



# Parent Engagement

## Why do schools struggle and what to do about it

Parental involvement has been increasingly a topic of conversation as an important tool to help students reach academic success. In fact, the Every Student Succeeds Act requires that school districts put a percentage of their budget towards parent and family engagement activities<sup>1</sup>. It's important to understand what parental engagement is about, what barriers exist against it, and how educators can develop a strong, enduring relationship with parents to benefit the students. Here is some vital information about parental involvement and some advice to get them engaged:

### Did you know there is ample research on how important parental involvement is for a child's educational success?<sup>2</sup>

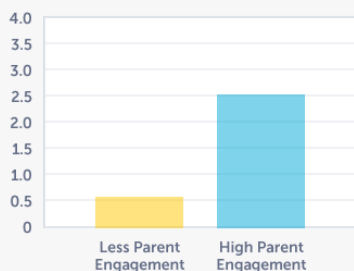
According to an ongoing study by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement that examines math and science achievement across different countries noted that the largest differences between the highest and the lowest academic achievement were due to "home" factors, including "parental support for academic achievement" and "socioeconomic status". In the U.S. specifically, they found that these home variables accounted for 64% of the differences.

### In addition to socioeconomic status, the best predictors of student achievement are:<sup>2</sup>

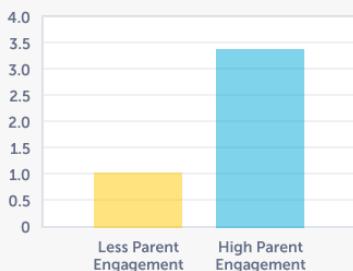
- A home environment that encourages learning
- Parents' high expectations for achievement and future careers
- Parents being involved in a child's education.

Another study by Wesat in 2001 asked teachers how reaching out and the corresponding parental involvement impacted students' achievement. When teachers reported high levels of parental involvement with low achieving students, their reading and math scores increased at a rate of 40% more than schools where there was less parent involvement<sup>2</sup>. Another study from the California State University, Long Beach, students from nuclear families with more structural support like religion, or marriage, have about a 5% higher GPA than those without<sup>3</sup>.

Coupled with high teacher support, high parental engagement has 2.0 grade point impact



Coupled with student sense of belonging, high parent engagement has 2.4 grade point impact



According to the American Institute of Research, when parents get involved in a child's education, given that there is teacher support, the child's GPA increases 2 full grade points on average from the GPA of a child whose parents are not involved<sup>4</sup>.

# So what does parental involvement need to look like?<sup>2</sup>



## Carefully planned

Think through what you want to say to the parents, how you want to say it, and what you want to get back from them



## Two-way communication

Engage the parents to give feedback, ask questions, and be involved with you to better help their student



## Keep it short, clear, & engaging

Parents are busy, and don't always want to read long handouts. Everyone scans written material for a couple of seconds, disregarding it if they aren't interested. Of those interested enough to keep reading:

- 80% will spend less than 30 seconds looking at it
- 20% will read some short articles for up to 3 minutes



## Understand why parents are not involved

Knowing why parents don't read communications is not enough though, educators need to understand why they aren't already involved in school activities to fully address and increase parental engagement. According to The Parent Institute, it's because the parents:

- Don't have time
- Don't know what to do
- Don't know it's important
- Don't speak English
- Parental involvement barriers



## Identify parent involvement barriers

A parental involvement barrier is something that prevents parents from being actively involved with their child's education. The Parent Institute compiled a list of a few barriers that need to be overcome school by school, including:

- Parents don't feel like the school wants their involvement
- Parents do not believe they can help their child in school
- Schools do not provide practical advice to parents about what they can do to help
- Schools do not alert parents as soon as their child starts having problems
- Lack of two-way, respectful communication between school and parents

# Making it easier for parents<sup>2</sup>

- Write strong, attention-grabbing headlines.
- Add a picture to help communicate your message
- Keep your headline short and simple
- Limit your newsletter to one sheet of paper
- Keep your article shorter than 250 words
- Use simple, plain language
- Ask people what they think in order to get that two-way communication

## How technology can help

Research from Project Tomorrow shows that 88% of administrators see a positive impact from communicating with families via social media<sup>5</sup>. Around 66% of parents prefer to get emails or phone messages as communications<sup>3</sup>. A great way to help parents be more involved is to make your communication convenient for them. An example of an easy mobile application is [bloomz.com](https://bloomz.com). You can send out notifications, pictures, videos, and send individual messages to parents—they can even read your messages translated into their preferred language. This saves educators time because they have one platform for everyone, and don't need to print out messages and make sure they get into children's backpacks. More importantly having one place to consolidate information for parents, will help parents know where to get information and get the point across about what schools expect from parents.

According to Monica Burns, the founder of ClassTechTips.com, it's important to address individual parent needs, allow for a range of tool use, and share web-based content<sup>6</sup>. Using a mobile application like Bloomz streamlines communications, and utilizes a platform parents are already comfortable with: their phone. It's up to you to help get parents involved in their child's education.

- <sup>1</sup> "Every Student Succeeds Act." (2015). U.S. Department of Education.
- <sup>2</sup> Wherry, John H. (2010). "Parental Involvement: Nine Truths You Must Know Now." The Parent Institute.
- <sup>3</sup> Jeynes, W. (February 15, 2017). "The Evidence is In: Student Achievement Starts at Home." Bloomz Webinar Series: Building a Culture of Family Involvement.
- <sup>4</sup> Henderson, Anne T., and Mapp, Karen L. (2002). "A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement." American Institutes for Research: SEDL.
- <sup>5</sup> Evans, Julie. (March 15, 2017). "From the Front Lines: Ideas for Improving Family Engagement." Bloomz Webinar Series: Building a Culture of Family Involvement.
- <sup>6</sup> Burns, Monica. (April 13, 2017). "Supporting Parents as Learning Partners: Quality Use of Technology at Home." *Bloomz Webinar Series: Building a Culture of Family Involvement.*