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# Effective Strategies for Engaging Parents in Students' Learning to Support Achievement

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## **Maine Education Policy Research Institute**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is three-fold. First, it reviews the research literature on parental engagement in schooling as a means for increasing student learning and achievement. Second, the study assesses and reviews parent engagement strategies used in a sample of Maine schools. Finally, the study conducts exploratory analyses examining whether higher levels of parental engagement in schools in Maine is related to higher levels of student proficiency on state standardized achievement tests.

To accomplish this, the research team conducted a review of the research literature on parent engagement and its impact on student achievement and learning. This review examined parental engagement in school settings (e.g., volunteering), as well as parental engagement in their child's learning at home (e.g., helping on homework). Based on the literature and national "best practice" standards, the team conducted an online survey of school principals in Maine, in order to assess the various parental engagement strategies being used across the state (referred to here as the "*School Engagement Survey*"). These data were then linked to state assessment data in order to identify possible relationships between school reports of parental engagement activities and student proficiency in math and reading.

**Research Evidence.** While empirically strong research on the effect of parent engagement in school is limited, studies suggest that parent engagement in their son or daughter's learning *at home* has consistently greater impacts on his or her academic achievement and performance than does parent engagement in the school setting itself (Sheldon and Epstein, 2005; Harris and Goodall, 2008; Altschul, 2011). In particular, collaborative homework that requires parents and children to work together, and providing enrichment materials that students can take home to their families have been found to be effective. In contrast, while all agree parent engagement in their child's school is positive, there is less evidence that it results in improved student learning and achievement (Altschul, 2011; Harris and Goodall, 2008; DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, and Duchane, 2007). Research does suggest that specific approaches that are *targeted* in terms of their audience and content, *proactive*, and *direct*, may have larger impacts on student learning and performance than approaches that are more general and indirect. Furthermore, researchers

have noted that the effect of parental involvement in schools may vary based on the age of the child and the nature of the involvement. With young children, having a parent visibly involved in their classroom may be beneficial; whereas, for adolescents, less visible involvement—such as serving on school committees—may be more important (Singh et al., 1995).

**Parental Engagement in Maine Schools.** A survey of 48 schools across Maine suggested that schools were generally active in attempting to both engage parents in the school as well as support collaborative parent-child learning activities at home. Nearly two-thirds of these schools reported making special efforts to assign parent-child collaborative homework and half made special efforts to provide families with enrichment material for at-home use. Nearly all schools made efforts to engage parents of new students and many held regular workshops on topics such as testing and student placements. In addition, nearly two-thirds of these schools reported that their school administration and PTA worked well or very well together.

**Relationship with Proficiency in Math and Reading.** When interpreting possible relationships between school reports of parent engagement activities and student testing data, it must be remembered that these are cross-sectional snapshots of school programs and proficiency rates. One *cannot* draw casual inferences that a parent engagement strategy resulted in improved proficiency in math or reading. Recognizing that limitation, analyses using state testing data suggested that a number of parent-engagement efforts being used in Maine were related to student academic outcomes, in particular proficiency in math, and to a lesser degree proficiency in reading. For example, when examining data from all 48 schools, those that sent new families a personalized welcome letter, made special effort to provide families with enrichment material at home, and made special effort to inform parents of school testing periods, had higher rates of proficiency in math than schools that did not make such efforts. Furthermore, schools that reported their administration and PTA work well together and those that reported sending parents “Welcome” packets to parents of new students also had higher school-wide rates of proficiency in both math *and* reading.

Reflecting the previous observation that certain parent engagement strategies may be more effective for younger students, several engagement strategies were related to student proficiency in math for elementary and middle schools, but not for high school. Specifically, elementary/

middle schools that made greater efforts to assign parent-child collaborative homework, report positive behaviors and academic achievements to parents, and seek input from parents through their newsletter or online also had higher school-wide rates of proficiency in math.

**Implications.** While recognizing the limitations of this cross-sectional, observational study, the results suggest that engaging parents in student learning—both at home and in school—may benefit student academic performance, particularly in mathematics. As the research literature notes, efforts that target learning in the home may have the largest, most consistent impacts on student learning. Strategies include:

- Collaborative homework that requires parents and children to work together—particularly for elementary and middle grades.
- Providing enrichment materials that students can take home to use with their families.
- Establishing formal school initiatives that encourage student learning at home.
- In the right situations, encouraging *appropriate*, but possibly higher student and parent aspirations and expectations.

Results also suggest that school-based efforts may be valuable, particularly for elementary and middle schools. Strategies should be developmentally appropriate, recognizing that elementary schools and high schools may require very different approaches. Research suggests that school-based efforts that target subject-specific material and skills may also prove more effective.

Possible strategies include:

- Regular, targeted communication to parents regarding their child’s academic successes.
- Regular communication to parents regarding academic activities and schedules.
- Providing parents of new students with “Welcome packets” and personalized letters.
- Maintaining a strong, collaborative partnership between the school and PTA.
- Actively and genuinely seeking parent input through newsletter or online surveys.

Nevertheless, given the strong research evidence of the impact of collaborative learning in the home environment, students and schools would benefit from linking any parent engagement initiative to the promotion of parent engagement in their child’s learning at home.

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## INTRODUCTION

At the request of the Maine State Legislature, the Maine Educational Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) undertook a study to examine the role of parental engagement in children’s education, and its effect on student learning and achievement. The work was conducted in the winter and spring of 2013-2014. This report seeks to address three questions:

- (1) Does research support the belief that parental engagement in their children’s education, whether at home or at school, increases student learning and achievement? If so, what types of engagement activities are most effective?
- (2) What strategies do schools in Maine employ to increase parental engagement?
- (3) Do data from Maine schools suggest that higher levels of parental engagement are related to higher levels of student achievement (i.e., proficiency on state standardized achievement tests)?

To accomplish this, the research team conducted a review of the research literature on parent engagement and its impact on student achievement and learning. This review examined parental engagement in school settings (e.g., volunteering, conferencing with teachers, attending workshops, involvement in school decision making), as well as parental engagement in their child’s learning at home (e.g., helping on homework, communicating encouragement and educational expectations). Based on the literature and national “best practice” standards, the team conducted an online survey of school principals in Maine, in order to assess the various parental engagement strategies being used across the state (referred to here as the “*School Engagement Survey*”). These data were then linked to state assessment data in order to identify possible relationships between school reports of parental engagement activities and student proficiency in math and reading.

