

CENTERING FAMILIES IN THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

INSIGHTS & PERSPECTIVES FROM
10 YEARS OF RESEARCH

**LEARNING
HEROES**

OCTOBER 2025



Mind the Gap – Perception vs. Reality

Insight 1

National parent perception of student grade-level achievement vs. reality

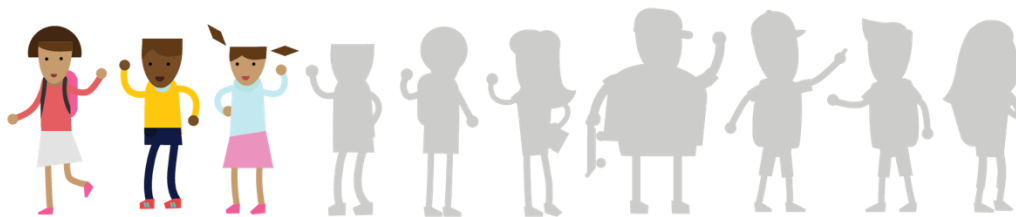
PERCEPTION



88%

of parents regardless of *race, income, and education level*, believe their child is at or above grade level in reading and math.*

PERFORMANCE



30%

of eighth graders demonstrate proficiency or above in reading and math.**

*Gallup & Learning Heroes. (2023, November 14). *B-flation: How good grades can sideline parents*. bealearninghero.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/B-flation_Gallup_Learning-Heroes_Report-FINAL.pdf

**National Center for Education Statistics. (2024). *The nation's report card: 2024 reading and mathematics assessments*. nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard

“The perception gap suggests that parents aren’t getting the full picture of how prepared their kids are for the next grade, for college or for the workforce. We owe it to families to provide them with clear, honest information about their children’s progress. Without that transparency, we risk denying students the opportunities they deserve.”

**JOHN B. KING, FORMER U.S. SECRETARY OF
EDUCATION AND CHANCELLOR OF THE
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK (SUNY)**



Reckoning with Report Cards

Insight 2

Parents reporting their child receives all Bs or above*

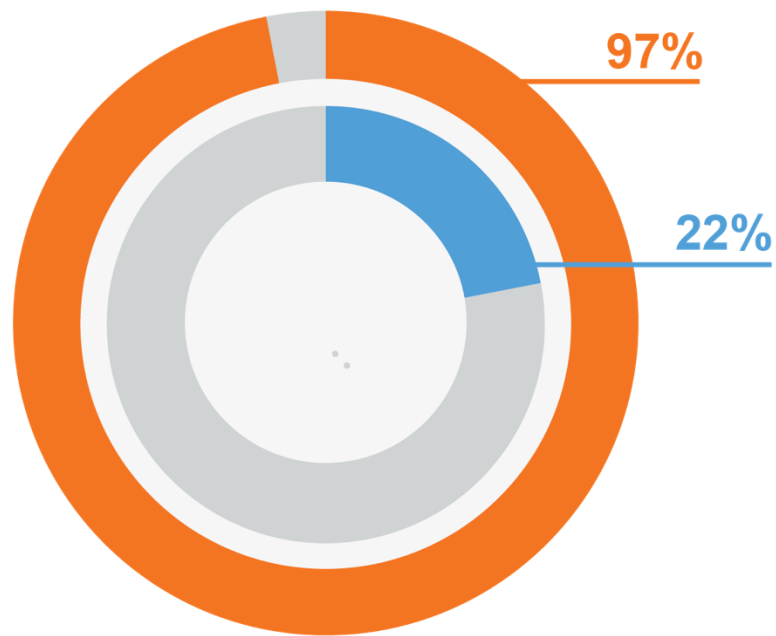


*Gallup & Learning Heroes. (2023, November 14). *B-flation: How good grades can sideline parents*. bealearninghero.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/B-flation_Gallup_Learning-Heroes_Report-FINAL.pdf

Spark Parent Action Through Awareness

Insight 3

Parents who know their child is behind in math say math is top worry*



97% percent of parents who know their child is **below grade level** in math are worried about their child's math skills, compared with **22%** of those who believe their child is **at or above grade level**.

*Gallup & Learning Heroes. (2023, November 14). *B-flation: How good grades can sideline parents*. bealearninghero.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/B-flation_Gallup_Learning-Heroes_Report-FINAL.pdf

“When parents know there's a problem, they'll fix it. They care about their child's success more than anything else, so you had better believe they'll take action - teaming up with teachers and getting their kids the support they need. But how are they expected to fix a problem they don't know they have?”

