

Activating Parental Managerial Capital: How Role Clarity Improves Education Outcomes

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- ▶ In practice: routines, monitoring, study time, and reducing distractions.
- ▶ *Can activating this overlooked role improve student outcomes?*

This paper

- ▶ Studies 8th-grade students and their parents in Benin.
- ▶ Documents a large gap between the educational role parents endorse and the practices they implement.
- ▶ Designs a low-cost phone-based intervention that:
 1. makes parents' managerial role salient;
 2. provides concrete, feasible recommendations;
 3. supports parents through implementation challenges.
- ▶ Estimates impacts on parental practices, student effort, learning, grade completion, and dropout.

Preview of findings

1. Parents endorse a managerial role, but implementation is low.
2. The intervention narrows this role-action gap.
3. Parents become better informed about their child's academic standing.
4. Students improve test scores, GPA, and grade completion.
5. Dropout falls one year after the intervention for girls and students whose parents are illiterate.

Contribution 1: Household managerial capital

- ▶ Management practices explain productivity differences across firms.

Bloom & Van Reenen 2007, 2010; Beg et al. 2023

- ▶ This paper brings that logic inside the household.
- ▶ I define **parental managerial capital** as parents' ability to organize, monitor, and sustain children's educational effort.
- ▶ This identifies parental managerial capital as a missing input in human capital production
- ▶ This also identifies a channel through which inequality may persist beyond differences in school access or household resources

Contribution 2: From information to implementation

- ▶ A large literature studies parental information and beliefs.

Dizon-Ross 2019; Barrera-Osorio et al. 2020; Bergman 2021; Rogers & Feller 2018

- ▶ This paper shows that information is partly endogenous to parental management:
 - ▶ parents who monitor effort learn more about academic standing;
 - ▶ parents who do not monitor remain poorly informed.
- ▶ The intervention does not provide child-specific performance information.
- ▶ Instead, it helps parents act on responsibilities they already endorse by reducing attention and implementation frictions.

Madrian 2014; Abel et al. 2019

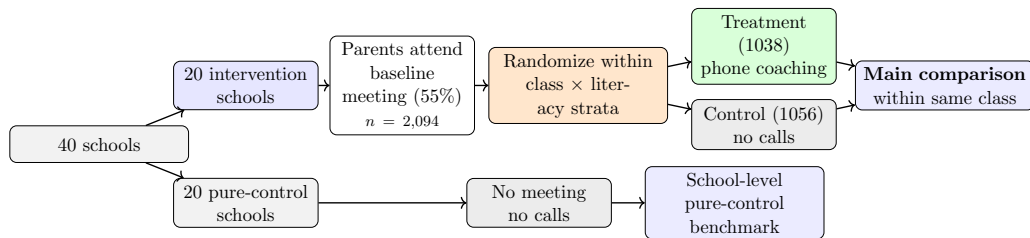
- ▶ This matters especially where direct academic support is constrained by low literacy.

Lieberman et al. 2014; Bjorvatn et al. 2025

Context: Why Parental Management May Matter

- ▶ Students remain in fixed classroom groups across all subjects
 - ▶ same teachers, tests, and grading environment
- ▶ Promotion is based on performance accumulated throughout the year
 - ▶ subject-specific tests → GPAs → grade completion
- ▶ Parent–school communication is limited, and many parents have little formal education
 - ▶ direct academic support at home/private tutoring is difficult
- ▶ Parents nevertheless control a key input into learning:
 - ▶ children's time outside school—routines, chores, study time, and attendance

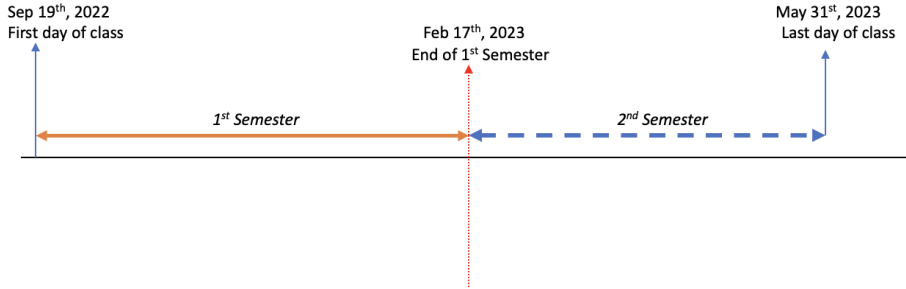
2-Stage Randomization: Schools First, Parents Within Class Second



Key point: treatment assignment occurs among parents in the same classroom; pure-control schools provide a separate untreated benchmark.