The findings have been organized into two broad categories reflecting strategies for promoting parent engagement in learning at-home and strategies for promoting parent engagement in schools. Within the category of engagement in learning at-home, findings are further organized

into (1) the use of collaborative homework and (2) strategies supporting the home environment. Within the category of engagement in school, findings are further organized into (1) school-parent communication, (2) volunteering and participation in school activities, and (3) decision making (Sheldon and Epstein, 2005). Findings from individual studies are also listed in Appendix A.

Each section begins with a review of the research on the corresponding type of parent engagement – specifically focusing on its impact on student academic outcomes. This is then followed by a review of the findings from the *School Engagement Survey*. Sections end with a summary of analyses using state assessment data that examined whether specific parent engagement strategies were associated with higher school-wide rates of proficiency in math or reading in a sample of Maine schools.

## **METHODS**

The study involved three components: (1) A detailed literature review assessing support—or lack of support—for the belief that parent engagement in schools leads to increased academic performance in children, (2) a statewide survey of schools regarding their parent engagement efforts (the *School Engagement Survey*), and (3) an analysis comparing survey results state testing data on school proficiency rates in math and reading.

### **METHODOLOGY FOR REVIEW OF RESEARCH**

In order to conduct a thorough and accurate review of research evidence for the effect of parental engagement in children’s education and its impact on learning and achievement, the following process was employed. First, several educational databases (ERIC, EBSCO, Education Full Text, JSTOR, and Google Scholar) were searched using a variety of keywords, including: parent, parent involvement, parent engagement, student achievement, student achievement in school, achievement, engagement, partnership, school partnership, schools, and students. The search was limited to peer-reviewed, full-text articles written after 1995. These were reviewed to identify those that most clearly examined parental engagement in school or learning, resulting in an initial pool of 44 articles (including five meta-analyses and seven studies using the same

national longitudinal dataset). Each of these articles was then considered individually in order to evaluate the methodology, research question, and findings. Eight articles that were either not research studies or that focused on student (versus parent) behavior were then eliminated, resulting in 36 studies. These were then further reduced by removing those with small sample sizes, weaker designs, or populations distinctly different from Maine. This resulted in a final core list of eighteen articles related to parent involvement in learning and school engagement as predictors of student achievement.

## **METHODOLOGY FOR SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT SURVEY**

Based on a preliminary review of the literature, an online *School Engagement Survey* was created assessing strategies used to increase parental engagement in school, as well as parental engagement in student learning at home (see Appendix B). Items were chosen that reflected findings from the literature, as well as best-practice recommendations contained within the PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships (PTA, 2014). Requests to complete the survey were emailed to all principals in Maine using contact information available through the Maine Department of Education. Principals were provided with a description of the instrument and a link to the online survey. The email noted that principals could forward the link to other personnel familiar with parent engagement efforts at their school, or complete the survey themselves if they wished. A follow-up email was also distributed two weeks later, reminding principals of the request.

At the end of the process, forty-eight schools completed the *School Engagement Survey*. The survey data were then linked with the most recent state assessment data in order to explore the relationship between various parent engagement strategies and school-level proficiency rates in math and reading.

## **FINDINGS**

The findings have been organized into two broad categories reflecting strategies for promoting parent engagement in learning at-home and strategies for promoting parent engagement in schools. Within the category of engagement in learning at-home, findings are further organized

into (1) the use of collaborative homework and (2) strategies supporting the home environment. Within the category of engagement in school, findings are further organized into (1) school-parent communication, (2) volunteering and participation in school activities, and (3) decision making (Sheldon and Epstein, 2005). Each section begins with a review of the research that has examined the effectiveness of that broad approach on student outcomes, followed by a review of the findings from the *School Engagement Survey*. Sections conclude with a summary of the relationship between the corresponding parent engagement strategies and school rates of proficiency in math and reading.

## **PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING AT HOME**

Research clearly documents that parent engagement and involvement in their child's learning *at home* is positively related to the child's academic achievement and performance *at school*.

When parents are engaged with student-learning in the home and work collaborative with their children on schoolwork, significant and meaningful improvements are consistently observed for both standardized test scores and grades (Sheldon and Epstein, 2005; Harris and Goodall, 2008; Altschul, 2011).

### **Collaborative Homework**

**Research Evidence.** Research has consistently found collaborative, subject-specific homework that requires student-parent interaction to be a particularly effective approach for improving student academic achievement (Sheldon and Epstein, 2005; Bailey, Silvern, Brabham, and Ross, 2004). This is not surprising: parents, students, and teachers all consistently report that parental involvement in their child's education has a positive impact on student achievement (DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, and Duchane, 2007). Assigning homework that requires students to show their work and discuss their math skills with a family member has been found more effective at

#### **How Can Schools Help?**

While homework that involves parent-child collaboration is useful, research suggests that it can have an even larger impact on learning if parents are also provided information regarding the importance of working with their child on homework.

Schools can facilitate an enriching home environment by providing parents and students with game packets or lending-library activities

Schools can help teachers promote parent-child interactive learning by offering professional development on designing collaborative homework.

predicting school-wide mathematics achievement than a wide-range of other approaches, including workshops, parent-teacher conferences, targeted communications to parents, and volunteerism in the school and classroom (Sheldon and Epstein, 2005), even after controlling for prior school-wide achievement. Similarly, parent-child collaborative assignments have been found to double the length of time parents spend working with their elementary age child on reading homework (from 21 to 44 minutes). Not surprisingly, this was also found to result in improved reading skills at this critical developmental time period (Bailey, Silvern, Brabham and Ross, 2004).

Research also suggests that the positive effect of parent-child collaborative homework can be further magnified by providing parents with information regarding the *importance* of doing so (Bailey, Silvern, Brabham and Ross, 2004). For example, while assigning parent-child interactive reading homework has been found to result in significant improvements in reading skills among 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students, including instructions to parents regarding the importance of working with their child on homework resulted in significantly greater improvement beyond assigning collaborative homework alone (Bailey, Silvern, Brabham and Ross, 2004).