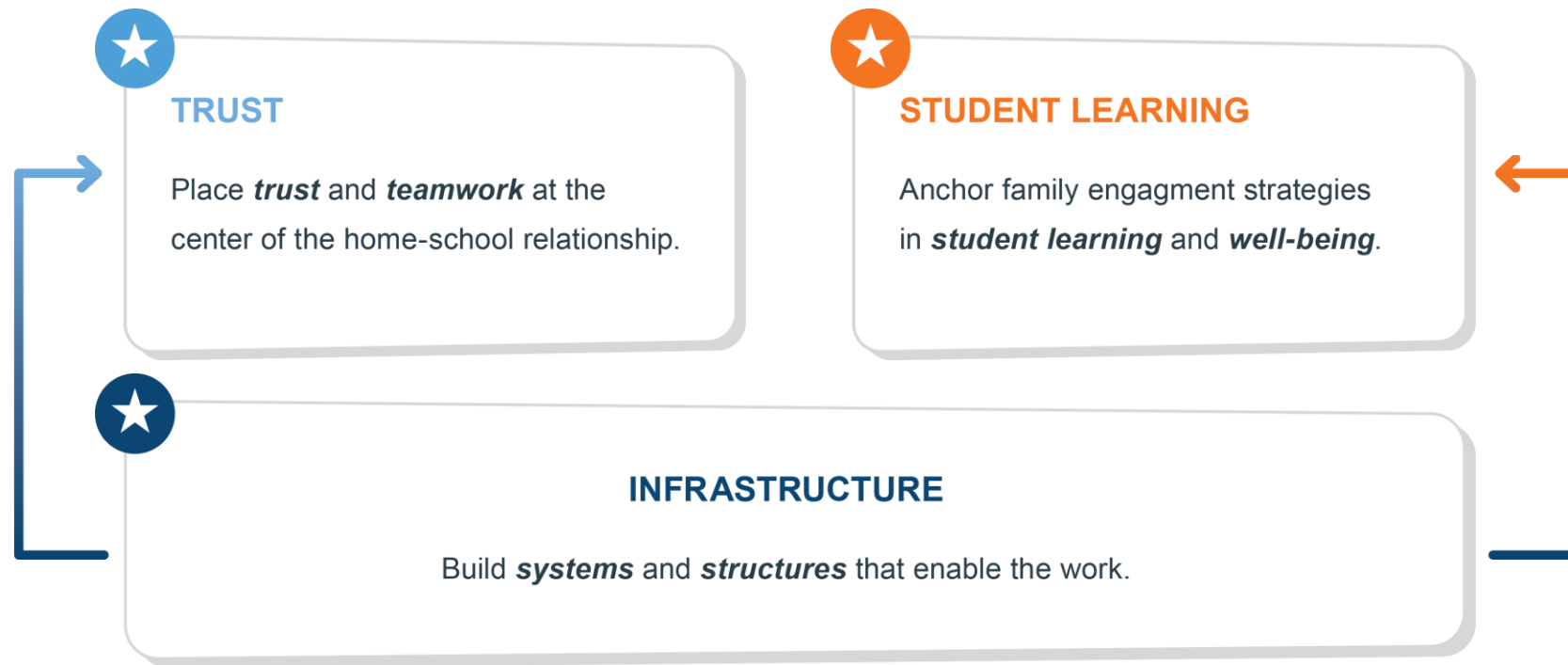
SARAH CARPENTER, EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR OF MEMPHIS LIFT



Prioritize the Parent-Teacher Team

Insight 4

Three pillars of effective family engagement*






*Gallup & Learning Heroes. (2023, November 14). *B-flation: How good grades can sideline parents*. bealearninghero.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/B-flation_Gallup_Learning-Heroes_Report-FINAL.pdf




Make Family Engagement a Strategy, Not a Goal

Insight 5

Family engagement traditional goals:

-  Increase the number of families at Family Night
-  Host Donuts for Dads
-  Send monthly classroom newsletters

