

# Engage us:

Parents share their opinions on how to maximize the impact of K-12 communications





# About Blackboard's parent engagement survey

At Blackboard we are committed to developing technologies and practices that will enable you to effectively communicate and engage your community. In 2015 Blackboard conducted a survey with over 1,400 parents with children in grades K-12 about their preferences when it comes to school communications.

These survey results are intended to help you improve your communication strategy to better meet the needs of your community.



# Part 1: Defining student success



“

*The one thing that I've heard in my fifteen years in school communications is that teachers would love to communicate more with families, but they don't know how.”*

**Stephanie Smith, APR**  
Public Relations Director  
Fort Osage R-1 School District, Missouri

## Parents say...

**They have the most impactful role on student success**

67%

**That teachers play a critical role in student success, second only to the parents themselves.**

25%

# Most impactful roles on student success

We know that parent engagement increases the closer that communication gets to their student. This means that teachers have the potential to have the greatest impact on student success by engaging parents directly. Teachers often use email, websites, phone calls, and other tools to communicate important classroom information to families. Often these tools are used independently by teachers, but having a district-wide solution for teachers will provide consistency and oversight.



**Learn more** about how you can equip your teachers with the right communication tools.

“

*We're operating in a traditional educational delivery system that was designed to serve traditional learners and models - that is not working today. One of the reasons it's not working is that it was not designed for the new learner.”*

**Jay Bhatt**, CEO  
Blackboard Inc.

# A new way to measure student success

The goal of education is not to provide higher test scores, but rather to prepare students for life, career, college or other post educational activities. While test scores can illustrate how well a student is doing they may not tell the full story.

## Top indicators of student success

Student confidence



Positive teacher feedback



Engagement in the classroom



## Bottom indicators of student success

High test scores



Career prospects



Active peer to peer collaboration



“

*Another area that we feel has a direct correlation to student achievement is trust between the school and the parent.”*

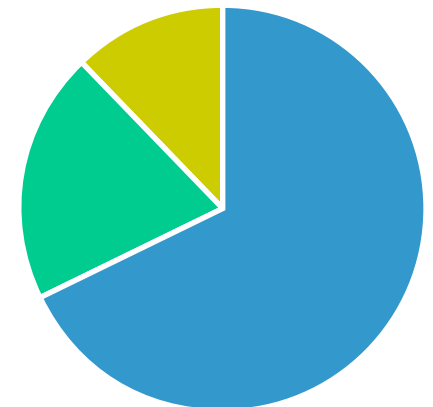
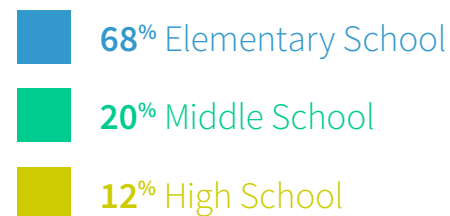
**Cindy Warner**

Community Ed/Public Relations  
Shelby County Public Schools, Alabama

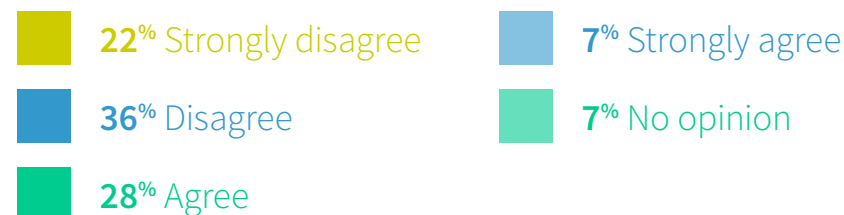
# Parent involvement is critical at all grade levels

This data shows that parent and community involvement has a tendency to drop off during the later stages of education. Parents need to stay involved during these stages, as they can have a greater impact on a student’s preparedness for college and career.