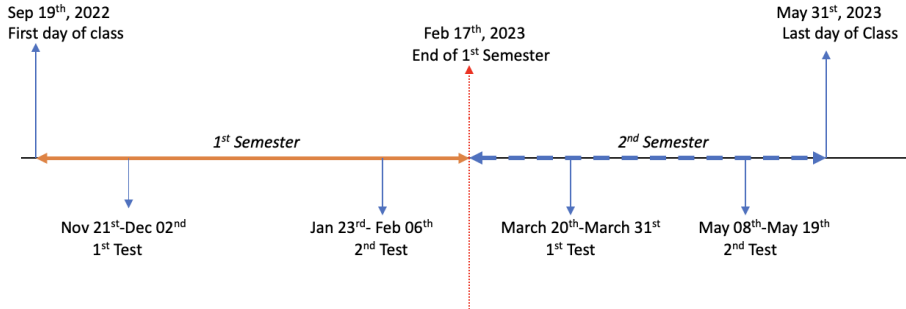
Timeline

Figure 1: Timeline of Activities



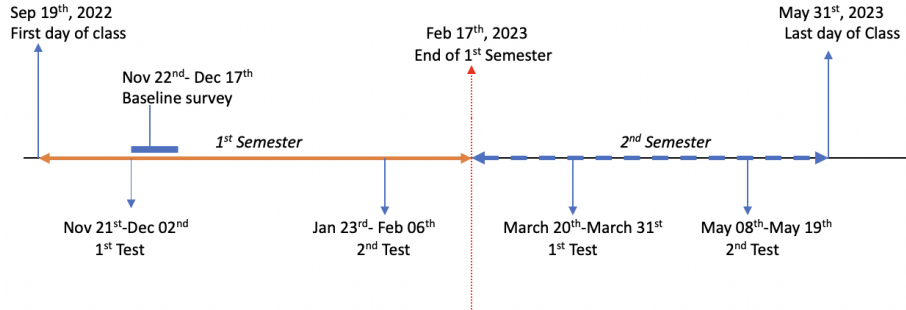
Timeline

Figure 2: Timeline of Activities



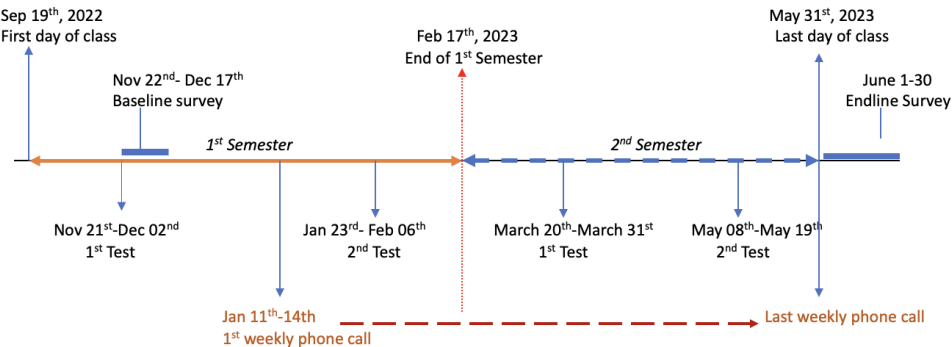
Timeline

Figure 3: Timeline of Activities



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Figure 4: Timeline of Activities



Outcomes and Data Sources

Intervention schools

- ▶ **Parent surveys:** baseline and endline
 - ▶ managerial practices and knowledge of academic standing
- ▶ **Student survey:** endline
 - ▶ study effort, routines, and parental involvement
- ▶ **School administrative data**
 - ▶ subject-specific tests in both semesters
 - ▶ absenteeism
 - ▶ annual GPA and grade completion
 - ▶ enrollment one year later

Pure-control schools

- ▶ Annual GPA
- ▶ Grade completion

Used to assess spillovers within intervention schools

Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Household head is father	0.73	0.44
Household size	6.02	2.24
Mother years of schooling	2.29	3.57
Father years of schooling	4.9	4.75
Survey respondent is literate	0.49	0.5
Number of household members with some secondary education	1.56	1.36
Local language is spoken at home	0.98	0.13
Household has electricity(including solar)	0.76	0.43
Household has a mobile phone	0.97	0.16
Household has a television or radio	0.75	0.43
Household has a study table	0.55	0.5
Number of students		2094

Measuring the Role–Action Gap

- ▶ For each parent, I measure four concrete parental roles:

$$d \in \{\text{attendance, academic progress, review, notebooks}\}$$

- ▶ For each domain, I ask two linked questions:

1. **Role endorsement:** Whose responsibility is it to ensure that the student attends school regularly?

