

The Learning Bar

Parent & Caregiver Survey Success Strategies

Informed

Schools have a need to distribute information to parents and caregivers in both written and verbal forms. This includes information that helps families understand their child's academic progress, behaviour (both positive and negative), and social-emotional development, as well as expectations for learning and opportunities that support their child's future. It also includes information that enables parents and caregivers to understand and engage in decisions that may impact their child or the school. There are multiple ways schools can keep parents informed and involved about their child's education; regardless of the nature and format, all exchanges between teachers and parents provide opportunities to form partnerships that support student learning (Graham-Clay, 2024a).



Why is it important?

- Taking time to help parents understand what their child will learn and how they will be assessed helps promote parental academic support at home (Patel et al., 2008).
- Participation in a child's learning acts to close achievement gaps by making parents more aware of the educational needs of their child and encouraging them to seek educational opportunities for their children (LaRocque et al., 2011).
- Educators frequently lack the requisite skills and best practices needed to facilitate productive conversations with parents and caregivers (Ozmen et al., 2016).
- Accessibility considerations are an important factor in keeping parents informed; thus, in order to effectively communicate with all parents, schools must find ways to overcome language barriers (Graham-Clay, 2024a).

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In Practice



What can schools and teachers do to better inform parents?

Schools require coordinated efforts to ensure that parents have proper information to support their child's development, including:

- Planning parent-teacher meetings at the outset of the school year and ensure that they are scheduled at times when parents are available. Provide detailed information concerning time, place and agenda to ensure parents are sufficiently prepared (Ozmen, 2016).
- Providing standards-based report cards, which offer separate grades on a variety of learning goals per class, and are easier to understand and more informative than traditional report cards with single overall grades (Swan, Guskey, & Jung, 2014).
- Discussing classroom incidents, behaviour problems and other concerns or sensitive matters directly and, where possible, in-person with parents and caregivers (Graham-Clay, 2024a).
- Removing barriers by providing alternative meeting arrangements to overcome physical barriers, understanding the subtleties of specific cultural backgrounds and how they may impact student learning, and acknowledging different family structures and circumstances (LaRocque, 2011).
- Implementing sound communication practices, such as using clear, simple vocabulary, showing parents and caregivers undivided attention through active listening practices, adopting frequent paraphrasing and summarizing during conversations, and paying careful attention to non-verbal cues (Graham-Clay, 2024b).
- Where appropriate, making coordinated efforts to ensure that both parents and students have sufficient information related to their post-secondary education goals (Gibbons et al., 2006).
- Providing opportunities for parental representation and leadership by promoting active participation in school-related committees and councils (Epstein, 2001).

By keeping families informed, schools enable parents and caregivers to contribute to the educational process in ways that help students reach their full potential.

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