**At what grade level do you believe parent involvement is the most necessary for student success?**



**How much do you agree with the following statement: “My involvement with my child’s education experience decreases as they get older.”**



Part 2:  
How parents  
consume information



“

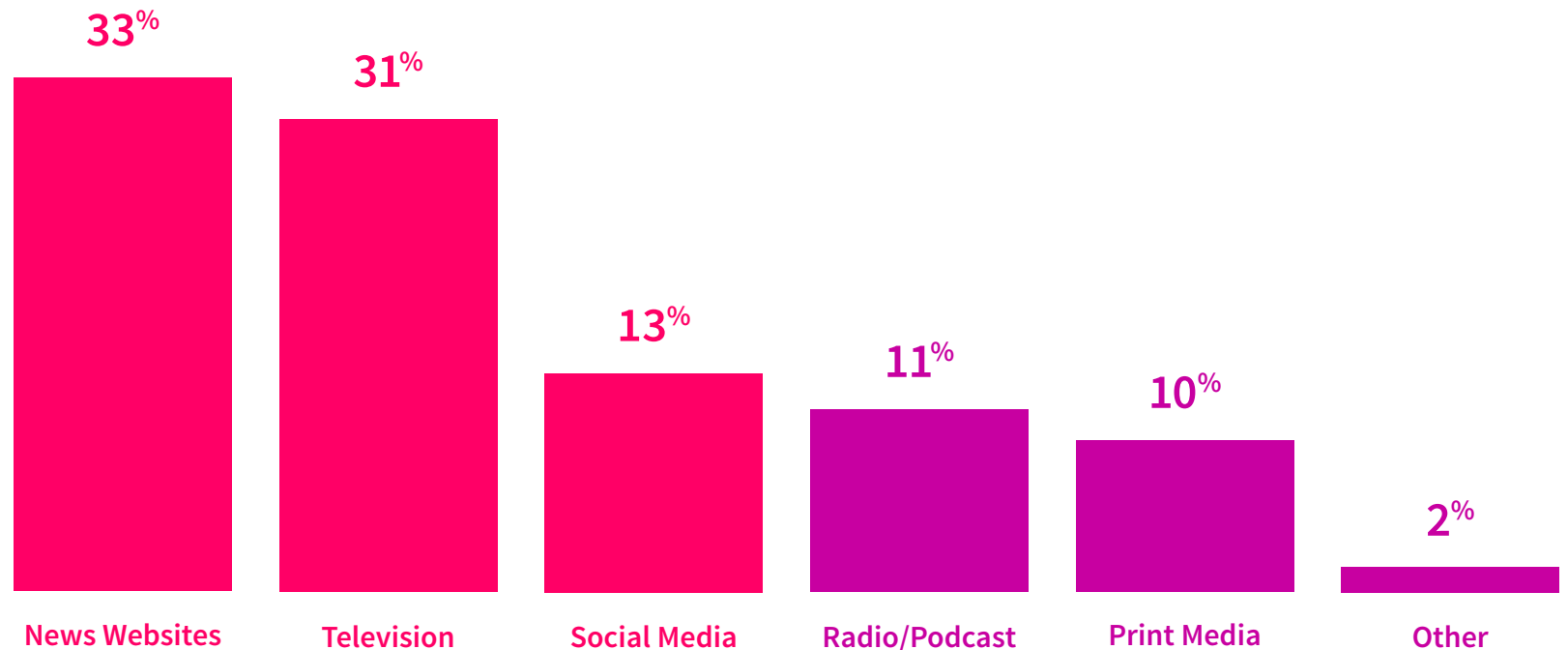
*The multitude of platforms people are using continues to grow. As communications professionals, we have to be vigilant about identifying what those platforms are and how [parents] are using them.”*

**Ray Weikal**

PR and Marketing Coordinator  
Kansas City Public Schools, Missouri

# Top sources where parents gather their news

News websites and television continue to be the primary sources of parent information, with social media seeing rapid growth. Districts are becoming their own news outlets. So a strong web presence is increasingly important. Pairing a website with other communication channels like phone calls, emails, and social media will ensure your message is consistent.