Beyond active collaboration on homework, simply discussing school work and grades with children can be an effective way for parents to increase their child's own engagement in school (Mo and Singh, 2008; DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, and Duchane, 2007) and improved academic grades (Desimone, 1999). Nevertheless, schools can still provide parents with guidance regarding homework expectations and parent-child discussions on learning at home (Harris and Goodall, 2008).

**Maine Schools.** Among schools that completed the *School Engagement Survey*, two-thirds indicated that they made special efforts to assign homework that required parental involvement (see Table 1), with 64.6% of schools agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement “*Our school makes a special effort to assign homework that requires parental involvement, such as joint reading, family history essays, etc.*” Analyses then compared these ratings with state data regarding the percentage of students identified as proficient or higher in math and reading on either the *NECAP* (2013/2014) for grades 3-8, or *MHSA* (2012/2013) for grade 11. The goal of these analyses was to assess whether there was a relationship between the degree to which

schools reported promoting parent-child collaborative homework and student proficiency in math and reading. Two sets of analyses were conducted: All schools combined, and elementary and middle school grades alone (based solely on NECAP results). The number of high schools participating was too small in order to be examined separately.

Table 1. Percentage of Maine Schools Reporting Activities to Promote Engagement in Learning at Home (March 2014).

Engagement Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Percentage of schools that make a special effort to assign homework that requires parental involvement	8.3%	8.3%	18.8%	52.1%	12.5%
Percentage of schools that make a special effort to send enrichment material home	4.2%	12.5%	33.3%	41.7%	8.3%

While there were no significant effects when analyzing data from all schools together (elementary, middle, and high schools), results based on elementary and middle schools alone are worth noting. Consistent with the research evidence, the data did suggest that elementary and middle schools that made greater efforts at promoting collaborative homework also had higher rates of students identified as proficient in math ( $r(37)=.324, p=.05$ ).

## Home Environment

**Research Evidence.** Beyond parents working directly with their children on collaborative homework, research has identified other home-based factors that schools can support that may facilitate parent engagement in student learning. For example, having educational resources in the home and having parents and children engage in enriching activities together have been found to be related to achievement in middle and high school age Mexican American youth (Altschul, 2011). This has been observed across a broad range of topics, including reading, math, science, and history. Unfortunately, many lower income families or families with less experience in higher education may have limited educational resources in their home. Consequently, schools can facilitate an enriching home environment by providing parents and students with game packets or lending-library activities that they can use at home. Providing

families with such resources has been found to be on par with collaborative homework in promoting math achievement (Sheldon and Epstein, 2005). Schools that are not in a position to offer this type of assistance can also help to promote a supportive learning environment at home through workshops on topics such as helping with homework and achievement test preparation (Sheldon et al., 2010). Ideally, such workshops should be scheduled for evenings or weekends in order to make them as available to all parents as possible (Sheldon and Epstein, 2005).

While providing resources and information to parents can help them to create additional successful learning opportunities at home, the full impact may be in more subtle changes to the larger home environment and parent-child relationship. Increased active involvement in student learning communicates to the child that learning and education are important in his or her family. The increased parent-child interaction is itself ultimately rewarding to both children and parents, particularly when this is tied to identifiable success at school. This can lead to changes in the family culture itself, with increased educational expectations and aspirations from both parents and children. In this regard, research suggests that raising parent and student aspirations and expectations may be one of the most important things parents can do to increase student academic performance and success (Rosenzweig, 2001, Fan and Chen, 2001). For example, in one study examining predictors of student achievement on the ACT test, the single strongest predictor of high performance was student reports that their parent(s) expected them to maintain at least a 3.0 GPA (Barwegan, Falciani, Putnam, Reamer, and Stair, 2004). Other studies have also found that parents' expectations of student achievement had a more positive impact than other parent behaviors, including homework help, time management, and discussions with their children about education (Lee and Bowen, 2006).

***Maine Schools.*** As indicated in Table 1, half of all schools responding to the *School Engagement Survey*, indicated that they made special efforts to send enrichment material home with students. The data suggested less support for formal initiatives to involve parents in their child's learning at home, with 35.5% of schools reporting that they make this type of effort at least once a year, while slightly more than one-in-four schools (27.1%) indicated that they never conduct such programs (see Table 2).

Consistent with the research evidence, analyses found marginally significant relationships

between both of these school efforts and school-wide proficiency in math. Specifically, schools that reported making (1) greater efforts to provide enrichment materials to families and (2) more frequent use of initiatives to encourage parental involvement in student learning at home also had higher rates of student proficiency in mathematics ( $r(46)=.279, p=.06$ ; and  $r(46)=.273, p=.07$ , respectively – both approaching statistical significant).

Table 2. Percentage of Maine Schools Reporting Formal Efforts to Encourage Parental Engagement in Learning at Home (March 2014).

<b>Engagement Survey Item</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Occasionally, but not every year</b>	<b>Approximately once each year</b>	<b>More than once each year</b>
Campaigns to encourage parents to become involved in their child's learning at home	27.1%	37.5%	18.8%	16.7%

While there were no overall effects across all schools in either math or reading. Consistent with the research evidence, the data did suggest that elementary and middle schools that made greater efforts at promoting collaborative homework also had higher rates of students identified as proficient in math ( $r(37)=.324, p=.05$ ).

## **PARENT ENGAGEMENT AT SCHOOL**

In contrast to the impact of parent engagement in learning at home, parent involvement in at-school activities is often found to have relatively little direct impact on student academic performance (Altschul, 2011; Harris and Goodall, 2008; DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, and Duchane, 2007). This is not to say that there is little schools can do in this regard. As described later in the following sections, there are a variety of evidence-based strategies that schools can employ to increase parental involvement in student learning. However, the key to successfully impacting student achievement and learning appears to be for schools to employ strategies that ultimately help parents to change the home dynamics in order to promote parental engagement with at-home learning, rather than simply bringing parents into the school environment.



