SURVEY REPORT AUGUST 2017



Parents 2017: Unleashing Their Power & Potential

Commissioned by Learning Heroes

In collaboration with Univision Communications In partnership with National PTA National Urban League NCLR UNCF **Research conducted by** Hart Research Associates

With support from Carnegie Corporation of New York Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation

A Letter from the Founder & President



Dear Friends,

When it comes to raising their children, parents tell us two stories: they're both anxious about their children's social environment and emotional well-being, and positive about their academic progress. In fact, when it comes to academics, this belief is almost universal among parents of elementary and middle school students: nine in 10 parents believe their child is at/above grade level in reading and math. Yet, national data from the U.S. Department of Education tell us that only about a third of students are performing at grade level, a much more sobering story. This disconnect can undermine what parents aspire for most—happiness and educational success for their children.

I founded Learning Heroes to better serve and equip parents to be advocates for their children and partners in their education. So, for the second year in a row, we set out to understand what worries parents, what informs them, what goals they have for their children, what they know a lot about, and where they need to know more. As important, we must learn what role parents see for themselves in their children's education and what tools they need to fulfill that role.

The following pages underscore the unwavering commitment of parents to their children. Parents own the responsibility for their children's success in school, believing they can make a significant difference in their children's academic progress and emotional well-being. As a mother of two teen boys, I know the pressure of owning this responsibility. I also know how daily moments of supporting a child's learning—no matter how big or small—can add up to something incredibly powerful.

But the gap between how parents view their children's academic standing and where they are in reality must be narrowed. Even with 83 percent of students graduating high school nationally,¹ only 37 percent are prepared for college or the workplace.²

This matters because, while most parents have high expectations for their children to go to college, two in five are not highly confident that their children will be ready for a post-secondary education. Moreover, when parents learn that by 8th grade two-thirds of students nationally are performing below grade level in reading and math, many don't reject the possibility that their child might also be performing below grade level.

We at Learning Heroes believe that, once equipped with an accurate picture of how their children are performing academically and the tools to support them, parents can be the stewards they aspire to be.

This serves as a clarion call: Let's deepen the conversation beyond free-range parenting or the caricature of suburban helicopter and tiger moms and address the need for parents to have clear, complete information to better serve their children. Understanding parents' goals, interests, emotions, and perceptions can help ensure they have the context and knowledge to accomplish their most important task—raising their children to be happy, productive adults.

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Bibb Hubbard Founder & President *Learning Heroes*

- ¹ National Center for Education Statistics
- ² 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress, 12th grade report

Parents 2017: Unleashing Their Power & Potential

MY MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITY IS THAT MY KIDS ARE KIND. I WANT THEM TO BE GOOD PEOPLE, AND TO BE AWARE OF THE WORLD BUT NOT AFRAID OF IT. OF COURSE, I WANT THEM TO BE FOCUSED ON THEIR EDUCATION, TOO.

DENVER, CO MOM OF 1ST AND 8TH GRADERS* Guided by a positive view of their children's educational achievements, parents of K–8 public school students place far greater emphasis on their children being happy than on their academic success. A new national poll reveals parents are positive about their children's academic progress, and are more likely to harbor concerns about peer pressure, bullying, physical safety, and social media than about their child being on track academically.

The poll, our second in two years, also highlights a disparity between how parents define their children's happiness today and in the future. Satisfied with their children's academic track, many parents don't associate education with emotional well-being until they peer over the horizon and consider what will make their children happy adults.

The poll found parents are ambitious for their children and a significant number want them to achieve more than they themselves did. More than seven in 10 parents say it is "very important" or "absolutely essential" that their child receive a twoor four-year college degree. This is a dominant priority, even though a majority of parents surveyed do not have any type of college degree.

In the short-term, however, parents give far more importance to the emotional well-being of their children over their academic achievement. This emphasis on happiness over academics is not surprising. More than three out of four parents say their child is getting a good education and two-thirds believe their child is above average academically. Indeed, for the second year in a row, nine in 10 parents believe their child is at or above grade level in reading and math. All in all, that is a sobering misperception considering that the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows fewer than two in five students nationally are keeping up with 4th and 8th grade-level goals.

Last year's report highlighted the disconnect between parents' positive academic perceptions and NAEP results. This year, we probed deeper and discovered many parents are open to rethinking their child's academic progress when presented with the results of national assessments. We also set out to measure the degree of importance parents give to academics versus their child's happiness, and how much education factored into their definition of their child's emotional well-being.

These views matter because parents place primary responsibility for their child's academic and developmental success on themselves and their families, not on schools and teachers. The incomplete view they have of their child's academic progress can ultimately undermine their advocacy on behalf of their child.

To understand the discrepancy between parents' perceptions and state and national assessment data, it is important to recognize that there are several ways parents assess their children's achievement. Our poll shows parents are more likely to rely on report card grades, classroom assessments, and communications with teachers than on state tests to know if their child is achieving at grade level. In fact, two thirds of parents believe report card grades provide a more accurate picture of their child's academic standing than do state test scores.