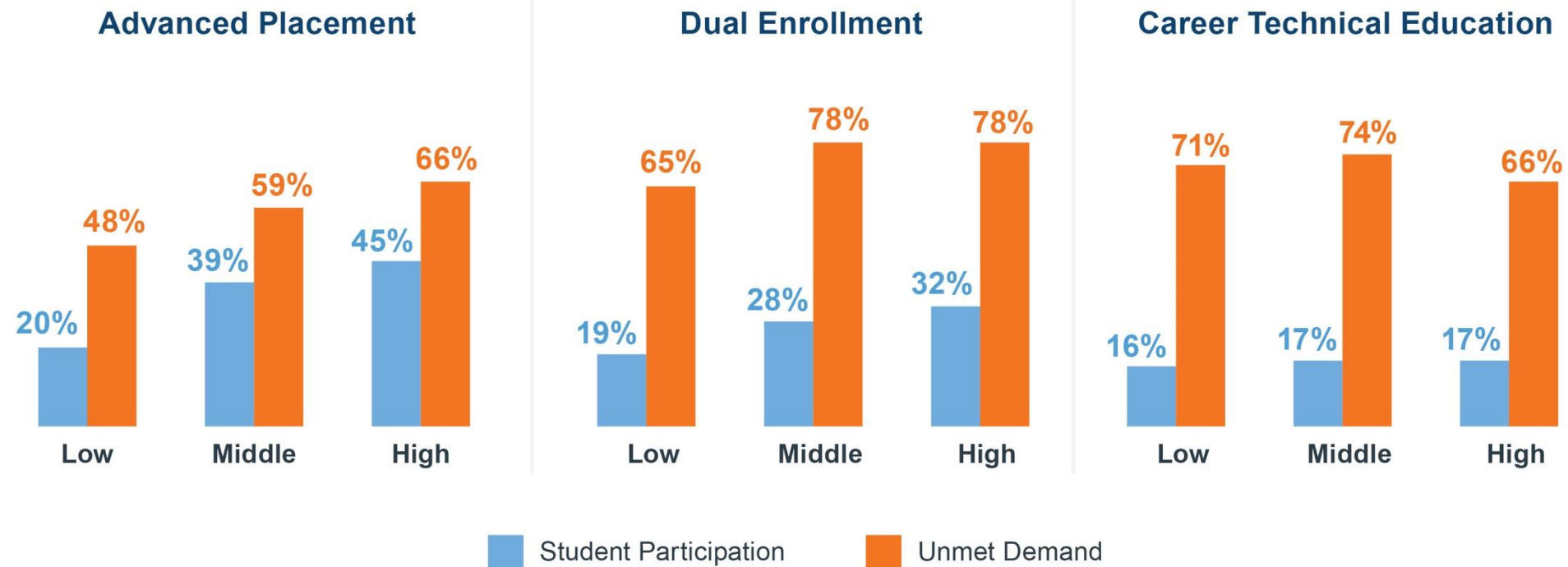
Family engagement as a strategy for achieving school goals:

-  Train and give teachers the time to share student data with families
-  Create an “action plan” with each family to support reading at home
-  Conduct home visits as a way to build relationships and improve attendance

Defining Success After High School

Insight 6

Student participation and unmet parent demand in college and career programs
(by household income)*



*50CAN. (2024, October). *The state of educational opportunity in America: A 50-state survey of 20,000 parents.* 50can.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/50CAN.EducationalOpportunitySurvey.pdf

“Providing every parent in America with clear information about how their children are performing in school is a national imperative. Whether it's our youngest students learning to read and do basic math, our middle schoolers moving through more advanced coursework, or our high schoolers gaining skills to succeed on their future pathway of choice - families deserve timely and transparent data so they know how to help their child.”

**MARGARET SPELLINGS, FORMER U.S.
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION AND PRESIDENT
& CEO OF THE BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER**



Connecting the Dots Between Social, Emotional & Academic Growth

Insight 7

Top skills and traits parents prioritize for their children*



*Learning Heroes. (2018). *Developing life skills in children: A roadmap for communicating with parents*. Learning Heroes. bealearninghero.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/DLS-Report-2018-for-distribution-single-pages.pdf

“Each student is a human being in progress, full of possibility. The ability to change, grow, and learn new skills lives in each of us, in our biology. Parents and schools have enormous influence over how much of each child's potential we ever get to see. That's because what shapes the human brain and body, what drives genetic expression, are the relationships, experiences and opportunities in each young person's life. Trusting relationships - whether between adults and kids or between peers - produce the biological spark that fuels curiosity, engagement and learning inside and outside of school.”