## Parent-School Communication

**Research Evidence.** Educators will also often use various forms of targeted communications to parents as a way to increase parental engagement in both the school environment and learning at home. This can include providing contact information for a child’s teacher, sending home progress reports, holding “family nights” at school, or holding workshops to help increase parent understanding and involvement. Approaches can range from largely passive opportunities provided to parents, to targeted communications to specific parents that directly address parent engagement in learning. While no one would argue against the inherent value of such school-parent communication, to date there is limited empirical evidence that this in fact leads to higher academic performance (Sheldon and Epstein, 2005) — although the impact may be more indirect and subtle, making it difficult to detect. For example, one project examined the use various “communicating” strategies (e.g., parent-teacher conferences focusing on math, open houses targeting math-teaching, math topics in the school newsletters, progress notes to parents, and workshops on state achievement tests) as ways of creating a stronger family-school partnership. As expected, such behaviors were seen by parents as important contributors to a “positive partnership climate”. Furthermore,

### How Can Schools Help?

1. Conduct workshops during daytime or school hours for parents on content-based skills (e.g., math, reading) and expectations for children.
2. Conduct similar workshops for parents in the evening.
3. Give families information on how to contact the teacher at school.
4. Issue certificates for students to take home that recognize mastery of new skills.
5. Schedule individual conferences with parents of students who are failing or are at risk of failing.
6. Inform parents of students’ progress and problems on report cards.
7. Offer videotapes on content skills (e.g., math, reading) that families can view at school or at home.
8. Invite parents and the community to assemblies for student awards for academic excellence.
9. Invite parents and the community to assemblies for student awards for academic improvement.
10. Request parent or community volunteers to tutor students.
11. Assign students homework that requires them to show and discuss skills with a family member.
12. Offer parents or students game packets or lending-library activities to use at home.
13. Offer students and families content-based activities on Saturdays.
14. Organize presentations for students on how different content areas (e.g., math, reading) are used by business, government, and industry.

*Adapted from Sheldon and Epstein, 2005*

this overall positive climate was then found to have a positive impact on student achievement (Sheldon, Epstein and Galindo, 2010).

While the actual impact of such efforts is unclear, one possibility is that school-communication efforts that are targeted, proactive, and direct may have larger impacts on student learning and performance than approaches that are more general and indirect. For example, elementary schools that *specifically targeted parents of low-achieving students* by having educators (1) telephone parents of low-achieving students on a regular and as-needed basis, (2) send materials home to parents regarding strategies for helping their child, and (3) hold face-to-face meetings with parents, saw growth rates among low-achieving students increase at a 40% higher rate than schools that reported low levels of such efforts (Henderson and Mapp, 2002). In this case, telephoning parents of high-risk students may understandably be more effective for those specific students than providing additional student-progress updates to all parents in a school.

Identifying effective communication strategies is further hampered by the large variety of approaches that are used, with multiple strategies often used simultaneously. This may make it difficult to differentiate effective from ineffective approaches, and may inadvertently mask the true impact of effective strategies (Mattingly et al., 2002).

**Maine Schools.** As indicated in Table 3, schools responding to the *School Engagement Survey*, generally reported making a variety of efforts to communicate with parents through different ways and on different topics relevant to families. While the research evidence for the effect of such communication on student learning and achievement is more mixed, analyses based on these Maine schools did find certain school-parent communication strategies to be related to higher proficiency rates. In particular, elementary and middle schools that reported making greater efforts to report positive achievements and behaviors had higher overall rates of proficiency in math when compared to schools reporting less such effort ( $r(37)=.398, p<.05$ ). Similarly, schools that reported making greater efforts at informing parents about mid-term exams, final exams, and other school testing also had higher overall rates for proficiency in math ( $r(46)=.351, p<.05$ )—with this effect being exceptionally strong for elementary and middle schools ( $r(37)=.546, p<.001$ ). In fact, while increased efforts to inform parents of testing was not related to overall proficiency rates in reading across all schools, it was related to higher

reading proficiency rates in elementary and middle schools ( $r(37)=-.330, p<.05$ ).

Table 3. Percentage of Maine Schools Reporting Various Communication-Based Strategies to Encourage Parental Engagement in School. (March 2014)

Engagement Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither		Strongly Agree
			Agree nor Disagree	Agree	
Our school makes a special effort to regularly remind parents to monitor their student's work	2.1%	6.3%	14.6%	52.1%	25.0%
Our school makes a special effort to inform parents when it is time for mid-terms, finals, or high-stakes testing	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	54.2%	39.6%
Our school makes a special effort to reach out to parents of struggling students	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	31.3%	68.8%
Our school makes a special effort to reach out to low-income or ethnic minority families	0.0%	6.3%	27.1%	27.1%	39.6%
Our school makes a special effort to regularly report student's positive behavior and achievements	0.0%	12.5%	16.7%	47.9%	22.9%

Communication with new families is widely seen as important in helping families engage with a new school environment. As indicated in Table 4, nearly all responding schools indicated that parents of new students were invited to visit the school and meet their child’s teacher, while more than half reported sending a formal “Welcome” packet to the home containing information regarding the school.

Given this targets a limited number of families, one would not anticipate seeing significant effects between these factors and school-wide proficiency rates; however, analyses did find two sets of effects. First, schools that reported sending parents a “Welcome packet” also had higher overall rates of proficiency in both mathematics ( $t(44)=2.435, p<.05$ ) and reading ( $t(44)=2.064, p<.05$ ). Specifically, the mean proficiency rates for schools that did not provide “Welcome Packets” were 53.7% for math and 60.7% for reading, while the mean proficiency rates for schools that did provide packets as 63.3% for math and 69.4% for reading. Second, while only one-quarter of schools reported sending a personalized letter to the family, those that did also had

higher overall rates of proficiency in mathematics ( $t(44)=2.706, p<.01$ ). Specifically, the mean math proficiency rates were 56.1% for schools that reported they did not send letters and 68.8% for those that reported they did.

Finally, as reported in Table 5, over half (56.2%) of participating schools reported holding annual (or more frequent) workshops teaching parents about educational progress monitoring, such as testing and student placements, while less than one-quarter (22.9%) held similar workshops on child development. Neither of these were related to school-wide proficiency rates.