While all these measures are an important part of the puzzle that make up our children's academic progress, most of the communications parents receive — report cards, annual state test score reports, and curriculum summaries to name a few — are indecipherable and incomprehensible for most parents.

To help address this disconnect, Learning Heroes, whose mission is to help parents support their children's educational success, commissioned a national survey of more than 1,400 K–8 public school parents, in collaboration with Univision Communications and in partnership with the National PTA, National Urban League, NCLR, and UNCF (United Negro College Fund). The survey, conducted by Hart Research Associates, includes oversamples of Hispanic and African American parents.

It explores parents' kitchen table anxieties, their aspirations for their children, their role in their children's academic and developmental success, and their needs to help their children succeed.

Parents are anxious, but not about school

INSIGHTS

Nine in 10 parents believe their child is performing at or above grade level in math and reading, despite NAEP data that shows only one in three 8th graders are proficient in math and reading.

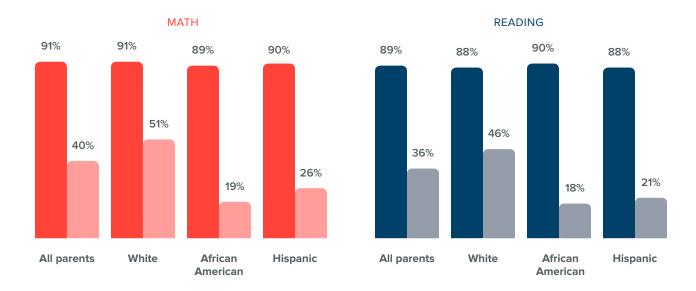
77 percent of parents believe their children are getting a good education and 66 percent say they are doing above average academically.

86 percent of parents rely on report card grades to know if their child is achieving at grade level.

The emphasis parents place on emotional well-being over academics tracks with their optimistic view of their children's learning. The poll finds nine out of 10 parents — across race, income and education levels — believe their child is performing at or above grade level in math and English, despite national assessment statistics to the contrary.

NAEP shows that in 2015 only 36 percent of 4th grade students scored at or above proficient in reading; 40 percent scored at or above proficient in math. Hispanic and African American 4th graders fared worse, with 21 percent and 18 percent proficient in reading, and 26 percent and 19 percent, respectively, rated proficient in math. By 8th grade, only 34 percent of all students met the proficient standard in reading and 33 percent in math. Math proficiency for Hispanic and African American 8th graders also dropped to 19 percent and 13 percent, respectively. Their reading proficiency, however, changed little between 4th and 8th grades.

Nine in 10 parents think their children are achieving at or above grade level, though national data suggest otherwise.



Parents saying their child is achieving at or above grade level

2015 NAEP reporting Grade 4 student performance at or above proficient in this area

Yet, two out of three parents believe their child's performance in school is above average. Eight percent believe their child performs below average. Three out of four parents believe their child is getting an excellent/pretty good education in their school. Parents generally view their child's teachers positively, with more than four out of five rating them excellent/pretty good at making sure that their child achieves at grade level, providing academic support, keeping their child engaged, and adequately challenging them. More than 70 percent rate their child's teachers as excellent/pretty good along social and emotional measures.

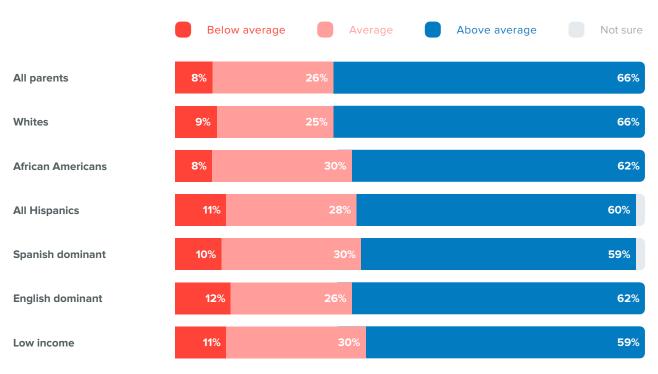
Among Spanish-dominant parents, the number who say their child's school provides a excellent/pretty good education drops to two-thirds, and four in five worry about their child being on track with the expectations of his or her grade.

Most parents believe their children are getting a good education and doing well academically.



HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE EDUCATION YOUR CHILD IS GETTING?

HOW IS YOUR CHILD DOING ACADEMICALLY IN SCHOOL?



Perception meets reality—bridging the disconnect

INSIGHTS

Education is not a major factor when parents think about their children's happiness today, yet it comes into play when they think about their children's happiness and well-being as an adult.

When parents are informed about national test scores, one in four concedes it is likely their child is not performing at grade level. Another 22 percent don't reject the possibility.

72 percent of parents feel it is important—and 75 percent of parents expect—their children will get a two- or four-year college degree.