Coded as one when the respondent assigns responsibility to the parent among others.

2. **Action implementation:** does the parent report taking the corresponding action?

- ▶ The key object is the share of domains where parents endorse the role but do not implement the action:

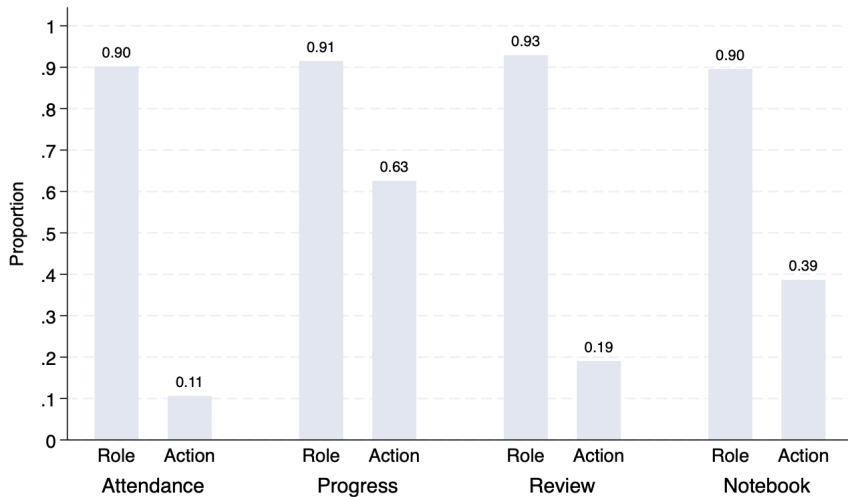
$$G_i = \frac{1}{4} \sum_d \mathbf{1}\{R_{id} = 1, P_{id} = 0\}$$

- ▶ This captures a role–action gap, not a lack of concern for education.

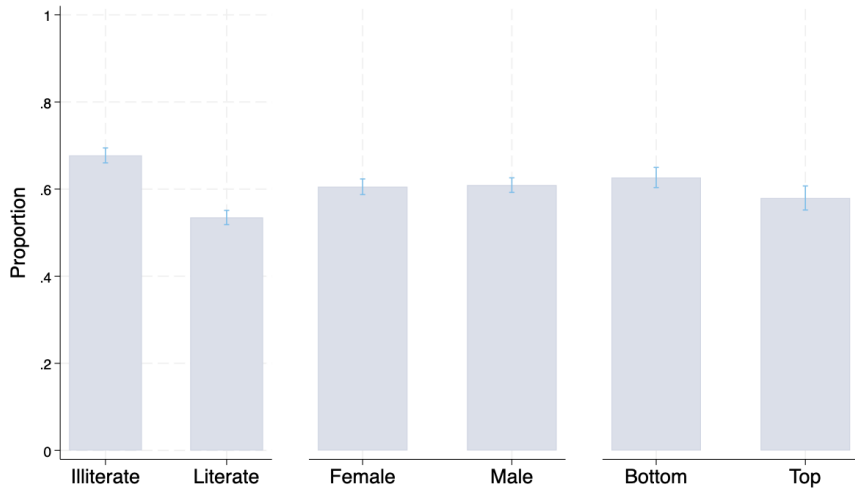
Four Role–Action Pairs

Domain	Role endorsement	Implementation
Attendance	Parent says they are responsible for ensuring attendance	Parent checks or visits the school to check on attendance
Academic progress	Parent says they are responsible for tracking performance	Parent asks the child about test scores
Review	Parent says they are responsible for ensuring study and review	Parent organizes or checks study time
Notebooks	Parent says they are responsible for checking notebooks	Parent checks notebooks or school materials