Table 4. Percentage of Maine Schools Reporting Various Communication-Based Activities for New Students and Families. (March 2014)

Engagement Survey Item	Percentage of Schools
A "Welcome" packet is sent home containing information about the school	56.3%
Parents are offered an opportunity to visit the school	93.8%
Parents are offered an opportunity to meet with their child's teacher(s)	91.7%
A personalized letter is mailed to the family home	25.0%
Someone from the school personally calls the parents	33.3%

Table 5. Percentage of Maine Schools Offering Different Types of Workshops. (March 2014)

Engagement Survey Item	Never	Occasionally,	One a year	More than
		but not every year		once each year
Offer workshops on understanding children's educational progress, such as testing and placement	14.6%	29.2%	33.3%	22.9%
Offer workshops on understanding how children learn and grow, such as child development, learning styles	33.3%	43.8%	12.5%	10.4%

## Volunteering and Participation in School Activities

**Research Evidence.** In addition to increasing communication between the school and parents, educators and educational researchers have explored, with varying degrees of success, numerous strategies for increasing parent participation in activities on-site at their child's school.

However, as noted previously, there is relatively limited empirical evidence that parental

involvement in the school-setting has a direct impact on student academic performance (in contrast to the effect of parental involvement in learning at home). The following studies nevertheless point to some possible areas for further research or consideration.

In an effort to regularly bring parents into the classroom, many schools encourage volunteerism by parents and families. This can involve helping in classrooms and libraries, or providing other types of support around the school.

While few empirical studies have focused on the effect of parental volunteerism on student academic outcomes, one study did find that students who *perceived* their parents as being more involved in volunteering at their school also performed higher on standardized achievement tests (Barwegan, Falciani, Putnam, Reamer, and Stair, 2004). However, it is unclear whether this is due to parent involvement in the school, or whether this reflects parents of academically strong students—or higher income / more highly educated families—being more engaged with their child’s school environment to begin with.

Stronger data regarding possible effects of this type of parental involvement are available through a large, national longitudinal database that includes information on several different types of parental involvement

### **PTA’s National Standards for Parent-School Partnerships**

**Standard 1:** Welcoming all families into the school community—Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

**Standard 2:** Communicating effectively—Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

**Standard 3:** Supporting student success—Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students’ learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

**Standard 4:** Speaking up for every child—Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

**Standard 5:** Sharing power—Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

**Standard 6:** Collaborating with community—Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

*From :*  
[www.pta.org/programs/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3126](http://www.pta.org/programs/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3126)

in school settings. Analyses by different research teams largely suggest that parental volunteerism has no clear or substantively meaningful effects on student outcomes (Singh et al., 1995), with a few exceptions that indicate possible small effects for parent volunteering-related work among certain subgroups of students. Specifically, parental volunteering and fundraising were related to overall grades and standardized test performance among Caucasian students, but were unrelated to achievement for Black, Hispanic, and Asian students (Desimone, 1999). These same analyses also suggested that such volunteerism may have significant effects for students from middle and upper-income families, but less or no effect for students from low-income families.

Volunteerism is only one way in which parents can become directly involved in their child's school. Researchers have examined parental school-involvement more broadly, with similar limited evidence of its effect on student learning or academic achievement. While general involvement – consisting of volunteering, as well as attending conferences and school activities—has been found to predict student achievement by some (Lee and Bowen, 2006), others have found parental participation in school activities and PTA meetings to be unrelated to student achievement (Singh et al., 1995).

One possible explanation for these seemingly contradictory patterns is that the effect of direct parental involvement in schools varies based on the age of the child and the manner in which the parent participates in the school. For young children, it may be more beneficial for parents to be involved in their school, with more visible forms of parental engagement (e.g., volunteering in the classroom) also more effective at impacting student outcomes. As children age, the effect of parental involvement in the school may decline, with less visible forms of engagement (e.g., serving on committees) becoming more effective (Singh et al., 1995).

In addition, some researchers have suggested that parental involvement in schools may be more effective at influencing child academic outcomes when that involvement is targeting specific content areas (Henderson and Mapp, 2002; Sheldon and Epstein, 2005). For example, Sheldon, Epstein and Galindo's study (2010) focused narrowly on student performance in math. Specific activities were identified as having greater impact on student achievement: Family math nights, volunteer math-aides, and math projects that involve family or community partners. Rather than

focus on simply “getting parents into the school”, optimal strategies may require strategically-planned parent involvement activities that engage parents and students in discussion of the subject-specific material and skills (Sheldon and Epstein, 2005).

**Maine Schools.** When promoting participation in in-school activities, access to all families is important. Hence, providing school-based activities at low or no cost can allow low-income or financially distressed families to nevertheless engage in the school environment. Over 40% of the Maine schools responding to the *School Engagement Survey*, indicated that most or all school activities are free or low-cost (see Table 6), with only 21.3% offering financially-accessible activities rarely or never.

Table 6. Percentage of Maine Schools Offering Activities at Low or No Cost. (March 2014)

Engagement Survey Item	Never	Rarely	Some- times	Most of the Time	Always
How often does the school offer family activities at low or no cost	4.3%	17.0%	36.2%	21.3%	21.3%

Nevertheless, it should be noted that analyses found no evidence that offering free or low cost activities ultimately was associated with higher school-wide rates of proficiency in math or reading.

### **Decision-Making**

**Research Evidence.** Another general strategy for promoting parental engagement in the school setting involves bringing parents into the decision-making process for school planning. This can involve seeking parental input on strategic planning or having parents from all backgrounds serve on various committees (Sheldon, Epstein, and Galindo, 2010). Unfortunately, as with volunteering and other types of on-site school participation, there is relatively little empirical evidence that parental involvement in the school decision making has a direct impact on student academic performance. An exception is limited evidence that participation in a school’s *Parent Teacher Organization* may be related to standardized achievement test and grades for African American and Caucasian students, but was only related to achievement tests for Hispanic

students – and unrelated to any academic outcomes for Asian students (Desimone, 1999). Nevertheless, others have found no effects for these same activities (Singh et al., 1995).

**Maine Schools.** The *School Engagement Survey*, included two items that touched on the degree to which school administration welcomed input and decision-making from parents. The first question assessed how well the school administration and the school PTA or similar parent-group worked together. As reported in Table 7, school respondents generally reported positive such partnerships, with nearly two-thirds (65.9%) reporting that the school administration and PTA (or equivalent) worked well or very well together. Analyses found this to be related to school-wide rates of proficiency in both math ( $r(42)=.444, p<.01$ ) and reading ( $r(42)=.341, p<.05$ ).