LEARNING HEROES-PARENTS 2017

For all the importance most parents place on their children's current happiness over academics, our research shows that future educational success is not far from their minds. When parents are asked to think about key factors that will contribute to their child's happiness as an adult, the number who list learning and getting an education is two and a half times greater than the number who see it as a happiness factor for their child today. In other words, parents give education greater worth when they assess the value of academics over the long term.

Providing further evidence of that long view, the poll shows that more than seven out of 10 parents say it is very important that their child go to college for a two-year or four-year college degree. Parents place an even higher priority on a college degree as their children reach middle school. That number, however, has dropped to 72 percent from 75 percent a year ago. It is lowest among White parents — at 64 percent, and it declined from 83 percent a year ago to 75 percent among African American parents, and from 90 percent to 85 percent among Hispanic parents. Even so, three-fourths of all parents believe their child is very likely to graduate with a two- or four-year degree.

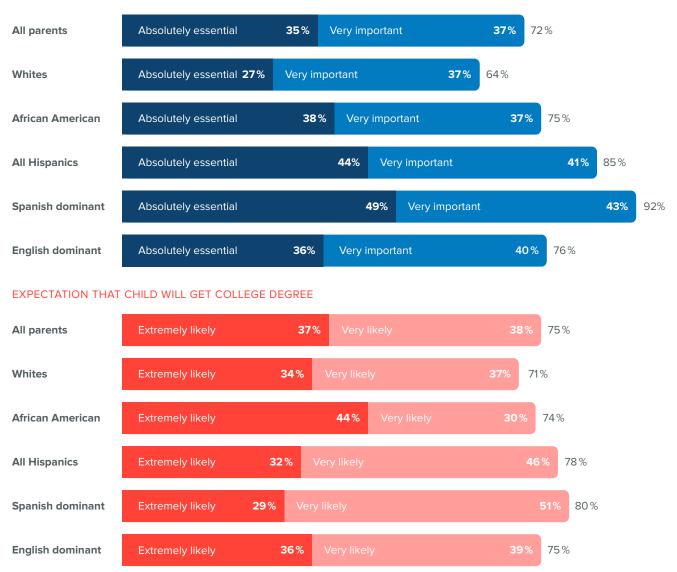
Spanish-dominant parents cite factors related to learning and getting an education above all others in determining the happiness of their children as an adult. Spanish-dominant parents are also more adamant about college — more than nine out of 10 say it is very important their child attend a post-secondary institution and obtain a two- or four-year degree.

I WORRY A LOT ABOUT MY SON. I WORRY THAT HE'LL GET INTO TROUBLE, AND FALL BEHIND. I WANT COLLEGE TO BE HIS ULTIMATE GOAL.

WASHINGTON, D.C. MOM OF 1ST, 4TH AND 12TH GRADERS



Most parents hope and expect their children will get a college degree.

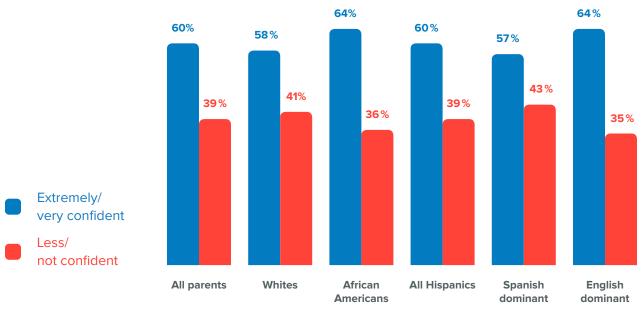


IMPORTANCE OF CHILD'S GETTING COLLEGE DEGREE

The poll reveals a wobbly foundation beneath today's academic perceptions. This year, more parents worry about their child being on track academically and gaining skills and knowledge to prepare for college than last year. Two in five parents are not highly confident their child will be well prepared to enter and succeed in college. The older the child, and thus closer to college age, the less assured parents are — 67 percent of K–2 parents are confident; 59 percent of parents of children in grades 3–5 are confident, and 54 percent of parents of 6th–8th graders are confident. And because parents give more priority to a college degree as their children reach middle school, the gap between those college aspirations and confidence in their children's readiness widens even more.

When parents learn that a majority of 8th graders nationally perform below grade level in reading and math in annual assessment tests, more than one quarter of the parents concede it is likely their child is performing below grade level. Another 22 percent are skeptical but do not reject the possibility that their child could be performing below grade level. That is significant given that nine out of 10 also consider their child to be at or above grade level.

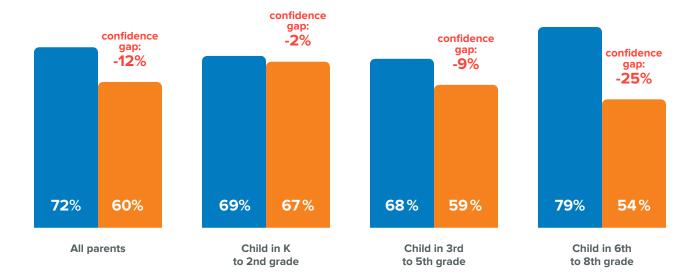
Two in five parents are not highly confident their child will be well prepared to enter and succeed in college.



