



Ambika Kapur, Program Officer, Education Program

Education Program's beliefs and assumptions

- When families are empowered as true partners in their children's education, students thrive, schools are stronger, and the whole community benefits.
- We fund programs that bridge the gap between home and school.
- We want families to have access to the information they need to support their children's learning and for them to be able to act as effective advocates for change.

Education Program Partners

- National PTA
- National Center for Families Learning and their network of family engagement centers around the country
- GreatSchools
- Common Sense Media and scores of other nonprofit organizations and school districts

Family Engagement in the time of COVID

- Due to school closures, teachers, families and other stakeholders are realizing that **education cannot happen unless parents are true collaborators in their kids' education.**
- This new attitude may have been born of necessity, but it has the potential to create lasting changes.

The State of Public Understanding and Engagement in American Education

- Research commissioned by the foundation shows that **family engagement is one of the biggest factors in educational outcomes across the board**, but especially for students of color, low-income students, students, and students whose families speak languages other than English at home.

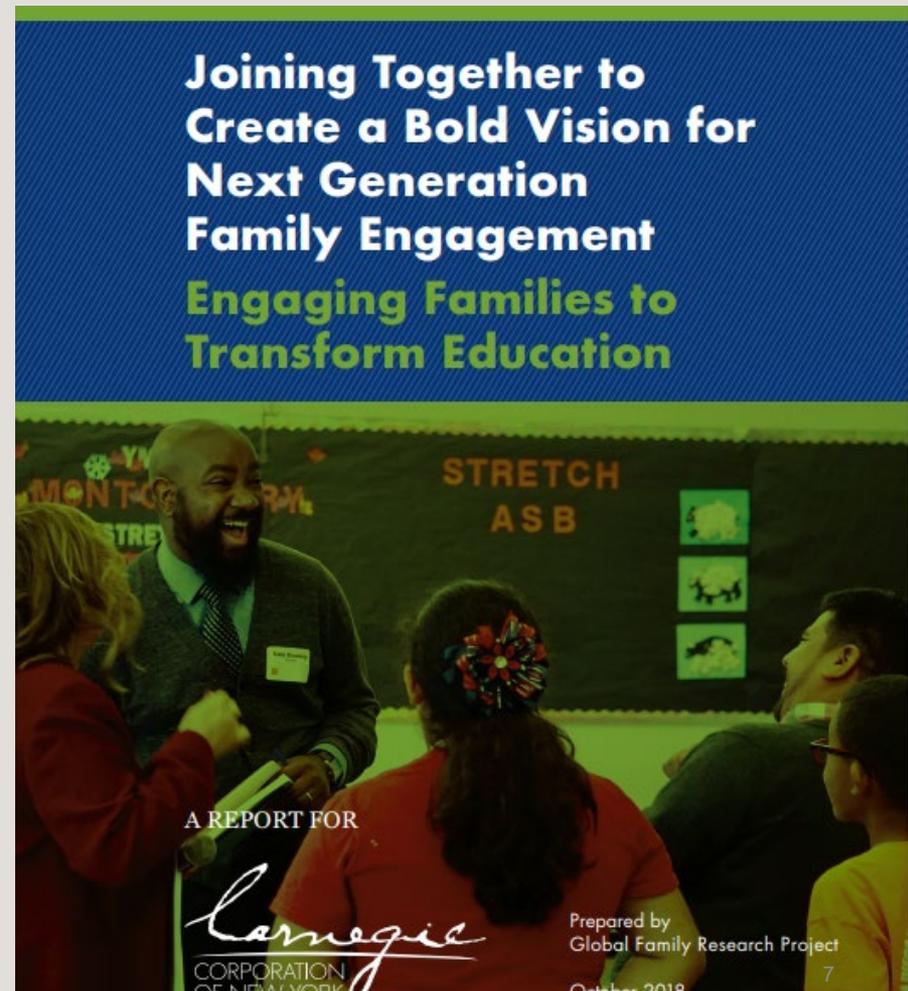
The State of Public Understanding and Engagement in American Education (cont.)

- According to a study released in April by the Northwest Evaluation Association, **students were expected to return to school in the fall with significant learning loss — up to 30 percent in reading skills and over 50 percent in math, especially among Black and Latino students.**
- Getting them back on track will involve parents and caregivers as much as teachers.

What does meaningful family engagement look like?

Two of the most important issues schools must address are:

- ✓ First, parents and caregivers need a much clearer idea of how their children are doing
- ✓ Second, families need access to technology and avenues of communication that allow for meaningful conversations with teachers



We work with many educational nonprofits that are redirecting their efforts to develop solutions to the problems caused by the pandemic.

Knowing that families were overwhelmed last spring by the sheer amount of information schools were sending them, two organizations – Student Achievement Partners and Seek Common Ground - teamed up to create grade-specific family guides that provide:

- ✓ a clear outline of what students are expected to learn this school year
- ✓ online resources that match the most important content and everyday activities that reinforce learning
- ✓ tools to help parents advocate for their children.

We support organizations addressing the digital divide

Common Sense Media, which assists educators in teaching students how to become responsible consumers and creators of digital information, is working within communities to make broadband available to lower-income students.

Meanwhile, the boots-on-the-ground advocacy group Innovate Public Schools is helping parents, who may have spent little time on computers, set up a Zoom call or join a virtual classroom.

We partner with employers through **EdNavigator** to provides families with access to affordable, high-quality, on-demand support along the path to a great education, from before preschool to college and beyond.

Family Engagement: Employers as Education Advocates in New Orleans

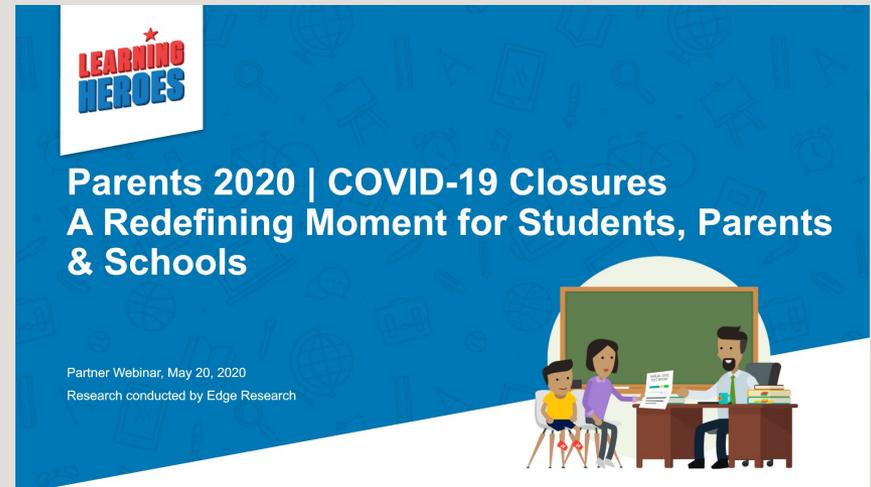


Families are uniquely receptive to developing stronger relationships with their schools and teachers in order to weather the current crisis.

A recent study by Learning Heroes found that parents and caregivers are determined to:

- ✓ get more involved with their children's education
- ✓ work closely with their schools
- ✓ and communicate effectively with teachers

In May, **67 percent** said they felt more connected with their child's day-to-day education than ever before, and **70 percent** wanted to know more about lessons their children had missed and how their schools planned to recover that lost ground.



Let's not miss this opportunity

We see all this as evidence of the increasing importance of family engagement.

However, the problems for effective family engagement practices are daunting, but the will to solve them creatively and collaboratively shows promise for long-term gains.