The second question assessed how often the school solicits input from parents through their newsletter. As reported in Table 8, schools reported doing this less often, with less than 5% of schools reporting that they did so most or all of the time (4.4%), and over half indicating never or rarely (52.2%). While less common, subsequent analyses nevertheless found that soliciting this input from parents was related to school-wide rates of math proficiency in elementary and middle schools ( $r(37)=.419, p<.01$ ).

Table 7. Quality of Partnership Between School Administration and PTA. (March 2014)

Engagement Survey Item	Very				
	Poorly	Poorly	Fair	Well	Very Well
How well does the school administration and the PTA work together	6.8%	6.8%	20.5%	31.8%	34.1%

Table 8. Use of School Newsletter for Parent Input. (March 2014)

Engagement Survey Item	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Most of the Time	
				Always	Always
How often does your school newsletter solicit input from parents	10.9%	41.3%	43.5%	2.2%	2.2%



## CHALLENGES WITH ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

It should be noted that there are several factors that can make it difficult for research to detect positive effects for parental engagement in schools. For example, while this line of research is based on the assumption that increased parental involvement in school reflects a positive change, in fact in some cases parental involvement in their child's school is a result of problems their child is experiencing—referred to as a *reactive hypothesis*:

The reactive hypothesis claims that any negative correlation or relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement stems from a reactive parent involvement strategy whereby a student having academic or behavioral difficulties at school leads to greater levels of parent involvement. (McNeal, 2012)

Furthermore, research suggests that the effect of school engagement may differ based on a family's socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity (Harris and Goodall, 2008; Lee and Bowen, 2006; Desimone, 1999). For example, studies suggest that parent involvement in their child's school tends to increase with parents' income and education (Harris and Goodall, 2008). Consequently, children from middle and upper income families who historically perform at higher levels academically are also more apt to have parents who are engaged in their education (Lee and Bowen, 2006). Although there are a variety of factors that may keep lower-income families from engaging with their child's school, educators will need to deliberately reach out to these parents to draw them into the school. "Effective parental engagement will not happen without concerted effort, time and commitment of both parents and schools. It will not happen unless parents know the difference that they make, and unless schools actively reinforce that all parents matter" (Harris and Goodall, 2008).

Also, it should be noted that the nature of many of these research studies themselves limits the conclusions one can draw from them. Most are not experimental studies, and so differences may reflect different characteristics of the children and families, rather than the actual engagement strategies. Furthermore, most are not longitudinal studies—which, combined with the lack of experimental designs—limits the ability to draw causal inferences from any observed effects. Finally, studies typically involve simultaneously examining multiple strategies for increasing engagement. This may make it difficult to differentiate effective from ineffective approaches, and may inadvertently mask the true impact of effective strategies (Mattingly et al., 2002). The

limitations with existing research led Mattingly and colleagues to conclude that “*evaluation designs and data collection techniques are often not sufficiently rigorous to provide valid evidence of program effectiveness*” (Mattingly et al, 2002). Unfortunately, this situation has not improved significantly in the decade since.

## CONCLUSIONS

### SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to assess the existing research evidence on the impact that parental engagement in their child’s education may or may not have on student learning and achievement. The study also sought to assess the use of various parent engagement strategies being used by schools in Maine, and attempt to determine whether these approaches were related to student proficiency in mathematics and reading. As summarized below, the findings in all regards were positive and informative.

First, although empirically strong research on the effect of parent engagement in school is limited, studies suggest that parent engagement in their child’s learning *at home* has consistently greater impacts on the child’s academic achievement and performance than does parent engagement in the school setting itself (Sheldon and Epstein, 2005; Harris and Goodall, 2008; Altschul., 2011). While research has focused on the impact of collaborative homework that requires parents and children to work together, other school-based interventions that help to foster the learning-at-home environment have also been found effective. For example, by providing enrichment materials to students to take home, schools can facilitate the home-based learning environment for economically or educationally restricted families (Sheldon and Epstein, 2005).

While there is less research evidence suggesting that parent engagement in the school setting may lead to increased student learning and academic achievement (Altschul, 2011; Harris and Goodall, 2008; DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, and Duchane, 2007), there are studies that suggest specific strategies or features may be effective. For example, school-communication efforts that are *targeted*, *proactive*, and *direct*, may have larger impacts on student learning and performance

than approaches that are more general and indirect. In addition, researchers have suggested that the effect of direct parental involvement in schools may vary based on the age of the child and the nature of the involvement. With young children, having a parent visibly involved in their classroom may be most beneficial; whereas, for older adolescents, less visible forms of involvement—such as serving on school committees—may be more important (Singh et al., 1995).

In regards to Maine schools, this study included a survey of 48 elementary-level to high schools across the state assessing various parent engagement strategies being used. Results suggested that schools were generally active in attempting to both engage parents in the school as well as support collaborative parent-child learning activities at home. Nearly two-thirds of these schools reported making special efforts to assign parent-child collaborative homework and half made special efforts to provide families with enrichment material for at-home use.

Schools also reported making efforts to engage parents of new children, with nearly all indicating that parents of new students were invited to visit the school and meet their child's teacher, while more than half of the schools also reported sending a formal "Welcome" packet to the home that contained information regarding the school. Workshops held at the school is another school-based approach that some use to engage parents, and participating Maine schools reported offering workshops on a variety of topics. In particular, over half reported offering workshops at least annually aimed at helping parents understand and plan for their child's education progress, addressing topics such as testing, placements, etc. In addition, nearly two-thirds of these schools reported that their school administration and PTA (or equivalent) worked well or very well together.

Analyses using state testing data also suggested that a number of these parent-engagement efforts were related to student academic outcomes, in particular proficiency in math, and to a lesser degree proficiency in reading. For example, when examining all schools (K-12), those that sent new families a personalized welcome letter, made special effort to provide families with enrichment material at home, and made special effort to inform parents of high-stakes testing or mid-term/final exams had higher school-wide rates of proficiency in Math than schools that did not make such efforts. Furthermore, schools that reported their administration and PTA work

well together and those that reported sending parents of new students “Welcome” packets also had higher school-wide rates of proficiency in both math *and* reading.