CONFIDENCE THAT CHILD WILL BE WELL PREPARED FOR ENTRANCE/SUCCESS IN COLLEGE UPON GRADUATION FROM HIGH SCHOOL

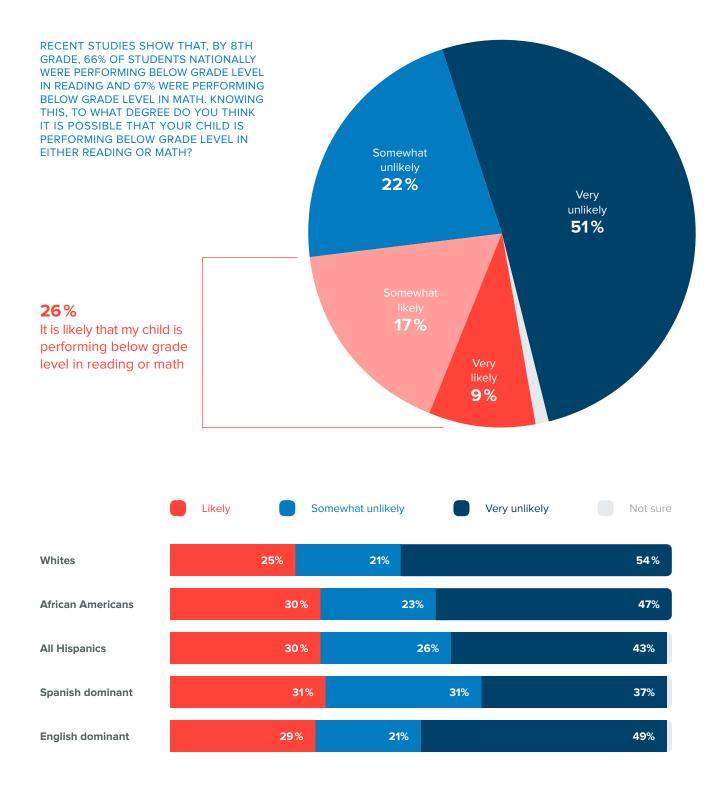
The Confidence Gap: As children get older, the importance that parents place on college increases, as do doubts about their children's preparedness.

Essential/very important that child goes to college and receives a two-year/four-year degree Extremely/very confident that child will be prepared for entrance/success in college





Information about national data raises doubt among some parents about their child's performance.



More than anything, parents want kids to be happy

INSIGHTS

All parents, regardless of race, income and education levels, are more worried this year than last year about their children's emotional well-being and academic progress. The only dimension parents are less worried about is standardized testing.

Parents define their children's happiness as feeling loved, socializing with friends, having fun and a happy home life, and feeling safe.

Three of five parents give greater importance to their children being happy and not overly stressed than doing well in school. When asked about their children's happiness today, parents say the key factors center on love, friendships, a happy home, and a secure environment. Indeed, 36 percent of parents name love or feeling loved as a key factor, 14 percent mention friends and socializing and 11 percent mention a happy home life. Education ranks below good nutrition.

Parents are uneasy when it comes to raising their children and they've grown more anxious since our survey a year ago. Peer pressure and their children's happiness top their worries. A majority also worry about affording a college education for their children. In fact, paying for college ranks as the top concern among Hispanic and African American parents.

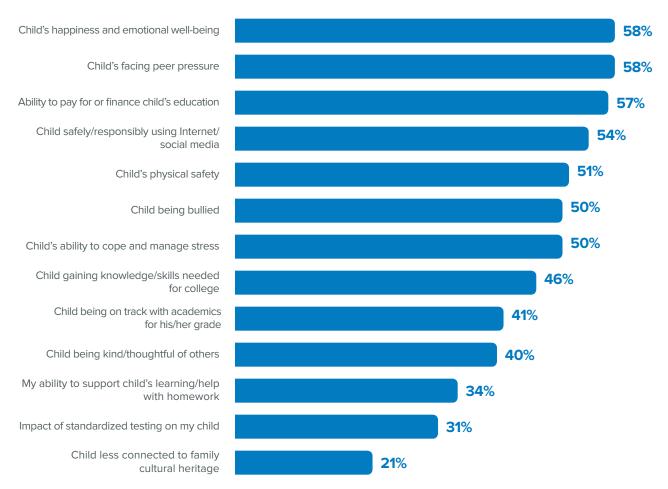
Three of five parents say it is more important their child be happy and not overly stressed than to do well academically. Similar to last year, parents rank their child's emotional well-being and fears about peer pressure high above academic concerns when asked to think about what worries them most about raising their child. While parents are worried at higher levels this year, the biggest leap in concern is regarding their child's happiness and emotional well-being — 58 percent say they worry about that issue compared to 48 percent a year ago.

