Beyond Short-term Learning Gains:
The Impact of Outsourcing Schools in Liberia after Three Years

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Outline

Introduction

Evaluation design

1. Learning

2. Access

3. Sustainability

4. Safety

Conclusions

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The logic of PPPs

- Overcome **efficiency-equity trade-off**:
  - Efficiency: Private schools are on average better managed than public schools (Bloom et al 2015, Muralidharan & Sundararaman 2015)
  - Equity: Fee-charging private schools may increase inequality and sorting (Hsieh & Urquiola 2006, Lucas & Mbiti 2012, Zhang 2014)

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- Overcome **financing constraints**:
  - Governments enter PPPs in large-part to raise capital.
  - NB: impacts necessarily include resource and efficiency effects.

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- Overcome **financing constraints**:
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  - NB: impacts necessarily include resource and efficiency effects.
- Contractors have incentives to cut quality on non-contracted/non-monitored processes/outcomes (Hart, Shleifer, & Vishny, 1997)
- Multi-tasking problem (Holmstrom & Milgrom, 1991): learning, safety, access, etc.

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What are “Partnership Schools”? (aka PSL, aka LEAP)

What are "Partnership Schools"? (aka PSL, aka LEAP)

- 93 schools
- free
- non-selective
- staffed by teachers on government payroll
- and managed by 8 private contractors
- with a $50 per pupil subsidy (+ fundraising)

RISING ACADEMY
NETWORK

YMCA

STREET
CHILD

OMEGA SCHOOLS
Every Child Matters

STELLA MARIS POLYTECHNIC
MONROVIA LIBERIA

brac

Bridge

MORE THAN ME

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Data

- **School:** Facilities, expenditure, management.
- **Teachers:** Socio-demographic, qualifications/experience, knowledge test.
- **Classroom observations:** Stallings
- **Students:** 20 students across all grades (2015/2016 log)
- **GBV:** 1-on-1 survey with student sample $\geq$ 12 years old

How data collection happens in reality

Experimental details

- Intention-to-treat (ITT) analysis:
  - Students sampled from 2015/16 enrollment logs, before PSL/LEAP announced
  - We track the same students over 3 rounds – regardless of where they are now

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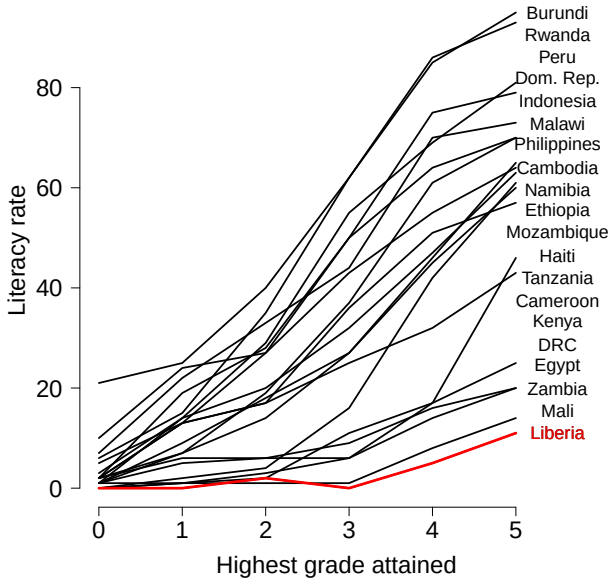
Background: low-learning levels



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   - Corporal punishment
   - Sexual violence

