

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT: A PROMISE, NOT A PROGRAM BY MICHAEL J. PITRELLI.

Traditional reporting methods to parents, including report cards and parent-teacher conferences, need to be re-examined.

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This brief paper, authored by Michael J. Petrilli, President of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute and Executive Editor of *Education Next*, focuses on two aspects of reporting by schools to parents about their children's progress in school.

He argues that doing that reporting in ways that give parents the information they really need to intervene to help their children requires a hard examination of the shortcomings in traditional reporting. He says that report cards issued by schools as well as parent-teacher conferences fail, in far too many cases, to provide accurate assessments of student progress.

For example, a study by American University professor Seth Gershenson reveals that far too often there is no correlation between student grades and their scores on high school end-of-course exams. Gershenson found that only three percent of students earning a B and 21 percent of students earning an A reached the highest level of achievement on the exam. Inflated grades, according to another survey, shows that while upwards of 90% of parents think their own children are on track, results from many studies show that just one-third of young Americans graduate from high school prepared for their next steps in life.

Petrilli also argues while the tradition of parent-teacher conferences seems positive too few teachers are well-prepared for such conferences, have sufficient knowledge of how to discuss student performance with parents, and have practical ideas for how families can help children improve. He suggests one approach to change this is creating Academic Parent-Teacher Teams, a model that brings all teachers and parents in a given school together jointly to improve student performance. This means really digging into school-wide performance data.

Finally, Petrilli reminds us that these changes will have real impact for the youngest students. He suggests we focus on making sure that no student leaves the fifth grade without being well prepared for what's next. Thus, the greatest responsibility lies with elementary schools to be fully truthful with parents—and to invest in programs to help students who lag behind to make rapid progress. This also has the advantage of working with parents when they are most comfortable being involved, and their children are most eager to please.

Pitrilli, Michael J. (2018). "Parental Engagement: A Promise, Not a Program." Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

<https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/commentary/parental-engagement-promise-not-program>



Thanks to generous support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, *Our Neighborhood*, is a compilation of stories and research from the family engagement field. It is intended to be a living repository and guide for STEM Learning Ecosystems and other communities interested in cultivating strong community partnerships to prepare the next generation.

This annotated bibliography was compiled by TIES for *Our Neighborhood*.