Researchers have noted that the effects of certain parent engagement strategies may be more effective for younger students than older students. Consistent with this, several engagement strategies were related to student proficiency in math for elementary and middle schools, but not for high school outcomes. Specifically, the data suggested that elementary and middle schools that made greater efforts to assign parent-child collaborative homework, report positive behaviors and academic achievements to parents, and seek input from parents through their newsletter or online also had higher school-wide rates of proficiency in math.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

When interpreting possible implications of these findings—particularly analyses using Maine data—one must remember that these are cross-sectional snapshots of school programs and proficiency rates. One cannot draw casual inferences that a parent engagement strategy *resulted* in improved proficiency in math or reading. To do so would require multiple years of tracking the implementation of specific engagement strategies over time.

With that limitation, the results suggest that engaging parents in student learning—both at home and in school—may benefit student academic performance, particularly in mathematics. As the research literature notes, efforts that target learning in the home may have the largest, most consistent impacts on student learning. Strategies include:

- Collaborative homework that requires parents and children to work together—particularly for elementary and middle grades.
- Providing enrichment materials that students can take home to use with their families.
- Establishing formal school initiatives that encourage student learning at home.
- In the right situations, encouraging *appropriate*, but possibly higher student and parent aspirations and expectations.

Results also suggest that school-based efforts may be valuable, particularly for elementary and middle schools. Strategies should be developmentally appropriate, recognizing that elementary schools and high schools may require very different approaches. Research suggests that school-

based efforts that target subject-specific material and skills may also prove more effective.

Possible strategies include:

- Regular, targeted communication to parents regarding their child’s academic successes.
- Regular communication to parents regarding academic activities and schedules.
- Providing parents of new students with “Welcome packets” and personalized letters.
- Maintaining a strong, collaborative partnership between the school and PTA.
- Actively and genuinely seeking parent input through newsletter or online surveys.

Nevertheless, given the strong research evidence of the impact of collaborative learning in the home environment, students and schools would benefit from linking any parent engagement initiative to the promotion of parent engagement in their child’s learning at home.

***“The importance of involving parents in improving educational achievement cannot be overstated as parents are the most pervasive socializing influence on academic competence and school functioning.” (Singh, et al., 1995)***

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## APPENDIX A: LITERATURE IDENTIFIED IN THE REVIEW

Author	-Type of Study	Findings Related to Parent Involvement and Student Achievement	Category
Altschul, I. (2011).	Quant-NELS:88*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extracurricular instruction, educational resources in the home, parents and children engaging in enriching activities together, and parents discussing school matters with children had the most impact on student achievement</li> <li>• The parenting behaviors above seemed to have no impact on change in student achievement between grades 8 and 10. Only eighth grade test scores were a significant predictor of grade 10 test scores.</li> </ul>	Parent Involvement in the Home
Desimone, L. (1999).	Quant-NELS:88*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School-level volunteering, PTO involvement, school contact, parent-child interaction were explored as types of parent involvement.</li> <li>• The effectiveness of parent involvement varied with race-ethnicity and income for 8th grade students in reading and math. .</li> </ul>	Family, School and Community
McNeal, R. r. (2012).	Quant-NELS:88*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some forms of parent involvement positively impact science achievement and truancy.</li> <li>• No clear evidence to support reactive hypothesis (negative reaction from parents towards a situation)</li> <li>• Parents may use different types of parent engagement/involvement depending on the age of the child.</li> </ul>	Parent Involvement in the Home
Mo, Y., & Singh, K. (2008)	Quant-NELS:88*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students whose parents stay connected to them and schools are likely to have higher school engagement and performance.</li> <li>• Parent engagement with their students and schools does show positive correlation with middle school students.</li> </ul>	Family, School and Community
Singh, K., Bickley, P. G., Trivette, P., Keith, T. Z., Keith, P. B., & Anderson, E. (1995).	Quant-NELS:88*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental aspirations exerted strongest positive impact on student achievement in 8th graders.</li> <li>• Parent-child communication had a moderate effect on the achievement of 8th graders.</li> <li>• Home structure had a small negative impact on student achievement of 8th graders.</li> <li>• Parental participation in school activities had no effect on 8th grade student achievement.</li> </ul>	Parental Aspirations and Expectations
Yan, W., & Lin, Q. (2005).	Quant-NELS:88*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adolescents tended to do well in school when parents expressed high expectations and provided nurturing environment.</li> <li>• Inequity exists within society, causing varied resources for minorities in relationship to Caucasians.</li> </ul>	Parental Aspirations and Expectations  Obstacles to Parent



			Involvement
Fan, X. & Chen Michael (2001).	Meta-analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistencies with the research literature on the positive influence of parent involvement with student achievement.</li> <li>• Parent aspirations and expectations appear to have the strongest relationship with the academic achievement of students.</li> </ul>	Parental Aspirations and Expectations
Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002).	Meta-analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families can improve their students' academic performance in school</li> <li>• Children at risk of failure benefit from extra supports from family/communities.</li> <li>• Ways parents are involved should be linked to learning, developing skills and guiding studies course choices.</li> <li>• Parent engagement programs must include a teacher component.</li> </ul>	Family, School and Community
Mattingly, D. J., Prislun, R., McKenzie, T. L., Rodriguez, J. L., & Kayzar, B. (2002)	Meta-analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of conclusive evidence to support the importance of parent involvement programs in terms of improved student achievement.</li> <li>• Flaws within studies of parent involvement programs to date.</li> </ul>	Family, School and Community
Rosenzweig, C. (2001)	Meta-analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The combination of seven parenting practices yield the highest impact on student achievement.</li> <li>• These practices are: educational aspirations and expectations; engagement; authoritative parenting style; autonomy support; emotional support and warmth; providing resources and learning experiences; specific types of parent participation in schools</li> </ul>	Parental Aspirations and Expectations
Semke, C., & Sheridan, S. (2012).	Meta-analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family-school connections in rural areas may be beneficial in promoting student achievement and in meeting student needs.</li> <li>• Connections between school and the whole community are important.</li> <li>• Studies of family-school connections are lacking and therefore more research is needed to conclusively measure any positive correlations.</li> </ul>	Family, School and Community
Barwegen, L., Falciani, N. K., Putnam, S., Reamer, M. B., & Stair, E. E. (2004).	Quant-Survey and Achievement Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a relationship between the perception of parent involvement and student achievement. Students who perceived a higher level of parent involvement scored higher on the ACT</li> </ul>	Parental Aspirations and Expectations
Lee, J.-S., & Bowen, N. K. (2006).	Quant-Survey and Achievement Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent involvement at school and parental educational expectations had the highest correlations with academic achievement</li> <li>• Time management and homework help had the lowest associations with achievement</li> <li>• Parents with a 2-year degree or higher reported significantly more frequent involvement at school, parent-child educational discussions, and higher educational expectations for their children</li> <li>• Poverty and race/ethnicity consistently played a significant role in student achievement</li> </ul>	Parenting  Parental Aspirations and Expectations  Obstacles to Parent