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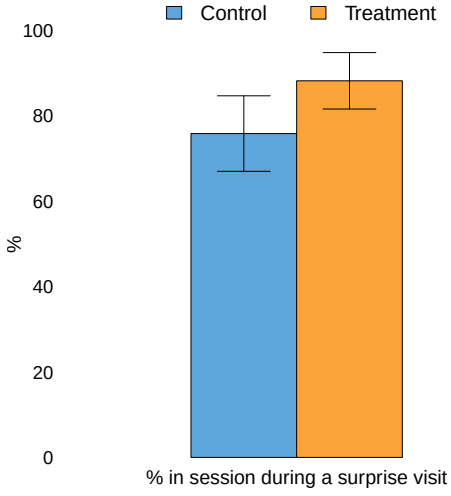
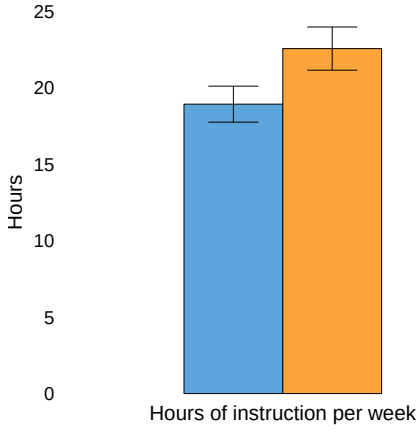
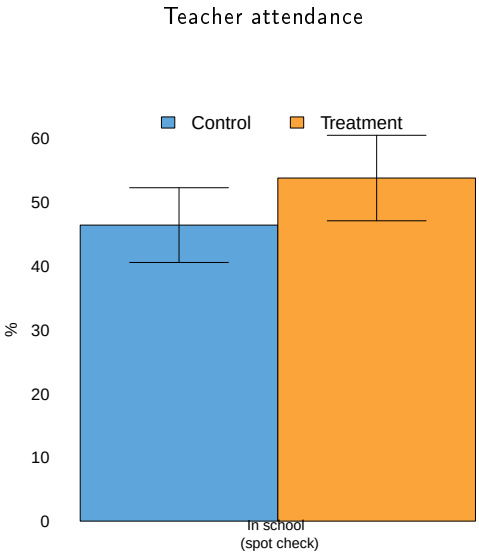
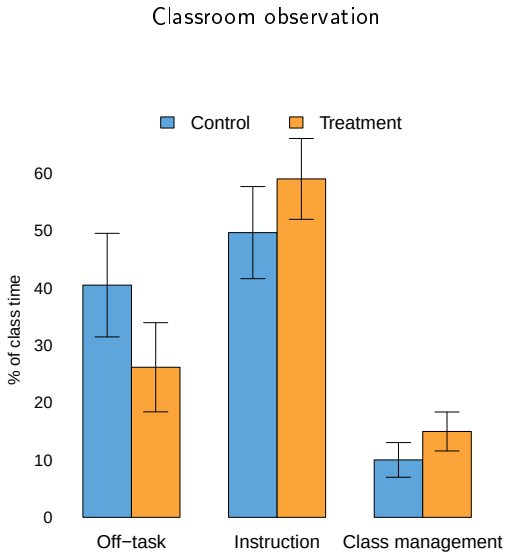
LEAP schools are more likely to be open and have more instructional time





LEAP teachers are not more likely to be in school, but quality of instruction is higher





