Parents 2019:
As the Stakes Get Higher for Kids, Why Do We Lose Parents?

Research conducted by Edge Research
SEPTEMBER 2019
PARENTS DESERVE AN ACCURATE PICTURE

Learning Heroes’ research reveals that nine in ten K-8 parents – regardless of race, income, education levels – believe their child performs at or above grade level in reading and math, despite national data that shows barely a third of students perform at grade level.

EXPLORATIONS

1. What is the perception of parents of high school children in understanding achievement?
2. How does this perception shape behaviors and attitudes towards their children’s educational success?
3. Is there a different or bigger role for the education community in serving parents of high schoolers?
RESPONSIBILITY HAS SHIFTED
Starting in elementary school, parents now place primary responsibility for school success squarely on their child, not themselves or their child’s teachers.

DISCONNECT DEEPENS FOR HIGH SCHOOL PARENTS
Despite additional data, such as PSAT, SAT, ACT, and a focus on post secondary plans, the disconnect is deeper among high school parents.

A LITTLE INFORMATION GOES A LONG WAY
When parents of high school children are presented with achievement data, many change their perceptions about their child’s achievement.
Methodology

NATIONAL ONLINE PARENT SURVEY:

• Nationwide sample of 2,952 parents and guardians with children in public school, grades K-12, including:
  • 1,403 elementary school parents
  • 645 middle school parents
  • 903 high school parents
  • Oversamples among African Americans, Hispanics
• Fielded April 15-May 5, 2019
• Offered in both English and Spanish
• Data were weighted to be representative of public school parents in the U.S.

NATIONAL ONLINE HS TEACHER SURVEY:

• Nationwide sample of 505 public school teachers in grades 9-12
• Fielded May 2-9, 2019
• Quotas set so representative by key demographics

WITH ADDITIONAL DATA FROM:

• Learning Heroes 2018 Parent Survey
• Learning Heroes 2018 Teacher Survey (all elementary and middle school teacher data is from this survey)

Throughout this report, blue/red indicates statistically higher/lower differences between audiences
Parents of High School Students: Greater Responsibility, High Aspirations, Less Worry
As students enter high school, expectations remain high for college graduation …

**How Important that Your Child Goes to College?**
- Elementary: 69%
- Middle: 77%
- High: 78%

**How Confident Your Child Will Be Prepared for College?**
- Elementary: 68%
- Middle: 61%
- High: 64%

**How Likely Your Child Will Graduate from College?**
- Elementary: 78%
- Middle: 77%
- High: 79%

Time in school results in no change in parent perspectives that their child will graduate from college.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>Essential/Very Important</th>
<th>Extremely/Very Confident</th>
<th>Extremely/Very likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>73%</strong></td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Higher Among**
- Hispanic: 87%
- African American: 81%
- HH Income $100k+: 79%
- Urban: 80%

**Men**
- 67%

**HH Income $100k+:**
- 69%

**Urban**
- 71%

**Lower Among**
- White: 69%
- Rural: 66%

**Women**
- 62%

**White**
- 62%

**Rural**
- 57%

**Men**
- 80%

**HH Income $100k+:**
- 86%

**African Americans**
- 86%

**HH Income $100k+:**
- 86%
College preparation and happiness become more important than grade level achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What’s most important right now?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What’s most important right now?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What’s most important right now?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>% #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child enjoying school</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieving at/above grade level</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting A’s &amp; B’s on report card</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being prepared for good job opportunities after high school</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being prepared for college</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being involved in activities like music, sports, Scouts</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking the highest level/in highest group of a subject</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting good scores on the ACT/SAT</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ranked by mean score and % selected #1*

The survey asked parents to rank each item from 1st – 8th. For the mean scores, lower numbers are higher on parents’ lists of importance.
By high school, parents worry less overall, with more focus on college

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your child's happiness and emotional well-being</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being able to pay for or finance your child's college education</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your child facing peer pressure</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your child being bullied</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your child using the Internet and social media safely and responsibly</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your child’s ability to cope and manage stress</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your child's physical safety</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your child gaining the knowledge and skills needed to be ready for college</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your child being on track with the academic expectations for (his/her) grade</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parents now place responsibility on the child, yet teachers are divided

Which of the following individuals do you think has the greatest responsibility for a child’s success in school?

