Leading in the Time of a Pandemic: Effective Family Engagement Strategies and Resources

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Presenters

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Today, we will...

- Discover actionable insights from new national parent research
- Get family engagement strategies/resources from the new *Principal’s Guide to Leading in the Time of a Pandemic*
- Consider how it can support your work with teachers and families
Listening to Parents

- 15 national surveys
- 200+ qualitative sessions
- All in English & Spanish
- Focus on low income parents & parents of color

Dark blue states represent locations where qualitative research was conducted by Learning Heroes.
Participant Poll

Poll Question: What percentage of parents believe their child is at or above grade level in reading and math?

a) 65%
b) 39%
c) 92%
d) 25%
Student Proficiency: Perception vs. Reality

Parents 2020 | COVID-19 Closures
A Redefining Moment for Students, Parents & Schools

Parker Webinar, May 20, 2020
Research conducted by Edgic Research

83% of parents indicate that their child is getting “mostly B’s” or better

2019: National NAEP Scores for 4th Grade Math and Reading At/Above NAEP Proficient

- 83% of parents indicate that their child is getting “mostly B’s” or better.
PARENTS ARE ACTIVATED

From their new front row seat and despite significant challenges, parents are engaging deeply in their children’s remote schooling and will show up differently next school year.

PARENTS DESERVE AN ACCURATE PICTURE

Even with more hands-on time, parents still have an inflated view of their children’s grade level ability – 92% report their children are at/above grade level in reading and math. It is closer to 37% (2019 NAEP).

RELATIONSHIP REDEFINED

This is a moment to establish clear expectations for parent, teacher relationships grounded in a shared understanding of the child’s progress and academic achievement.
The Opportunity: Parents are Activated

### Likelihood to Do During Upcoming School Year… (% very/somewhat likely)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Somewhat likely</th>
<th>Very likely</th>
<th>American</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get a better understanding of what my child is expected to learn at his/her new grade level.</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find more time to talk to my children about their everyday assignments.</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek a better understanding of where my child is academically.</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to the teacher about what I noticed regarding my child’s learning/schoolwork during the school closure.</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a stronger relationship with my child’s teacher(s) than I’ve had in the past.</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demand a better understanding of where my child is academically.</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demand that the school provide better support for students’ mental health and emotional well-being going forward.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower my academic expectations for my child due to this year’s disruption of my child’s education.</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Effective Family Engagement Strategies and Resources

FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

Schools in the U.S. are navigating uncharted territory. Depending on the school, students may attend in-person, participate in a hybrid model, or begin the year in a completely virtual learning environment. One thing that is true for all schools is that strong partnerships with families are more important than ever. Regardless of the model your school has adopted, the following ideas can help you share critical information about what is happening, strengthen relationships with families, provide student data in a parent-friendly way, and help all parents know how to use the resources you provide.

- As much as possible, help your team select as few platforms for students/families to reduce access barriers and confusion. Encourage your teachers to use the same apps whenever possible and ensure it is easy for parents to monitor their children’s school experience.
- Provide key information in multimedia formats and translated into family native languages. Post brief videos that share important updates and reassures parents that children are safe (in the case of in-person models).
- Develop a short and easy-to-use curated list of helpful links to navigate this new reality. Include school-based and community-based resources and sort them by topic.
- Post an FAQ about returning to school and share with parents via email, texts, social media posts, school website, and apps (e.g., Remind, Class Dojo, Khan Academy). Co-host a community conversation in partnership with your school’s parent group, such as a PTA, on the concerns and questions parents have about their child’s education during the pandemic.
- Consider having grade level teams post video tutorials showing families how to use your learning platform and any apps. Urge teachers to encourage parents to ask questions and provide feedback. Provide links to the tutorials via email, texts, social media, etc.
- Use social media and teacher apps to ask families what they need most from you and your school right now. Consider also having a designated phone number and email address for parent questions and a staff member assigned to fielding the questions.
- Use this PTA resource for additional ideas on transformative family engagement, and click here for more on building a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive PTA.
As much as possible, help your team select as few platforms as possible for students/families to reduce access barriers and confusion. Encourage your teachers to use the same apps whenever possible. Ensure your teachers make it easy for parents to monitor their children’s school experience.