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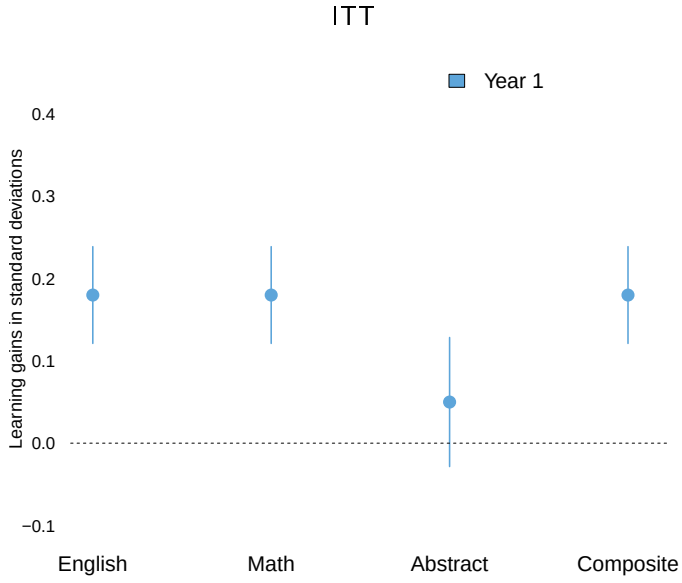
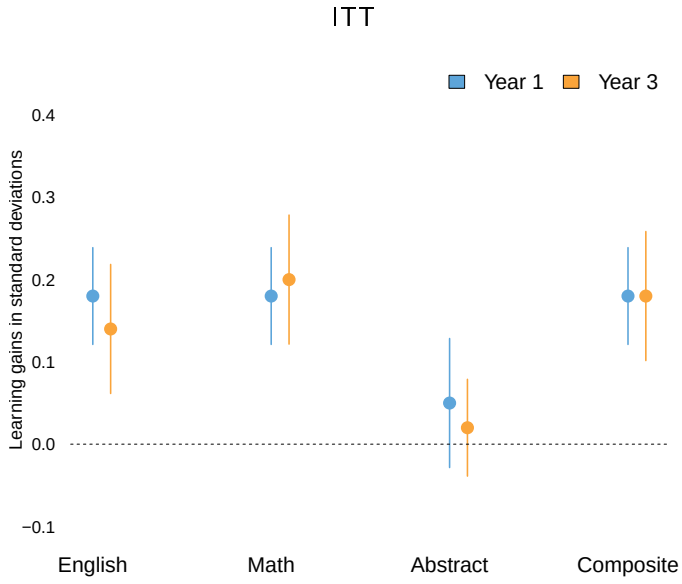
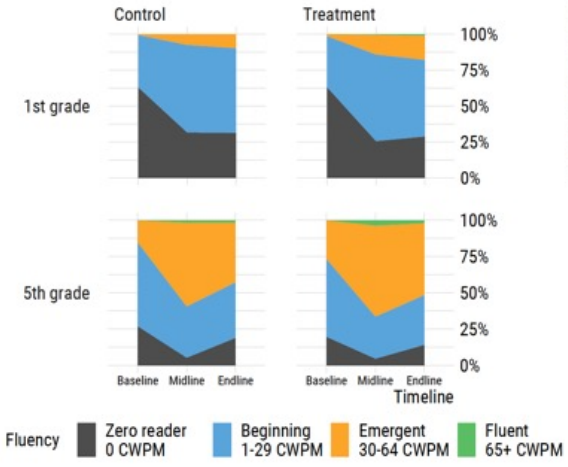
Test scores increased by .18σ in year 1...



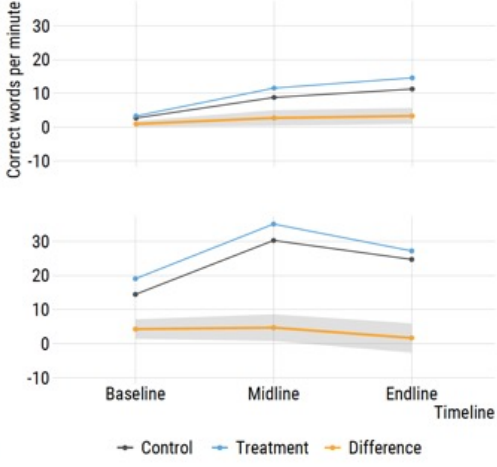
Test scores increased by .18σ in year 1. . . but flattened off since then



Reading fluency increased 2-4 words per minute



(a) Correct words per minute by fluency groups



(b) Difference between treatment and control

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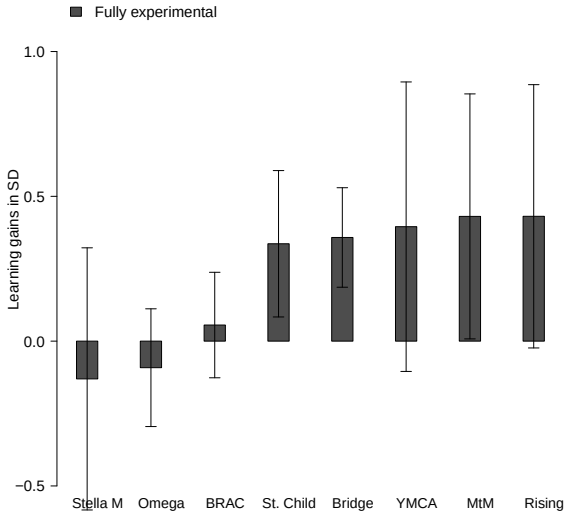
Learning outcomes by provider



