

Engaging Parents

Improving parental engagement in elementary school

Education Partner:

P.S. 182Q Samantha Smith School,
Queens, New York

Trial Duration: 02/07/18–02/27/18

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 augmenting paper notices with email or text reminders to improve the show-up rate at events that engage parents in the classroom.

Key Finding

Supplementing paper notifications with email reminders appears to be a simple way to improve parental engagement.

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

Background

Parental engagement in school has been shown to improve educational outcomes. Most school communication about events involving parents goes home with students. The inherent risk is that information may not be passed on to a parent. As we become increasingly reliant on technology to communicate, parents may receive and respond to information more reliably if they get a text message or email than if they receive paper communications alone. This merits exploration given the low cost of electronic communication.

P.S. 182Q Samantha Smith School, in Queens, NY, conducted a randomized controlled trial to evaluate the effects of adding email or text messaging in communicating about an event to engage parents in the classroom. 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

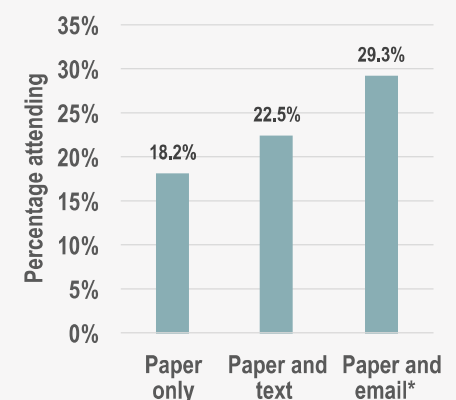
Twelve classrooms, comprising 298 students in kindergarten through third grade, were randomized to issue notices for parental communication using paper plus email, paper plus text message, or paper only. Teachers were provided with a template to record data. This included mode of communication, grade level, and whether a parent/guardian attended.

Results

Relative to the paper-only condition, messages issued by paper plus email improved show-up rates by more than 50% ($p = 0.06$). Subsequent analyses (not shown) revealed that the effects were particularly strong among parents of kindergarteners ($p = 0.03$). Text-message reminders were associated with somewhat higher show-up rates, but the difference was not statistically significant.

Supplementing paper notifications with email reminders appears to be a simple and low-cost approach to improve parental engagement.

Parent/Guardian Attendance by Study Condition



*denotes statistical significance $p < 0.1$

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