Fact 1: Large Role–Implementation Gap: r_{id} and p_{id}



Unmet-Responsibility Wedge Larger for Disadvantaged Groups: G_i^{unmet}



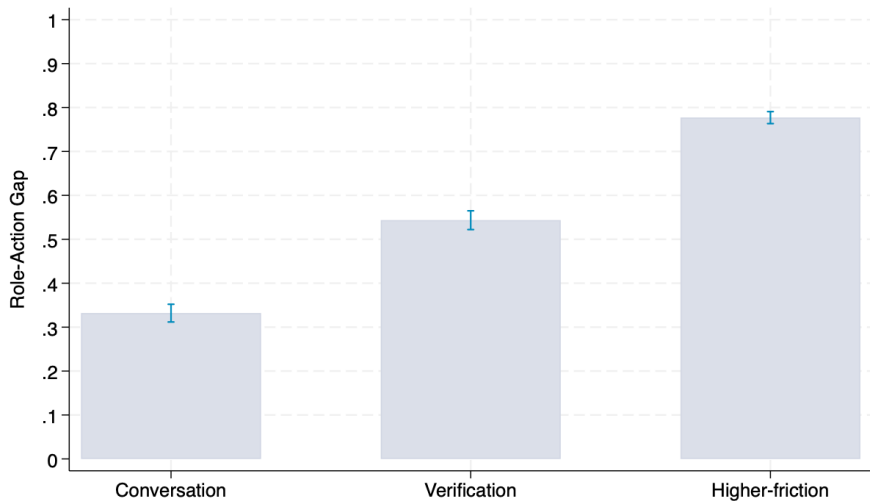
Some Actions Are Harder to Implement Than Others

- ▶ The previous slides document a role–action gap across four domains.
- ▶ But the four domains have different implementation costs

Conversation	Verification	Higher-friction actions
Ask about test scores	Check notebooks	Set study routines, visit school to check attendance
Requires conversation at home	Requires observation at home	Requires coordination and sustained follow-up at home and at school

Prediction: the role–action gap should be largest for higher-friction actions.

The Gap Increases with Implementation Difficulty



Intervention: Targeted Frictions

- ▶ Structured phone-based coaching sessions over four months
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 - ▶ Implementation frictions—particularly the fixed costs of getting started

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- ▶ **Step 2:** Build accountability in ways that fit the household
- ▶ **Step 3:** Discuss setbacks and troubleshoot

Intervention: What Parents Are Asked to Do

Three types of managerial actions:

► 1. Conversation

- Ask about school, test scores, and exam dates



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 - ▶ Ask about school, test scores, and exam dates
- ▶ **2. Verification**
 - ▶ Check homework, notebooks, and study effort
- ▶ **3. Higher-friction**
 - ▶ Set study routines
 - ▶ Adjust chores around exams
 - ▶ Contact schools/teachers/attendance



What the Intervention Did Not Provide

- ▶ No child-specific grades, test scores, attendance records, or ranking information
- ▶ No direct academic tutoring for parents or students
- ▶ No financial incentives or school subsidies
- ▶ No change in teacher behavior, curriculum, or school resources

The intervention changed how parents managed time and effort, not the state information or resources available to them.

Treatment Delivery and Take-up

- Treatment exposure was high and similar across parental literacy and student gender.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	All	Literate	Illiterate	Boys	Girls
Mean					
Number of successful calls	9.78	9.85	9.7	9.75	9.81
Success rate	87.2	87.7	86.7	87.1	87.3
Observations	1038	508	530	540	498

- 5.5 Minutes per call on average
- Around an hour in total

Empirical Strategy

$$Y_{ics} = \alpha + \beta Treat_{ics} + \gamma Y_{i0} + X_i' \delta + \lambda_{cs} + \varepsilon_{ics}$$

- ▶ i indexes students/parents, c classes, and s literacy strata
- ▶ $Treat_{ics}$ equals one if the parent was assigned to phone coaching
- ▶ λ_{cs} are class $\times$ literacy-stratum fixed effects
 - ▶ treatment and control are compared within the randomization strata
- ▶ Y_{i0} controls for baseline performance when available
- ▶ X_i are selected using double post-LASSO
- ▶ Standard errors clustered at the student level

Results: Role-Action Gap Decreases

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Conversation	Verification	Higher-friction	Overall index
Treatment	-0.09*** (0.016)	-0.11*** (0.021)	-0.06*** (0.014)	-0.08*** (0.011)
Control Mean	0.20	0.49	0.57	0.46
Observations	1,921	1,918	1,921	1,921

Results: Increased actions implementation

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Conversation	Verification	Higher-friction	Overall index
Panel A: Four Canonical Actions				
Treatment	0.11*** (0.017)	0.12*** (0.022)	0.06*** (0.014)	0.09*** (0.011)
Control Mean	0.77	0.46	0.37	0.50
Observations	1,921	1,921	1,921	1,921
Panel B: Full Set of Actions				
Treatment	0.11*** (0.012)	0.11*** (0.015)	0.06*** (0.013)	0.09*** (0.009)
Control Mean	0.76	0.59	0.34	0.54
Observations	1,921	1,921	1,921	1,921