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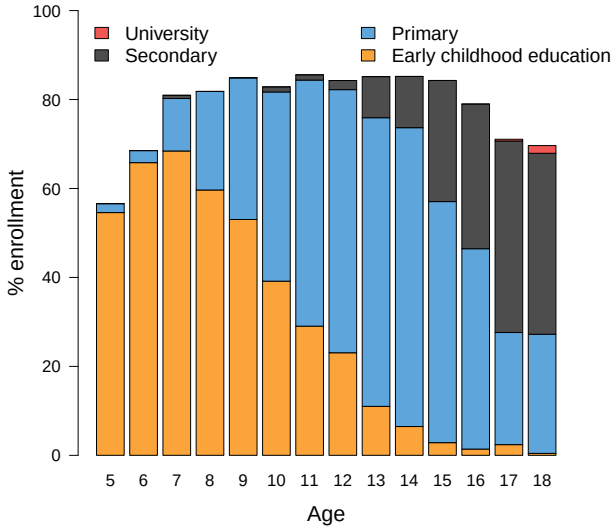
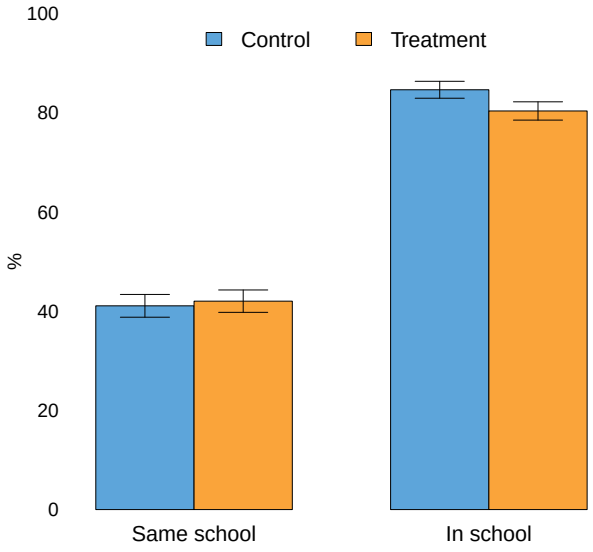
Background: Low enrollment and backlog of overage children



After 3 years, LEAP reduced the share of the original students still in school



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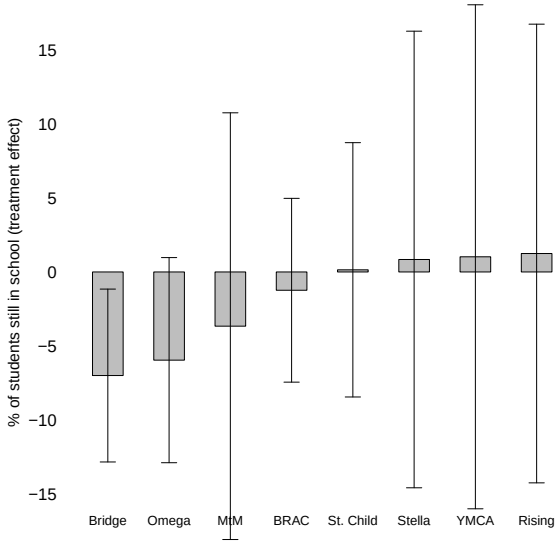

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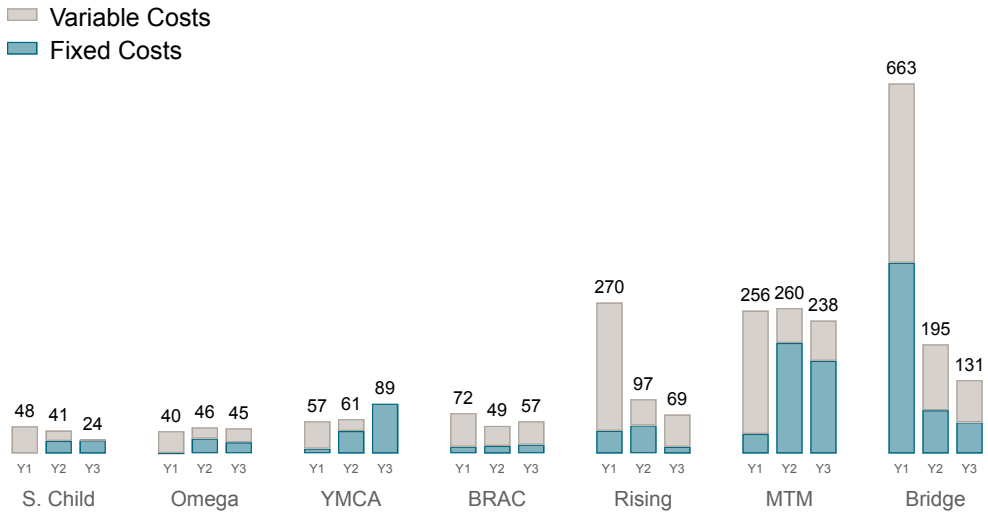
Self-reported expenditure per pupil



Source: Self-reported by operators via Ark (year 1) and Social Finance (years 2-3)

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Corporal punishment

Survey asks students whether their teacher ever hits students.