Provide key information in multimedia formats and translated in native home languages. Post a brief video each week (or biweekly) that shares important updates and reassures parents that their children are safe (in the case of in-person models). Use social media to direct parents to your video update links.
• Develop a short and easy-to-use curated list of helpful links to navigate this new reality. Include school-based and community-based resources and sort them by topic.

• Post an FAQ for issues about returning to school and share the list with parents via email, texts, social media posts, school website, and teacher apps (e.g., Remind, Class Dojo, Kinvolved).
1. Build Trust—Make a positive, personal connection with every family.

2. Help families understand how well their child is performing.

3. Empower families to support learning at home.
1. Build Trust--Make a Personal Connection

**Welcoming Calls/Virtual Visits**—Make these during the first weeks of school to help build trust. Share a bit about you and ask parents to share their child’s interests, strengths, areas for support. Ask parents what’s the best way to stay in touch.

**Good News Email/Text**—Send a piece of “good news” to each family via email or text in the first weeks following the welcoming call.

**Feedback Loops to Address Concerns and Elicit Ideas**—Use existing communication platforms to ask families what they need most from you and the school right now. Don’t shy away from their feedback and questions, even the tough ones.
2. Help families understand how their child is performing

Share Diagnostic/Benchmark Data with Parents—Use visuals (simple graphs/charts) to help illustrate performance against benchmarks (STAR, iReady & MAP Growth). Explain what the data means and how you will use the information to help their child.

Provide Tools that Show Progress with Key Skills—The Readiness Check is a digital tool that helps parents see how their child has learned key skills needed for success this year.

Start a Family Learning Lab—Provide open time for families to learn together and network virtually. Invite parents to identify topics/skills to be covered in breakout rooms. Families can host the weekly event or in partnership with other school staff (e.g. counselors, psychologists, assistant principals, etc)
Putting the Research into Action: A Parent Teacher Planning Tool

Teacher Discussion Guide: Frequently Asked Parent Questions

In 2018, Learning Heroes surveyed teachers and found that many of them felt that it is difficult to help students succeed in schools and that they need help from parents. One of the biggest challenges parents face is helping their children succeed in school.

Teachers are often burdened by helping parents understand the value of education, but this is not a new challenge. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education released a report titled “A Nation at Risk.” The report highlighted the need for parents to be more involved in their children’s education.

Since then, many states and communities have taken steps to encourage parent involvement, but there is still much work to be done. In this guide, we will explore some of the challenges that parents face and offer strategies for helping them become more involved in their children’s education.

COVID-19 PLANS

What is the status of the educational plans for this year?

- Regular school schedules will remain in place, but schools will be prepared to transition to online learning if necessary.
- Students will be expected to complete assignments and attend virtual classes.
- Teachers will be available to provide additional support and guidance.

- Pandemic preparedness plans will be updated regularly to reflect the latest guidance from public health officials.
- Schools will implement enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocols.
- Social distancing and other public health measures will be in place.

- Encouraging parents to maintain regular contact with teachers and school staff.
- Providing resources and support to families who may be struggling.

COURTESY OF EXCELLENT EDUCATION PROJECT
Like a game, students answer 3 to 5 questions as a quick review of math and reading.

Parents see how their child is progressing with key skills needed for this year.

At the end, get connected to skill-specific videos, resources, and more to support learning at home!

The digital tool is mobile-friendly and bilingual (English/Spanish), designed to support ELLs.

Find this tool at ReadinessCheck.org
3. Empower families to support learning at home

Co-Create a Plan focused on Key Skills—”Do Less to Do More”. Share 3 main skills in reading and math and 3 strategies and resources to support learning at home.

Host Game Nights—Grade level teams or support staff can come together to host weekly (or monthly) family games that are aligned to instructional goals and are easy for families to replicate.

Connect Parents to Outside Resources—e.g. community organizations, tutoring, social/emotional supports so parents know where to get help.
How do you **PREPARE** and **SUPPORT** your teachers to build partnerships with families?
Give the Gift of Time
Role play
Closing Reflection and Questions

As it relates to Family Engagement, think about:

- One thing you will stop doing that isn’t working
- One new thing you will try
- One thing you will keep doing and improve on
Contact

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