. Based on 747 randomized controlled trials in education.

The Five Factors to Consider When You See the Impact of an Education Intervention

Does the study measure a causal impact (not just a correlation)?

What kind of test was used to measure the impact and when?

Was the impact measured for a sample of the general population or a targeted group?

How much did the intervention cost?

Was it a small pilot or implemented at scale?