Parents across the board place more emphasis on happiness than academics. Still, parents of middle-schoolers are more likely to prioritize academics over happiness than are parents of elementary school children. Among parents of 3rd to 5th graders, only 34 percent say academic performance is more important than their child being happy. Among parents of 6th to 8th graders, the importance of academic performance climbs to 43 percent.

It is worth noting that Spanish-dominant parents are more evenly split in their concerns — 52 percent emphasize happiness; 47 percent say academic performance is more important. Unlike other groups, Spanishdominant parents express a comparable level of concern about their child gaining the knowledge and skills to succeed academically as they do about their happiness and emotional well-being. And there has been a notable increase in the share of Spanish-dominant parents who express concerns about raising their children, with a significant rise in the number who worry about their children facing peer pressure. All of these point to a higher degree of overall anxiety among Hispanics regarding their children.

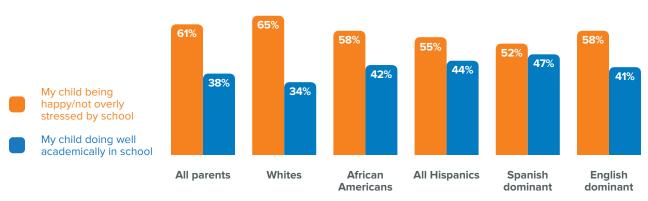


Parents are anxious in greater numbers about factors related to raising their children. They rank peer pressure, happiness and paying for college as their top concerns.



PROPORTIONS SAYING THEY WORRY A LOT OR SOME ABOUT THIS ASPECT OF RAISING THEIR CHILD

Three of five parents say it is more important their child be happy and not overly stressed than to do well academically.



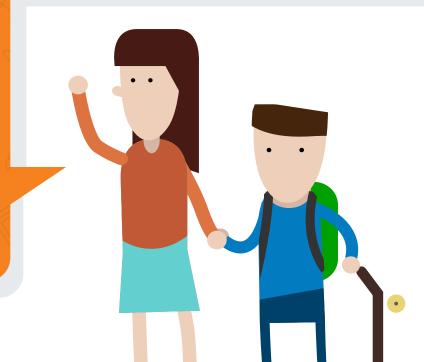
WHICH IS MORE IMPORTANT TO YOU REGARDING YOUR CHILD?

There has been a notable increase in the share of Spanish-dominant parents expressing concerns about raising their children.

Worry a lot/some about this aspect of raising my child	Whites	African Americans	All Hispanics	Spanish 2016	dominant 2017	English 2016	dominant 2017
Child's happiness and emotional well-being	56%	44%	73%	79%	85%	51%	58%
Child's facing peer pressure	54%	48%	71%	58%	79%	55%	60%
Ability to pay for or finance child's education	51%	55%	75%	80%	85%	58%	63%
Child safely/responsibly using Internet/ social media	51%	39%	72%	71%	84%	48%	55%
Child's physical safety	43%	48%	72%	78%	86%	53%	56%
Child being bullied	42%	41%	73%	77%	84%	52%	59%
Child's ability to cope and manage stress	46%	41%	64%	59%	72%	49%	51%
Child gaining knowledge/skills needed for college	38%	38%	70%	73%	87%	40%	49%
Child being on track with academics for his/her grade	34%	38%	65%	65%	83%	45%	42%
Child being kind/thoughtful of others	36%	22%	62%	N/A	83%	N/A	36%
My ability to support child's learning/help with homework	26%	26%	60%	63%	81%	40%	34%
Impact of standardized testing on my child	23%	33%	50%	53%	64%	42%	33%
Child less connected to family cultural heritage	9%	17%	51%	56%	71%	27%	27%

PARENTS CAN'T ALWAYS BE THE BEST TEACHERS — WE JUST WANT TO GET THE WORK DONE, AND TO HAVE TIME TO WORK ON PROJECTS THAT ARE FUN AND INTERACTIVE.

WASHINGTON, D.C. MOM OF 1ST, 2ND, AND 4TH GRADERS



When kids struggle, parents lose confidence

INSIGHTS

Most parents place primary responsibility for their children's success on themselves and their family. But they tend to shift the burden from themselves to their children when children reach middle school.

Among the 39 percent of parents who think their child struggled academically at some point, more than half do not feel highly confident they could support their child's learning.

Two thirds believe report card grades provide a more accurate picture of their child's achievement than standardized state tests.

LEARNING HEROES-PARENTS 2017

Two in five parents have at some time thought their child was struggling to keep up academically. The older the child, the more likely a parent would say they thought they struggled: 31 percent for K–2 parents, and 43 percent for parents of children in grades 3–8. Among Spanish-dominant parents, more than half say their child has struggled at some point. Among parents who say their child struggled academically at some point, more than half aren't highly confident that they can support their child's learning.

Parents say helping with homework, being involved with their child's education, and communicating with their child's school are among the most important things they do to help their child learn. Overall, 86 percent say they have helped their child with homework, 77 percent attended a parent-teacher conference and 72 percent communicated with teachers outside of conferences this school year. Two out of five parents say homework was a source of tension between them and their child.