### Parents

- **Your child**: 66% (Elementary), 56% (Middle), 75% (High)
- **You and your child’s other parent/guardian**: 32%, 25%, 20%
- **Your child’s teacher(s)**: 11%, 7%, 4%

### Teachers

- **The student**: 23% (Elementary), 35% (Middle), 50% (High)
- **The student’s parent/guardian**: 38% (Elementary), 32% (Middle), 24% (High)
- **The teacher(s)**: 38% (Elementary), 31% (Middle), 24% (High)

### Total

- **64%**
- **27%**
- **8%**

### Higher Among

- **White 66%**
- **College Degree+ 67%**
- **African American 35%**
- **Hispanic 34%**
- **Child has an IEP 11%**
- **Income <$37K 13%**

### Lower Among

- **Income <$37K 59%**
- **Small town/Rural 23%**

**LEARNING HEROES: Parents 2019**
The Disconnect Deepens
In high school, parent views of child's success increase

K-8 Parents
Believe Their Child is At/Above Grade Level

- Math: 91%
- ELA: 91%

High School Parents
Believe Their Child is At/Above Grade Level

- Math: 92%
- ELA: 94%

*NAEP Data Says…

- Math: 34%
- ELA: 36%

*2017: 8th Grade

- Math: 25%
- ELA: 37%

*2015: 12th Grade
While perception of school declines in high school, a majority still rate them positively.

How would you rate the job that your child’s school is doing when it comes to each of the following? (% excellent/pretty good)

- Communicating with you about your child’s academic achievement: 89% elementary, 81% middle, 82% high
- Involving you in your child’s education: 86% elementary, 78% middle, 77% high
- Informing you of key concepts your child is learning periodically throughout the year: 85% elementary, 73% middle, 72% high
- Clearly outlining for you the expectations for the academic content and the skills your child should know to stay on grade level in math and reading this year: 85% elementary, 80% middle, 81% high
- Communicating with you about your child’s social and emotional development: 78% elementary, 67% middle, 65% high

*No statistically significant differences by income*
Perceptions of academics remain strong in high school

How do you feel your child is doing academically in school?

- 34%: Your child is excelling academically
- 43%: High School only
- 17%
- 3%
- 2%
- 2%

How confident are you that you have a clear understanding of how well your child is achieving academically?

- 82%: Extremely or Very Confident
- 55%: Extremely
- 35%
- Very, 46%
- 34%
For parents, achievement is defined by grades…

84% say their child is getting A’s and B’s.

What information, sources, or evidence help you to know whether your child is achieving at his/her grade level? (Coded Open End Responses)

- Report card, grades
- Close contact, communication with teachers
- Parent/teacher conferences
- Pay attention to homework
- Test grades, school testing
- Progress reports, weekly/quarterly progress reports
- Online grade access
- Standardized tests

Use among K-8 parents is up significantly since 2017.
...and report card grades are seen as the most reliable measure

How much do you rely on each of the following resources to know whether or not your child is achieving at his/her grade level? (Rely a lot/Rely a fair amount)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your child’s report card grades</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-teacher conferences</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom assessments</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication from teacher(s)</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outside of parent-teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your child’s scores on annual</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state tests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your child's ACT score (HS Only)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your child's SAT score (HS Only)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Despite more measures in high school, report cards viewed as most accurate in defining achievement

How **accurately** do you think each of the following reflects your child’s level of academic achievement? (Very/Fairly accurately)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback you receive from the teacher</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your child’s report card grades</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your child’s mood/body language</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The performance of your child’s school</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your child’s scores on annual state tests</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your child’s SAT score (HS Only)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your child’s ACT score (HS Only)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Yet, teachers rank report cards as less important than ongoing communications with the teacher.

Most Important for Parents to Look at in Assessing How Well Their Child Is Achieving Academically

- Regular communication with you (the child’s teacher(s))
- Graded work and tests/quizzes from their child’s teacher(s)
- Grades on their child’s report card
- Whether or not their child struggles with homework
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Their child’s mood/body language
- Results from the annual or end-of-course state tests
- What their child tells them about school

LS Wording:
- Results from the annual state tests

HS Wording:
- Results from the annual or end-of-course state tests
In fact, teachers view communication with parents as important and linked to student success...

AGREE THAT...

