

Transcript: 1 Welcoming Campaign - Educators

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Hi, I'm your host, Brenda Close. And I'm your co-host, Kaili Smalley, and this is our podcast: Treasuring Education.

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Welcome to our educator series, Bridging the Parent Gap. Remember, in this podcast series we'll discuss briefly what you can expect to learn more about in each accompanying video.

In this episode, we'll discuss the welcoming campaign. This is where we lay the foundation for a positive and enriching school year with a strong partnership with parents.

Yeah, and getting parents primed is a beginning-of-the-year activity that can get overlooked as educators prep for new students. Parental engagement is a term that holds different meanings for each of us. Picture this: parents attending parent-teacher conferences, sporting events, school concerts and plays, and even contributing to a bake sale. These are all forms of engagement, but is there an agreement on the ideal level of engagement?

That's a good question. From our experience in working with parents, we've identified three levels: the disengaged parent, the engaged parent, and the ever-watchful "helicopter parent." Our goal: to elevate all parents to a level that supports their children's learning much more meaningfully. Families can be so much more than observers of the educational journey; they can be active participants.

And that journey starts with a well-executed welcoming campaign. Now let's talk research. Dr. John Hattie's studies show that parental involvement has the average effect size of 0.3. When we drill down into the practices that make up that average, we can see advances in student achievement by a full year or more.

That number - the effect size - it's based on statistics and standard deviations, right?

Correct. An effect size of 1.0 roughly translates to two full-grade levels of student advancement. Dr. Hattie says that activities that have an effect size of 0.4 or more can significantly change student outcomes.

That kind of sounds like parental engagement doesn't change student outcomes then, right? If parent engagement falls at a 0.3 and significant change happens at 0.4, are we still changing student outcomes?

Well, yes! Hattie's research includes the influence called "home" with multiple domains and subdomains involving parental engagement. This means that each of these influences contribute to this 0.3 average, but on their own, it can have significant positive, and in some

cases, quite negative effect sizes. For example, the influence of corporal punishment in the home has a $-.33$ effect size, which muddies the waters of overall parent engagement.

So it sounds like the 0.3 is only an average. So overall parental engagement has a positive effect on student success.

Correct. Dr Hattie's insights tell us that involving parents can make a real impact.

Although this seems like an area that we as educators have little control over, we can actually get our students families engaged with just a little effort.

Yes, so what's the first step in welcoming parents and leveraging that influence? Crafting that welcoming letter or email as something that resonates and engages parents.

Right! We want parents to read it, hear our unique voices in it, maybe even pin it to the fridge!

[LAUGH]

The key: clear calls to action with a personal touch. Include elements like parent homework to engage parents to share about their child and set their own expectations.

Absolutely. It's about building the trust and showing parents you're there to partner with them in their child's learning. We'll get into the details in the accompanying video.

Sounds good! And let's not forget those welcoming phone calls home. That is so important! A call from a genuinely interested teacher is a real game-changer.

Absolutely! That initial warm call makes future calls much less stressful.

Registration and orientation are great opportunities to welcome families face-to-face into the school community, too. This isn't just about showing them what you plan for their kids, it's about inviting them to be part of it. At my school, we do a Meet the Teacher before school starts so that each family can come in and have that initial interaction, and it's so powerful!

So true. Opportunities like registration, orientation, or even Meet the Teacher nights emphasize that learning isn't just confined to the classroom - it's an experience that continues at home as well.

And remember, parents expectations matter- a lot! According to Dr. Hattie, they can influence achievement by an entire school year! It's not just about grades, it's about the attitudes and expectations of the family unit to make learning an enjoyable experience.

Agreed. And finally, transparency is our North Star. Imagine your schoolhouse is made of glass, and every issue, every concern - everything - is shared openly. When parents and students understand that, trust and true partnership thrive.

I agree! Transparency in the initial stages of that school-home relationship puts us on the right path to strong partnerships with parents - and students. Thank you for joining us today! your presence here shows your genuine interest in joining forces with families to create a year of learning and achievement for your students.

Get more in-depth with us on this topic in the accompanying video.

Tune in to our next episode, Resources for Parents.

Bye for now! Follow us on your favorite podcast platform to get notifications of our next podcasts and sign up for our newsletter at www.treasuringeducation.com.

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