Not surprisingly, parents are fully immersed in their children's development and believe they make a difference in their academic progress. They place primary responsibility for their child's success on themselves and their family; only 12 percent of all parents say teachers had the greatest responsibility (White parents are the only ones who place primary responsibility on the child, rather than the parent.) What's more, parents own this responsibility — 90 percent believe they can make a fair amount/a lot of difference in their child's happiness and well-being, and 84 percent say this about their academic progress.

As previously noted, parents become less confident that their child will be prepared for success in college when their child is in middle school. That is also when parents tend to shift the burden for success in school from themselves to their child.

Parents feel they play a significant role in both their children's academic progress and emotional well-being.

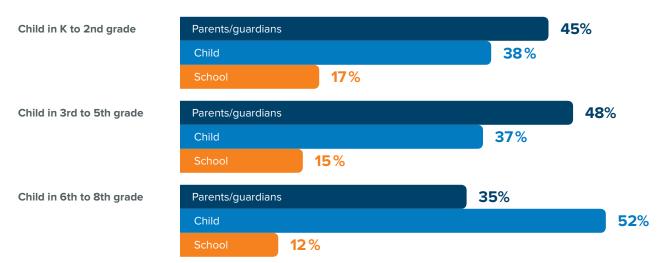
I CAN MAKE A LOT/ FAIR AMOUNT OF DIFFERENCE IN MY CHILD'S LEARNING/ ACADEMIC PROGRESS

A lot of difference 47%	A fair amount 37%	84%
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I CAN MAKE A LOT/ FAIR AMOUNT OF DIFFERENCE IN MY CHILD'S HAPPINESS/EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

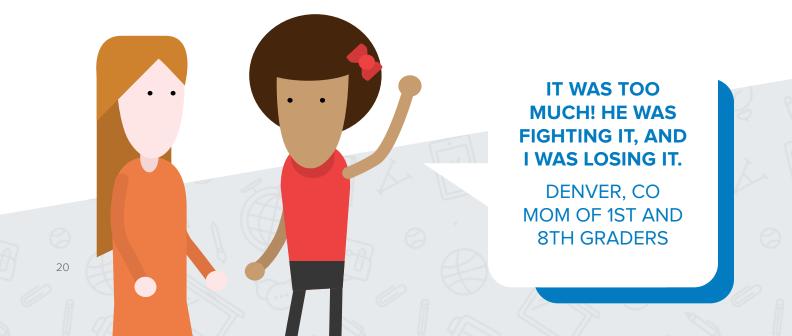
A lot of difference 5	58%	A fair amount	32%	90%
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Parents tend to shift burden from themselves to their children when children reach middle school.



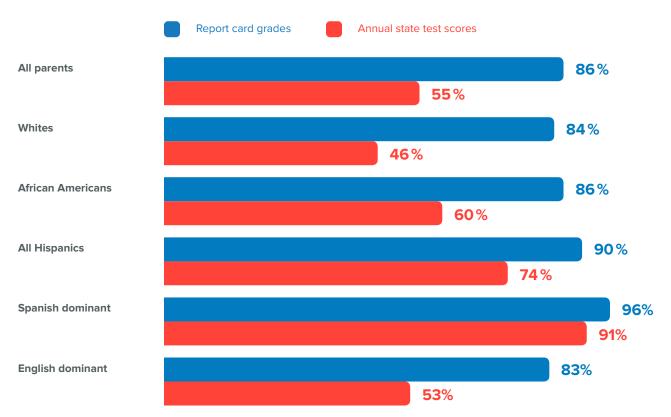
PERSON WITH GREATEST RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY CHILD'S SUCCESS IN SCHOOL

About a quarter of parents are not aware of their child's annual state test scores. Most parents rely on report card grades, quizzes, and communications with teachers to determine whether their child is achieving their grade level. Spanish-dominant parents, however, say they rely on annual state test scores at virtually the same high 90 percent or above rate as other factors. Among all parents, far fewer — 55 percent — rely on their child's scores on annual state tests. In fact, when asked what provides a more accurate picture of their child's performance, two thirds of parents choose report card grades over annual state test scores. Hispanic and African American parents (56 percent and 54 percent, respectively) are less likely than White parents (73 percent) to believe report cards provide a more accurate picture of achievement than state test scores.

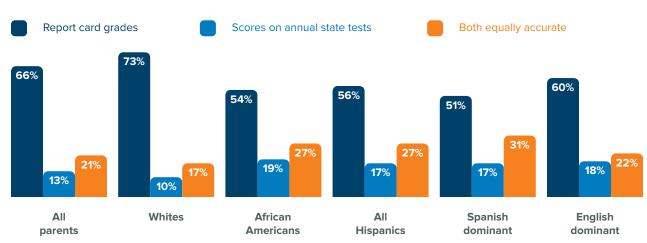


White and English-dominant Hispanic parents are notably more reliant on report cards than annual state tests, while Spanish-dominant parents rely on both equally.