Change in Allocation of Household Chores

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Students Doing Fewer Chores (Percentage points)	Parents Doing More Chores (Percentage points)	Siblings Doing More Chores (Percentage points)
Panel A: Parents Survey			
Treatment	0.11*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)	0.04** (0.02)
Control Mean	0.35	0.26	0.14
Observations	1,940	1,940	1,940
Panel B: Students Survey			
Treatment	0.14*** (0.02)	0.07*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)
Control Mean	0.37	0.21	0.19
Observations	1,902	1,902	1,902

Absenteeism Falls and Parental Knowledge Improves

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Absent at least once (Indicator)	Parental error about student performance (GPA points)	Parent correct about passing/ failing (Indicator)
Treatment	-0.07*** (0.019)	-0.09** (0.04)	0.06*** (0.02)
Control Mean	0.61	0.61	0.80
Observations	2,085	903	1,921

The Intervention Improves GPA and Grade Completion

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Grade Completion (Indicator)	Year-End GPA (Standard deviations)	Second-Semester GPA (Standard deviations)	First-Semester GPA (Standard deviations)
Treatment	0.04** (0.02)	0.11** (0.05)	0.12*** (0.05)	0.07 (0.04)
Control Mean	0.68	0.00	0.00	0.01
Observations	2,076	2,056	2,056	2,094

Treatment Effects Differ Across Subjects: Pooled

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Physics (SD)	Biology (SD)	Math (SD)	French (SD)	English (SD)	H&G (SD)
Treatment	0.11*** (0.03) [0.004]	0.09*** (0.03) [0.037]	-0.02 (0.03) [0.941]	0.007 (0.028) [0.941]	0.021 (0.030) [0.421]	0.05* (0.03) [0.139]
Control Mean	0.00	0.00	-0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Observations	6,047	6,107	6,144	6,177	6,177	6,090

Subject-Level Gains Become Broader in the Second Semester

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Physics (SD)	Biology (SD)	Math (SD)	French (SD)	English (SD)	H&G (SD)
Panel A: Second Semester						
Treatment	0.10*** (0.04) [0.019]	0.09*** (0.04) [0.019]	-0.04 (0.03) [0.478]	0.019 (0.033) [0.932]	0.015 (0.035) [0.329]	0.08** (0.04) [0.023]
Control Mean	0.00	0.00	-0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Observations	4,011	4,040	4,073	4,092	4,092	4,040
Panel B: First Semester						
Treatment	0.12*** (0.04) [0.028]	0.07 (0.04) [0.307]	0.02 (0.04) [0.760]	-0.011 (0.037) [0.941]	0.017 (0.041) [0.588]	-0.01 (0.04) [0.941]
Control Mean	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01
Observations	2,036	2,067	2,071	2,085	2,085	2,050

No Evidence of Negative Spillovers

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Treated students vs. students in non-intervention schools	Control students in treated schools vs. students in non-intervention schools	All students in treated schools vs. students in non-intervention schools
Spillover	0.06*** (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.04*** (0.12)
Non-Intervention Schools Mean	0.66	0.66	0.66
Observation	5,136	5,146	6,179

Are Performance Gains Larger When Parents Have More Room to Improve?

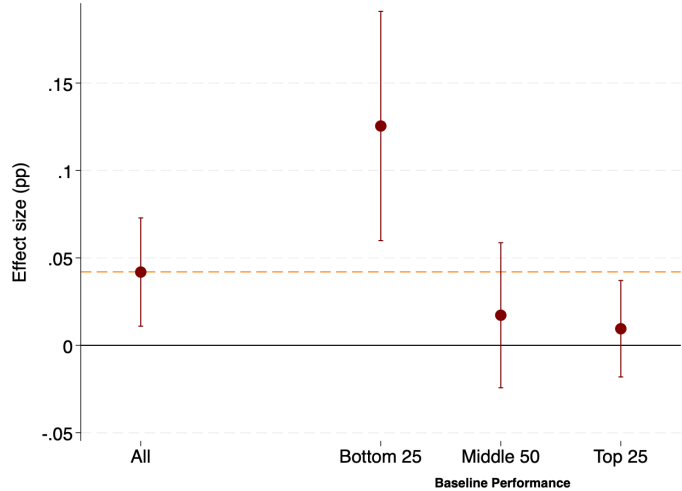
$$Y_{ics} = \alpha + \beta_1 Treat_{ics} + \beta_2 (G_{i0} - \overline{G}_0) + \beta_3 [Treat_{ics} \times (G_{i0} - \overline{G}_0)] + \gamma Y_{i0} + X_i' \delta + \lambda_{cs} + \varepsilon_{ics}$$