- In control group, 49% say never
- That rate is 4.6% higher (i.e., less corporal punishment) in LEAP schools

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In collaboration with...

Laura Johnson (Rutgers School of Social Work)

Wayne Sandholtz (UCSD)

Background: Widespread reports of sexual violence in schools

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Incidents with LEAP providers

- More than Me (pre LEAP)
- YMCA

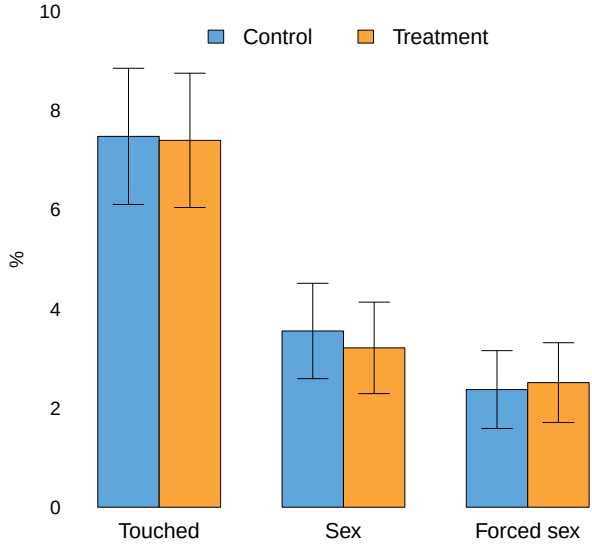
Steiner et al (2018)

Table 1. Sample description (N = 811).

Variable	Total %
Girl	36.74
Perpetrator (% yes)[a]	
Teacher	24.66
School staff	31.32
Classmate	54.75
Parent	24.17
Family member	31.32
Religious figure	25.54
Form of abuse (% yes)[a]	
Transactional sex	48.46
Sexual violation	90.26
Sexual coercion	57.58

[a] These categories are not mutually exclusive.

LEAP had no impact on reported abuse rates



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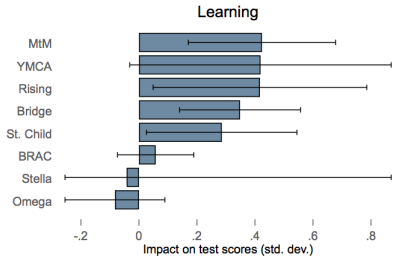
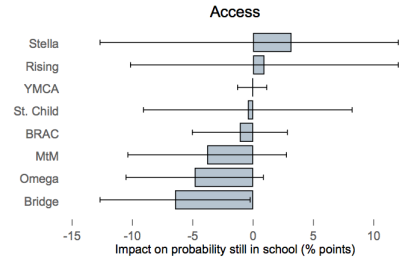
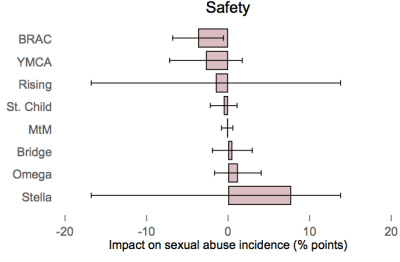
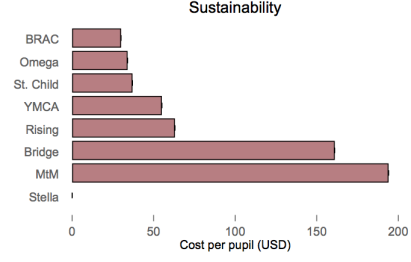
Summary of results









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  - Survey shows pockets of sexual abuse, which LEAP has so far not reduced
  - Drop-out rates are up

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  Beyond averages:
  - Some operators present trade-offs between learning and other goals
  - But a couple show uniformly positive results