PROPORTIONS SAYING THEY RELY A LOT/FAIR AMOUNT ON EACH OF THESE RESOURCES TO KNOW WHETHER THEIR CHILD IS ACHIEVING AT GRADE LEVEL



Two thirds of parents believe report card grades provide a more accurate picture of their child's achievement than standardized state tests. The gap is biggest among white parents.



WHICH PROVIDES A MORE ACCURATE PICTURE OF WHETHER YOUR CHILD IS ACHIEVING AT GRADE LEVEL?

With a commitment to help, parents are open to more resources

INSIGHTS

Parents want to be more involved. Parents say their actual level of participation in their child's education is lower than what they would ideally like their involvement to be.

When it comes to detecting whether their child is struggling, a majority of parents say their main signal is seeing their child having difficulty with homework.

More than half of parents say more information and resources would be helpful.

Despite their commitment to their children, parents still believe they come up short. The poll reveals a gap between how much parents ideally would like to be involved in their children's education and their actual level of involvement. On a scale from 1–10, with 10 indicating "extremely involved," 85 percent of African American parents say they would ideally like to be in the 8–10 range, but 70 percent say they are actually that involved. Among Hispanic parents, 83 percent aim for that level of involvement, but only 66 percent say they attain it. Among White parents, 68 percent aim for high involvement, but only 51 percent say they attain it.

Our two years of research shows that parents and educators are in sync. A poll last year by Scholastic Inc. reinforced the strong desire from educators to engage and communicate with parents. Yet, the poll also found a gap between activities educators believed were important to support family engagement and the degree to which those activities were taking place. While 86 percent of parents rate communications with their teachers about their child's academic achievement as excellent/pretty good, only 61 percent of teachers from the Scholastic poll believed two-way communication was actually occurring.

Parents trust their own observations over any other indicator in determining whether their children are struggling to keep up academically. Among parents who thought their child was having difficulty learning, seeing them struggle with homework was a more common indicator than low grades or communication from a teacher.

All this points to a clear need: improved communications that are responsive to parents' needs, interests, and concerns; more tools; and greater access to information to help guide their children through their academic challenges.

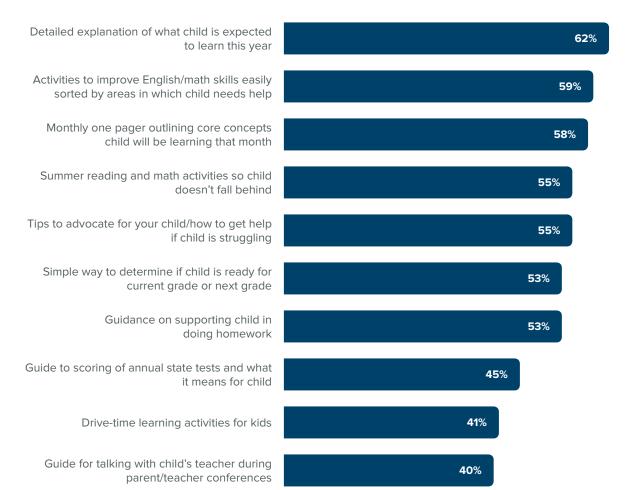
A majority of parents say they would find various resources and information helpful in supporting their child's academic success, including a detailed explanation of what their child is expected to learn over the course of the year and during each month. They also would welcome activities to improve English and math skills, tips on how to advocate for their child, and homework support. Hispanic parents — especially Spanish-dominant parents — and African American parents express greater interest in all of the resources listed. Separately, four out of five Spanish-dominant parents would find more flexible scheduling for parent meetings with teachers and bilingual interpreters helpful.

HELPING MY KID WITH HOMEWORK, I THOUGHT I WAS LOSING MY MIND. THESE KIDS ARE DOING ALGEBRA IN 2ND GRADE. WE'RE NOT TRAINED AS TEACHERS. WE AREN'T EVEN TRAINED ON HOW TO BE GOOD PARENTS!

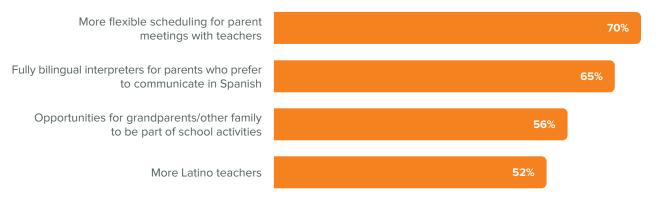
> DENVER, CO MOM OF 1ST AND 8TH GRADERS

Parents welcome a broad range of resources.

THIS WOULD BE EXTREMELY/VERY HELPFUL IN MY EFFORTS TO SUPPORT MY CHILD'S SUCCESS



ONLY ASKED OF HISPANIC PARENTS



It's Time for an Accurate Picture

Parents have high hopes and big dreams for their children. These often include a college degree and a fulfilling job. But, as our poll reveals, parents would welcome help paving a path for their children.