**Leverage your website** to inform your community quickly and get important information across to your community.



“

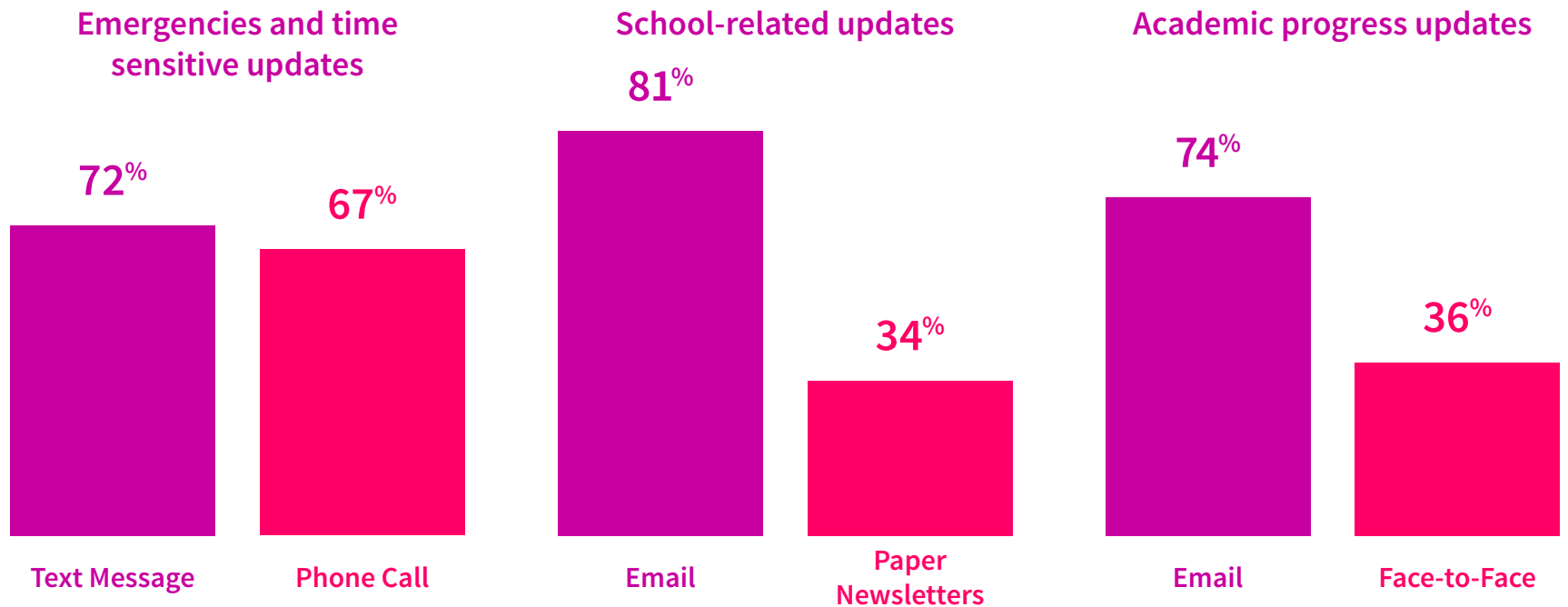
*Parents no longer look to newspapers for news. They're looking at their email and mobile devices. It's our job to keep that connection going, and not just on a daily basis, but an hourly basis.”*

**Dr. Patrick Murphy**

Superintendent  
Arlington Public Schools, Virginia

# Content influences preferences

Parents' preferred method of communication when receiving the following types of updates:



Email and phone calls no longer meet parent's demands. To **tell your story effectively**, you need to share your message across multiple channels. The right notification tools will enable you to do this in a single push.