- ▶ G_{i0} : number of responsibilities endorsed but not implemented
- ▶ β_1 : treatment effect at the sample-average baseline gap
- ▶ β_3 : change in the treatment effect per additional unmet responsibility

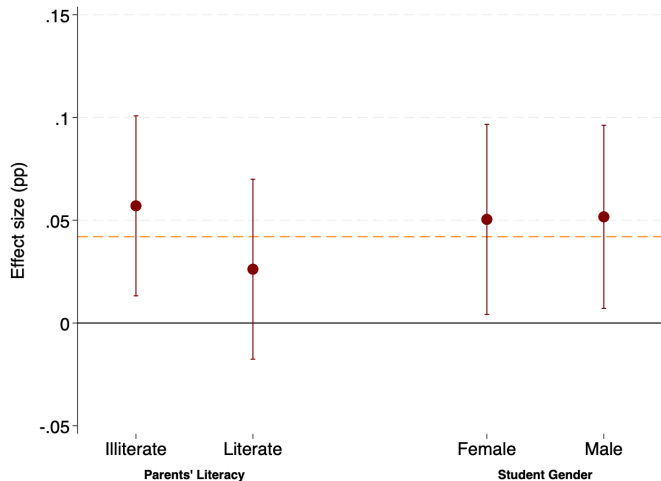
Performance Gains Do Not Increase with the Baseline Role–Action Gap

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Grade completion	Year-end GPA	Second-semester GPA	First-semester GPA
Treatment effect at sample mean	0.034** (0.016)	0.079** (0.034)	0.089** (0.037)	0.039 (0.030)
Treatment $\times$ additional unmet responsibility	-0.011 (0.014)	-0.032 (0.029)	-0.038 (0.032)	-0.016 (0.027)
Mean number of unmet responsibilities	2.43	2.44	2.44	2.44
Observations	2,076	2,056	2,056	2,094

Heterogeneity by Baseline Performance



Heterogeneity by Literacy and Student Gender



Dropout Falls Among Students Facing Greater Constraints

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Full Sample (Percentage points)	Illiterate Parents (Percentage points)	Literate Parents (Percentage points)	Female Students (Percentage points)	Male Students (Percentage points)
Treatment	-0.008 (0.012)	-0.04** (0.018)	0.03 (0.016)	-0.04** (0.018)	0.02 (0.018)
Control Mean	0.19	0.12	0.24	0.30	0.09
Observations	2,068	1,058	1,010	967	1,101
p-value		0.006		0.028	

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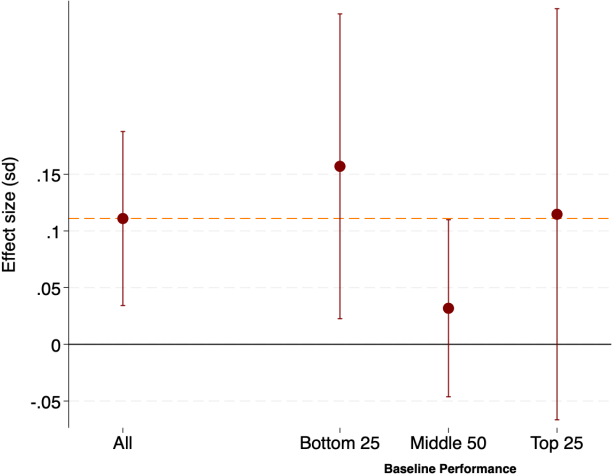
Parental managerial capital is a consequential and malleable input into human capital formation.

Thank You!

Performance Gains Do Not Increase with Baseline Implementation Deficits

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Grade completion	Year-end GPA	Second-semester GPA	First-semester GPA
Treatment effect at sample mean	0.034** (0.016)	0.079** (0.034)	0.089** (0.037)	0.039 (0.030)
Treatment $\times$ additional action not implemented	-0.005 (0.015)	-0.014 (0.031)	-0.016 (0.034)	-0.002 (0.027)
Mean number of actions not implemented	2.69	2.69	2.69	2.70
Observations	2,076	2,056	2,056	2,094

Year-End GPA



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