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Information, Non-Financial Incentives, and Student Achievement: Evidence from a Text Messaging Experiment

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Information, Non-Financial Incentives, and Student Achievement:  
Evidence from a Text Messaging Experiment\*

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Abstract

This paper describes a field experiment in Oklahoma City Public Schools in which students were provided with free cellular phones and daily information about the link between human capital and future outcomes via text message in one treatment and minutes to talk and text as an incentive in a second treatment. Students' reported beliefs about the relationship between education and outcomes were influenced by the information treatment. However, there were no measurable changes in student effort, attendance, suspensions, or state test scores, though there is evidence that scores on college entrance exams four years later increased. The patterns in the data appear most consistent with a model in which students have present-bias or lack knowledge of the educational production function, though other explanations are possible.

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