

# Parental Notification

## Testing parental notification to increase participation in an online reading program

**Education Partner:**  
P.S. 182Q Samantha Smith School, Queens, New York

**Trial Duration:** 12/03/18–12/07/18

**Pracademics\*:**  
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**Context**  
Parental engagement is associated with improved student outcomes. However, traditional methods of notifying parents via paper notices are often insufficient. This study examined supplementing paper notices with a phone call to increase the participation rate in a recommended online reading program.

**Key Finding**  
Supplementing paper notifications with a phone-call reminder appears to be a simple way to improve parental engagement and increase online reading participation.

\*BetaEd trains educators to become research-savvy "Pracademics" who lead trials.

### Background

Home-based parental engagement has been shown to improve educational outcomes. Strong reading skills in early education are associated with better socioeconomic outcomes in adulthood. School-based efforts to increase parental engagement can be difficult to coordinate around each parent's availability and language preferences. As technology becomes more accessible, there may be new ways to reach parents more directly, at lower costs.

P.S. 182Q Samantha Smith School, in Queens, NY, conducted a randomized controlled trial to evaluate the effect of a live phone call on behalf of the principal to remind parents about their children's recommended online reading practice. As regulations require that schools provide parents with a hard-copy version of all information, the school continued to provide these documents for the duration of the trial.

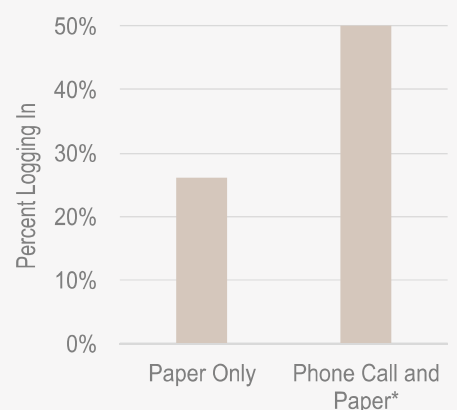
### Trial Design

188 students in ten classrooms in grades 3–5 who had not logged on for their recommended online reading practice were randomized to receiving paper notices or paper notices plus a phone call for parental reminders. Phone calls were made in parents' preferred language: English, Spanish, or Bengali. Detailed messages were left for parents who did not answer the phone. The school recorded data on students' grade level, class, method of communication, and whether they logged into their online reading program.

### Results

About 90% of the parents who received phone calls answered (voicemail messages were left when parents did not answer). Compared to the paper reminders only, paper plus phone-call reminder almost doubled online reading-practice login rates (from 25.5% to 50.0%;  $p < 0.001$ ). Supplementing paper reminders with a phone-call reminder appears to be a simple way to improve reading-practice participation. We will continue to track reading participation to assess the longer-term effects. Subsequent trials will assess whether automated calls yield similar improvements.

Online Reading Program Login Rates by Study Condition



\*denotes statistical significance ( $p < 0.001$ )

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