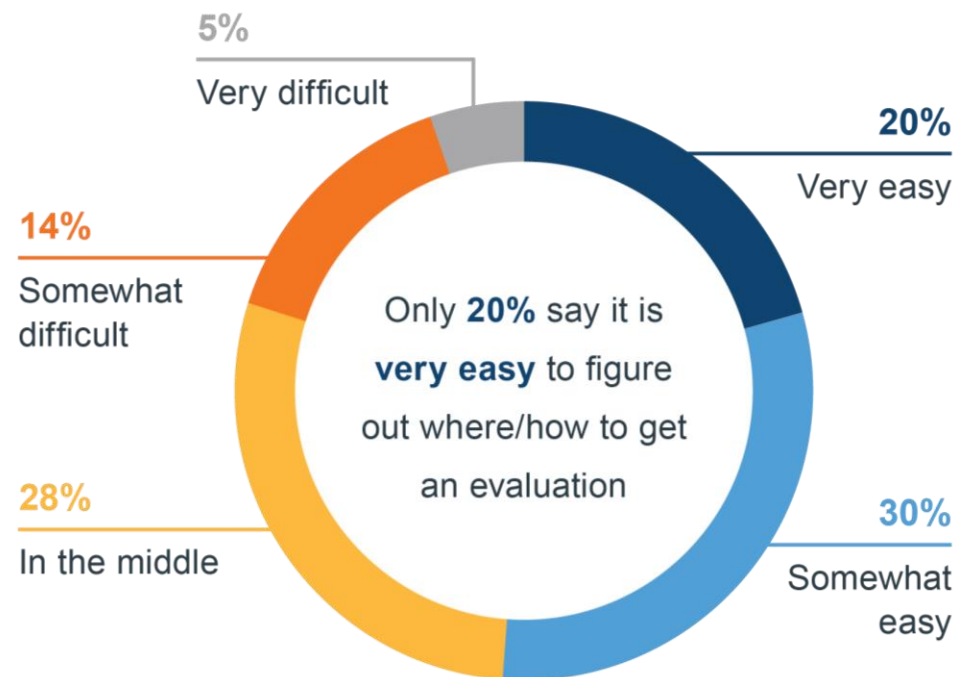
PAMELA CANTOR, MD
CEO OF THE HUMAN POTENTIAL L.A.B.



Learning Differences Are Common – Support Should Be, Too

Insight 8

Evaluations for learning and thinking differences — few parents find them very easy to obtain*



*Learning Heroes. (2023). *The parent journey: Cracking the code for families of children with learning differences*. bealearninghero.org/learning-differences-playbook

Lose the Edu-Jargon

Insight 9

Use clear, family-friendly language to build trusting partnerships with families

WE SAY...	PARENTS THINK...	PARENTS SAY...
Grit	"Strikes me as negative, like a struggle."	Taking on challenges, pushing yourself, not giving up
Self-regulation	"That sounds like my child is going through some sort of therapy."	Self-control
Growth Mindset	"Not sure what that means?"	Hard work pays off, it's all in the effort, learn and grow from mistakes

*Learning Heroes. (2018). *Developing life skills in children: A roadmap for communicating with parents*.

Engagement Works – At Every Grade Level

Insight 10

Schools with strong family engagement have shown:



- ★ Smaller spikes in absenteeism
- ★ Lower rates of learning loss in reading & math

The benefits are clear across elementary, middle, and high school that
when homes and schools team up, everyone wins!

Source: Learning Heroes & TNTP. (2023) Investigating the relationship between pre-pandemic family engagement and student and school outcomes.

“There is one constant in education – the families and students we serve. We cannot sideline them. It is long overdue to center the shifting K-12 education landscape around families and their kids.”

**ARNE DUNCAN, FORMER U.S.
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION AND
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF CHICAGO CRED**





Contact



David Park

President

dpark@learningheroes.org



Follow us on
Instagram:
[@learning.heroes](https://www.instagram.com/learning.heroes)



Follow us on
LinkedIn:
[@learning-heroes-us](https://www.linkedin.com/company/learning-heroes-us)



Like us on
Facebook:
[/Bealearninghero](https://www.facebook.com/Bealearninghero)



Follow us on X:
[@bealearninghero](https://twitter.com/bealearninghero)