			Involvement
Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2005).	Quant-Survey and Achievement Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of the six typologies, only learning-at-home-activities consistently related to students' performance on standardized achievement tests.</li> <li>• Homework that effectively required parent-student interaction had a more positive impact on mathematics proficiency than other techniques</li> </ul>	Parent Involvement in the Home
Sheldon, S. B., Epstein, J. L., & Galindo, C. L. (2010).	Quant-Survey and Achievement Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools that reported a more positive partnership climate (parent-school) had higher levels of math achievement</li> <li>• "Communicating" practices, when implemented effectively helped to create a "positive partnership climate"</li> </ul>	Family, School and Community
DePlanty, J., Coulter-Kern, R., & Duchane, K. A. (2007).	Mixed Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students and teachers have a higher expectation for parent involvement than parents do</li> <li>• Parents, teachers, and students ranked "attend parent-teacher conferences" and "talk to child about school" as the two most frequent parent behaviors</li> <li>• Students, teachers, and parents indicate that the most important factors in student achievement are "school involvement, time management, school attendance, parent structure, and a supportive home environment"</li> </ul>	Family, School and Community  Obstacles to Parent Involvement
Harris, A., & Goodall, J. (2008).	Mixed Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students, parents, and educators all believe that parent involvement is a "good thing" however, there is disagreement on whether it is in school involvement or in the home</li> <li>• Students responded that parental involvement in terms of parents valuing education and taking an interest in education was essential to their academic achievement as well as their behavior</li> </ul>	Parental Aspirations and Expectations
Battle Bailey, L., Silvern, S., Brabham, E., & Ross, M. (2004).	Quasi-experimental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactive homework with parent training produces the largest gain for 2nd grade students on a pre-posttest measuring reading inference skills</li> <li>• Interactive homework only (without parent training) also improved student achievement</li> </ul>	Parent Involvement in the Home

\*NELS:88 = National Education Longitudinal Study (1988)

## APPENDIX B: SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

**Instructions:** The Maine Education Policy Research Institute at the University of Maine’s Center for Research and Evaluation has been asked by the Legislature’s Education and Cultural Affairs Committee to conduct a study on parent engagement in Maine schools. The following short survey asks about school practices and policies that encourage parents to be engaged in their child's schooling, in the classroom or at home.

*There are no right or wrong answers.* Responses will be used to help provide the Maine State Legislature with a preliminary snapshot of how schools in Maine seek to help parents become more engaged in their child's learning. Participation in the survey is voluntary and will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. All responses will be anonymous. Neither your identity nor your school will be revealed in the report. You can skip any question that you would prefer not to answer.

We appreciate your responses and the time that you have taken to complete this survey. A copy of the final report will be available following our presentation of the findings to the legislature. If you have any questions, please contact Craig Mason at [cre@maine.edu](mailto:cre@maine.edu) or 581-2493.

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Please select your district and school name from the drop down boxes below:

What is your position in your school?

- Superintendent
- Principal
- Guidance Counselor
- Curriculum Coordinator
- Teacher
- Other

## REACHING OUT TO STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Our school makes special effort to reach out to parents of struggling students, such as parent-teacher conferences, phone calls to parents, providing material to parents, regular reports on their child's progress, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our school makes special effort to reach out to low-income or ethnic minority families in order to make them feel welcome.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our school makes special effort to regularly report student's positive behavior and achievements to their parents, rather than leaving it up to the child.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Which of the following activities does your school offer to parents of new students (Check all that apply)

- A "Welcome" packet is sent home containing information about the school
- Parents are offered an opportunity to visit the school
- Parents are offered an opportunity to meet with their child's teacher(s)
- A personalized letter is mailed to the family home
- Someone from the school personally calls the parents
- Other (Please describe briefly below) \_\_\_\_\_

How often does the school offer family activities at low or no cost so everyone can participate?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Most of the Time
- Always

## EDUCATING AND INFORMING PARENTS

How often does your school offer workshops or training to parents on...

	Never	Occasion ally, but not every year	Once a year	More than once a year
Topics that help them stay informed about their child's educational progress, such as testing, placement and effective advocacy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Topics that help them understand how children learn and grow, such as child development, learning styles, and behavior management.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other topics important to parents and families, such as preventing drug and alcohol use or applying to college?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How often does your school host a forum for candidates running for public office, focusing questions on issues that affect children, families and education?

- Never
- Occasionally, but not as a regular election-year event
- Every election year

## **PARTNERING WITH PARENTS**

How well does the school administration and the PTA/parent group work together to identify ways to support school improvement goals?

- Very Poorly
- Poorly
- Fair
- Well
- Very Well

How often does your school newsletter include a way of soliciting input from parents, such as a question-and-answer section, mini survey, or link to online survey or question-box?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Most of the Time
- Always

Does the school provide teachers with a checklist and tip sheets for effective parent-teacher conferences?

- Yes
- No

## PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING AT HOME

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Our school makes a special effort to send enrichment material home with children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our school makes a special effort to assign homework that requires parental involvement, such as joint reading, family history essays, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our school makes a special effort to regularly remind parents to monitor their students work through letters/email, articles in the school newsletter, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our school makes a special effort to inform parents when it is time for mid-terms, finals, or high-stakes testing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How often does your school have organized campaigns to encourage parents to become involved in their child’s learning at home, such as “Read to your Child” nights or “What did your child learn today?” campaigns?

- Never
- Occasionally, but not every year
- Approximately one such campaign each year
- More than one such campaign each year

## **SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS AT YOUR SCHOOL**

Optional: What is the most effective thing your school is doing to encourage parents to become more involved with your school?

Optional: What is the most effective thing your school is doing to actively encourage parents to become more involved in their child's learning at home?