

Exploring Massachusetts Parent Mindsets About Education

Learning Heroes finds nine in ten K-8 parents nationally report their child performs at or above grade level in both reading and math, despite the stark reality that only about one third of students nationally perform at grade level, and half in Massachusetts. To know if this disconnect is similar among Massachusetts parents and to better understand their mindsets when it comes to their children's education, Learning Heroes conducted a survey of K-8 parents throughout the Commonwealth in July 2018, benchmarking the results against surveys of K-8 parents nationally.

We found that:

- ★ *Massachusetts parents are highly engaged in their child's education and academics are a priority but not a top concern*
- ★ *Massachusetts parents have a more realistic view of their child's academic achievement than parents nationally; however, a stark disconnect remains between perception and reality*
- ★ *The landscape is ripe to help parents have a more accurate picture of their child's achievement and thus better support their progress*



PARENT ATTITUDES

Massachusetts parents see themselves as the person most responsible for their child's success in school, more so than parents nationally.

- **50%** of Massachusetts parents report that they are the most responsible for their child's success in school, followed by their child (**27%**), and their child's teacher (**18%**). Nationally, **43%** of parents said the child was most responsible, **42%** said the parent, and **12%** said the teacher.

While they take responsibility for their child's education, most parents of K-8 children in Massachusetts, like K-8 parents nationally, lack an accurate picture of their child's achievement:

- **88%** of Massachusetts parents report that their child is at or above grade level in math. In reality, **48%** of Massachusetts students are at or above grade level in math.*
- **88%** of Massachusetts parents report that their child is at or above grade level in reading. In reality, **51%** of Massachusetts students are at or above grade level.*

*2018 MCAS for MA 3-8 grades

PARENT PERCEPTIONS

To assess their child's achievement, more Massachusetts parents report that they rely a lot or a fair amount on school, teacher, and child feedback than state test scores:

- Report card grades (**88%**)
- Parent-teacher conferences (**80%**)
- Informal communication (**78%**)
- Your child's demeanor (**75%**)
- Classroom assessments (**73%**)
- What child tells you (**73%**)
- State test scores (**43%**)

African American parents and Hispanic parents are much more likely to trust the accuracy of state tests, although these still fall below the other indicators.

Massachusetts parents say their child's report card grades are better than their test scores:

- **44%** of parents in Massachusetts said report card grades are better, **30%** said they were equal, and **15%** said test scores were better (12% did not compare). Nationally, only **28%** said report card grades were better, **15%** said state test scores were better, and **54%** said they were equal (3% did not compare).

PARENT ACTIONS

Overall, Massachusetts parents report greater engagement than parents nationally. They are more likely to have:

- Reviewed their child's mid-year report card (**96% MA vs. 91% nationally**)
- Helped with homework (**92% MA vs. 86% nationally**)
- Attended a parent-teacher conference (**88% MA vs. 77% nationally**)
- Communicated with their child's teacher outside of a parent-teacher conference (**84% MA vs. 72% nationally**).

Despite high levels of engagement, **47%** of Massachusetts parents report that they are less involved than they would like to be.

While Massachusetts parents are confident they can help their child with reading homework, they are less confident about helping with math:

- Help with reading homework: **57%** extremely confident and **31%** very confident
- Help with math homework: **33%** extremely confident and **30%** very confident

ABOUT LEARNING HEROES

Learning Heroes (www.bealearninghero.org) is a non-profit organization committed to inspiring and equipping parents to be advocates for their child's academic and developmental success. Since 2015, we have conducted an unprecedented amount of research in 25 states. We leverage this research, and national and local partner relationships, to conduct three seasonal campaigns for parents each year, and work with states and districts on their parent communications. For more information, including free parent resources in English and Spanish, visit www.bealearninghero.org.

Massachusetts parents report they are very interested in resources to help with their child's academic success. Topping the list:

- A detailed explanation of what your child is expected to learn this year (**87%**)
- Activities to improve your child's skills in English and math (**84%**)
- Guidance on how you can support them in doing their homework (**84%**)

With a more accurate picture of their child's academic achievement, parents can better support their children in school. Please share these insights with your networks, and pass along your ideas to put these rich data into action. For more information about the Massachusetts research and opportunities to engage with this work, please visit www.one8.org/study-tour/learning-heroes-mini-grants, or www.bealearninghero.org/MAParents or email dpark@learningheroes.org.

Methodology

Statewide representative survey of 564 K-8 Massachusetts parents with children in public school in English and Spanish. Oversamples with African American and Hispanic parents.



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