In response to what we learned, Learning Heroes teamed up with Univision Communications and the National PTA to create the Readiness Roadmap, a guide to help parents with key stages and issues, including: learning goals, financing college, life skills, parent-teacher communication, and learning tools.

Providing these tools to better enable parents to gain an accurate picture of their children's grade-level achievement with the information currently available is a step in the right direction. But we believe the findings in this report clearly tell us that, ultimately, what and how schools communicate to parents about their children's progress must be improved to be more responsive to parents' needs, interests, and concerns. To understand where the deficits are and how the education community can address this communications gap, a conversation needs to happen at the community and national levels to elevate awareness around this important issue, generate demand for improvement, and inspire a more holistic view of our children's educational success.

Readiness Roadmap

Learning Goals

Academic expectations by grade-level, including videos that show parents what specific skills look like and how they can help at home.

Financing College

Tips and resources on saving and paying for college.

Life Skills

Information and resources on how to support the skills children need for success in life.

Parent-Teacher Communication

Conversation guides to make the most of parent-teacher conferences and discussions with their child.

Learning Tools

Games, activities, and videos from trusted organizations to meet their child's individual needs.

bealearninghero.org/readiness-roadmap

Methodology

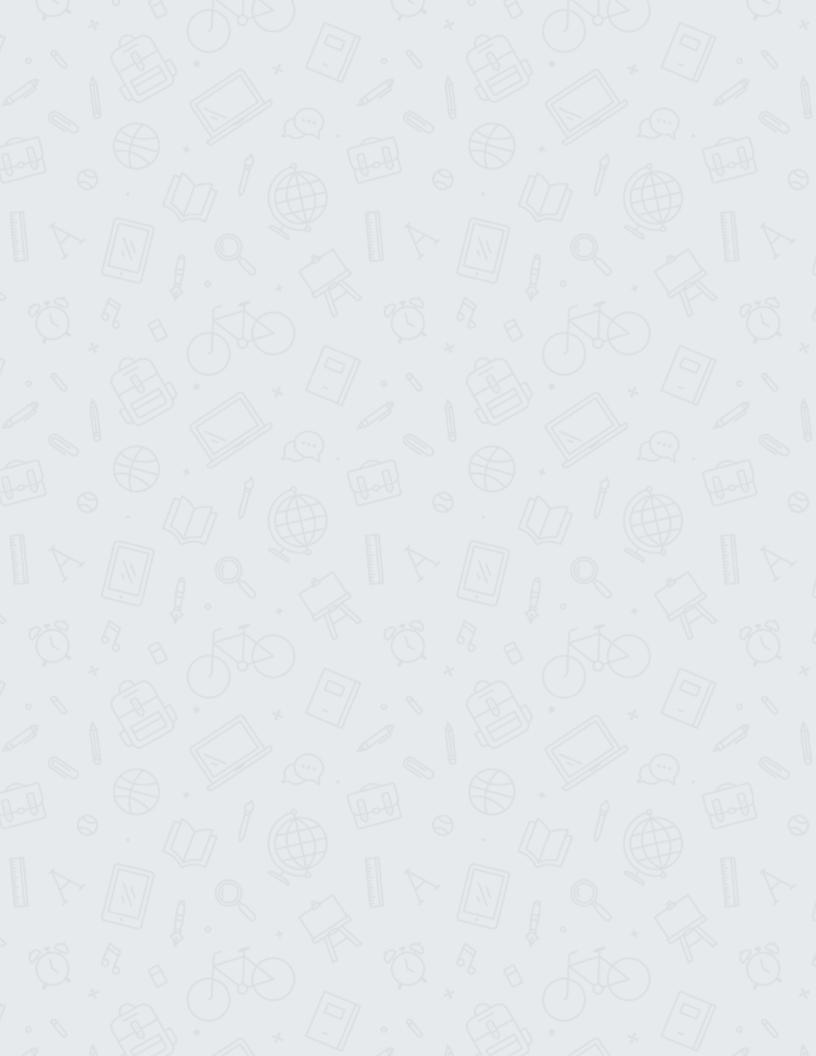
Hart Research Associates conducted this national survey among 1,423 parents and guardians of public school children in grades K–8. It includes a nationally representative survey of 813 elementary and middle school parents. It also includes oversamples among Hispanics (to yield 293 Spanish-dominant Hispanic parents and 266 Englishdominant Hispanic parents) and African Americans (to yield 280 African American parents). The online survey was conducted between March 22nd and April 6th, 2017, and was offered in both English and Spanish. The survey was administered by GfK, using their KnowledgePanel©, a probability-based Web panel designed to be representative of the United States. The survey has a margin of error of +3.2 percentage points for all parents. Sample tolerances for subgroups are larger.

Portico Research, in collaboration with GMMB, also conducted six 3-hour ethnographic interviews with parents of public school children in grades K–8. Interviews were conducted between February 6th and 10th, 2017, in Denver, CO and Washington, DC. Participants included African-American, White, and English-dominant Hispanic parents.

Acknowledgements

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