The students whose parents regularly communicate with me tend to do better academically than students whose parents do not communicate with me.
Most Important for You to Be Successful as a Teacher?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49%</td>
<td>Parents actively supporting their children’s education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Regular and open communication with the parents of your students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What’s most important for your success as a teacher? Select up to two:

- Parents actively supporting their children’s education: 49%
- A supportive administrative team (e.g., principal, assistant principal, team leaders): 48%
- School-provided academic supports for students who are struggling: 37%
- School-provided supports to assist with students’ social and emotional development: 23%
- Regular and open communication with the parents of your students: 20%
Despite its importance, communicating with parents is not a job expectation for middle and high school teachers.

How Important Are These Expectations in Doing Your Job? (% extremely important)

- Tell parents when their children are struggling academically:
  - Elementary: 66%
  - Middle: 56%
  - High: 53%

- Make sure that parents have a clear picture of how their children are achieving academically:
  - Elementary: 63%
  - Middle: 49%
  - High: 45%

- Make sure that parents have a clear understanding of grade level academic standards for the year:
  - Elementary: 50%
  - Middle: 43%
  - High: 42%

- Communicate directly with parents (not including sharing information through a portal or report cards):
  - Elementary: 47%
  - Middle: 42%
  - High: 39%

By comparison, 60% of HS teachers believe it’s extremely important to make sure students have a clear picture of their own academic achievement.

What % of parents did you communicate with during the school year, beyond an annual parent-teacher conference?

- 60% of ES teachers
- 50% of MS teachers
- 38% of HS teachers have talked/communicated with all or most.
When tough conversations happen, teachers don’t always feel supported

Would **definitely** contact parent if…

- **74%** of HS Teachers
  - The student is in danger of not graduating

- **60%** of HS Teachers
  - The student is in danger of failing your class

**Only 23%** of HS Teachers are very satisfied with the level of support they receive from their school for communicating difficult information to parents. Compared to **31% among ES teachers** and **25% among MS teachers**.
Expectations and Involvement Change Over Time
Recall, as children progress, responsibility shifts.

Which of the following individuals do you think has the greatest responsibility for a child's success in school?

- Your child: 75% (Elementary), 66% (Middle), 56% (High)
- You and your child's other parent/guardian: 20% (Elementary), 25% (Middle), 32% (High)
- Your child's teacher(s): 4% (Elementary), 7% (Middle), 11% (High)
- The student: 50% (Elementary), 35% (Middle), 23% (High)
- The student's parent/guardian: 24% (Elementary), 32% (Middle), 38% (High)
- The teacher(s): 24% (Elementary), 31% (Middle), 38% (High)
Parents and teachers agree on “ideal” level of involvement for parents…

IDEAL involvement in a child’s education?

For Parents, Highest Among…
- Women
- African Americans
- Hispanics
- Household Income <$37K
- Urban

LEARNING HEROES: Parents 2019
…but the gap between parents and teachers on “actual” involvement widens as students progress

**ACTUAL involvement in a child’s education?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>-25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Parents, Highest Among...
- Women
- African Americans
- Hispanics
- Urban
High school parents less involved overall, with just over half using online portals

Please indicate which of the following, if any, you have done during the recent 2018-2019 school year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helped your child with his/her homework*</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sure your child finished his/her homework*</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked to child about how s/he feels s/he is doing in school</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a parent-teacher conference</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicated with child’s teacher outside of a parent-teacher conference</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked child’s teacher if child is performing at grade level</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessed child’s grades through an online portal</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered at your child’s school</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked to child’s teacher about how to prepare your child to pursue his/her career aspirations</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked to your child’s guidance counselor</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considered switching schools so child can go to a better school</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LEARNING HEROES: Parents 2019  26
Increased responsibility on the child contributes to lower involvement levels

Which of the following prevents you from being as involved in your child’s education as you would like to be?

- I have limited time between work and home responsibilities
- I am already as involved in my child’s education as I would like to be
- I want my child to take responsibility for their own education
- My child is doing well, so I do not need to be more involved
- I want to minimize the tension & conflict that HW and academics creates between my child & me
- I do not know enough about the subjects my child is learning or the way s/he is being taught
- I am not sure what questions to ask my child’s teacher(s)
- My child has multiple teachers
- School policies and/or the school’s admin make it difficult for me to be as involved as I would like
- My child’s school or teacher is not welcoming of my involvement
- English is not my native language

High school parents have a more positive view of their child’s academic success - they don't need to be involved because they think their child is doing well.

Hispanics 11%

LEARNING HEROES: Parents 2019
A Little Information Goes a Long Way: Parents Deserve an Accurate Picture
Perceptions shift when presented with information – even if it isn’t about their child

Info Shared with HS Parents

A 2018 national parent survey found that nine in ten parents of middle schoolers believe their child is at or above grade level in math and reading. Yet, a nationally representative assessment of American students shows only 25% of 12th grade students meet or exceed expectations in math, and only 37% meet or exceed expectations in reading. And, only 43% of high school teachers say their students start the school year prepared for grade level work.

These results mean that most parents think that their children in high school are performing at a level higher in the classroom than they likely are.

Before Information

After Information

that they have a clear picture of how their child is doing academically
To get information, parents look to teachers and their children

How Much Do You Trust Each for Information on Developing Child’s Academic Skills? (% rated 4-5)

- **Your child’s teacher(s):**
  - Elementary: 79%
  - Middle: 75%
  - High: 74%

- **Your child(ren):**
  - Elementary: 78%
  - Middle: 72%
  - High: 73%

- **Your parents/family:**
  - Elementary: 69%
  - Middle: 63%
  - High: 62%

- **Pediatrician or other health care professionals:**
  - Elementary: 65%
  - Middle: 59%
  - High: 57%

- **Academics/education/learning experts:**
  - Elementary: 65%
  - Middle: 63%
  - High: 59%

- **Principal:**
  - Elementary: 61%
  - Middle: 56%
  - High: 53%

- **Your friends:**
  - Elementary: 47%
  - Middle: 44%
  - High: 45%

- **Afterschool program such as Boys & Girls Club, 4-H, etc.:**
  - Elementary: 42%
  - Middle: 40%
  - High: 40%

- **Parent groups/affiliations/support groups:**
  - Elementary: 41%
  - Middle: 39%
  - High: 42%

- **Leader of a place of worship (such as a pastor, priest, rabbi, imam or similar):**
  - Elementary: 37%
  - Middle: 35%
  - High: 40%

- **Parent websites/blogs:**
  - Elementary: 30%
  - Middle: 32%
  - High: 33%

- **Employers and business community:**
  - Elementary: 27%
  - Middle: 25%
  - High: 31%

- **Television/radio/print news media:**
  - Elementary: 16%
  - Middle: 20%
  - High: 21%

- **Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.):**
  - Elementary: 14%
  - Middle: 13%
  - High: 15%
Parents find different resources helpful at each stage

### How Helpful Would You Find Each? (% extremely/very helpful)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A simple, understandable explanation of what your child is expected to learn this year</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A simple way to determine whether your child is ready for the current grade or the next grade</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tips to advocate for your child and how to get help if/when your child is struggling</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A simple tool that helps you, the teacher, and your child reflect on grade level progress with prompts to help you create an action plan for the year</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance on how you can support your child in doing (his/her) homework</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer reading and math activities so that your child does not fall behind</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance on how to help your child be independent after high school</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A planning tool to help you support your child in planning for life after high school</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A guide that walks through the scoring of the annual state test and what it means for your child</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example questions and videos to help maximize your time with your child’s teacher(s) during parent-teacher meetings</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parents prioritize information on social & emotional development

Have the Knowledge and Information They Need on Each

- **How to effectively support your child’s academic progress**
  - Have enough: 55% (Elementary), 52% (Middle), 61% (High)
  - Need more: 42% (Elementary), 44% (Middle), 36% (High)
  - Need a little: 44% (Elementary), 45% (Middle), 45% (High)

- **How to effectively support your child’s social and emotional development**
  - Have enough: 48% (Elementary), 48% (Middle), 54% (High)
  - Need more: 45% (Elementary), 45% (Middle), 41% (High)
  - Need a little: 44% (Elementary), 45% (Middle), 44% (High)

- **How to know if your child is on track to do the academic work required in college**
  - Have enough: 48% (Elementary), 50% (Middle), 58% (High)
  - Need more: 44% (Elementary), 44% (Middle), 36% (High)
Thank you!