Part 3:  
Developing a social  
and mobile presence



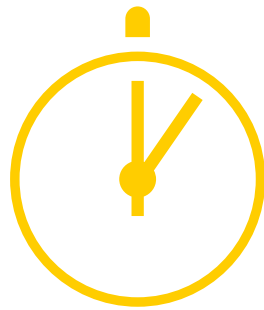
“

*Parents are really relying more on social media to be the venue that they are seeking out their news.”*

**Cindy Warner**

Community Ed/Public Relations  
Shelby County Schools, Alabama

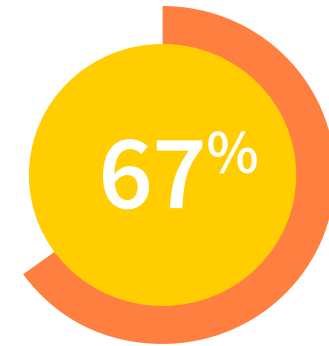
# Schools have yet to embrace social media



Parents spend an average of **1 hour 40 minutes** on social media per day.



Despite the growing use of social media, **over half** of schools are infrequent users.



**Two-thirds of parents** who are dissatisfied with the level of communication they receive are part of districts that do not use social media frequently.



Successful districts are leveraging the growing use of social media to engage their parents and students. **Build your district's brand** by moving beyond basic monitoring to get the most out of this online community.



80%



9%



7%



4%

## Top social channels visited by parents

“

*Things are moving at lightning speed. It is amazing, especially with social media and instant messaging. It's a very positive change and enables you to reach your audience very quickly.”*

**Julie Thannum, APR**

Assistant Superintendent

Board and Community Relations, Carrol ISD, Texas



“

*Everything has gone mobile and very social. It's gone that way very rapidly. I think a lot more than people were anticipating.”*

**Zac Rantz**

Chief Communications Officer  
Nixa Public Schools, Missouri

## District mobile apps on the rise

29%

of parents are aware that their district provides a mobile app

44%

of parents access their district's mobile app on either a daily or weekly basis

# Schools have an opportunity to go mobile

Mobile apps are an easy way to give education stakeholders on-demand access to both general and academic information that drives student success. Provide your community with classroom, student and school information through a district branded mobile app.



Your branded app can **expand your communications strategy**. Reviews and ratings are an indicator of how well you are meeting the needs of your mobile users. Make sure that your mobile app provides a delightful user experience and content that engages them.

“

*With our mobile app we're able to allow parents to peer into the teacher's gradebook and see their child's grades in real-time. No longer can a kid race home and pull the bad report card out of the mailbox.”*

**Mychal Frost**

Director of Communications  
Rock Hill School District, South Carolina

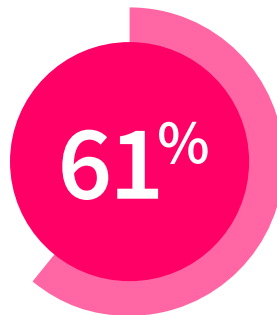
# Parents want access to student-specific information on mobile devices

Parents are accessing mobile apps more frequently and want to see multiple students' information with one single login. Natively displayed student and classroom information provides the highest level of engagement.

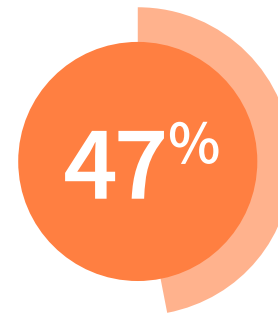
## Top reasons parents access district/school mobile applications



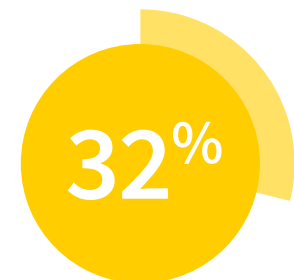
Academic information



Calendars and schedules



School notifications





## Part 4: How you can improve parent satisfaction





47%

of the parents dissatisfied with the level of communication they receive from their district **do not have a mobile app.**

65%

of parents dissatisfied with the level of communication they receive are from districts who **do not use or are very infrequent users of social media.**

17.5%

Districts that communicated frequently on social media and had a mobile app saw **parent satisfaction increase by 17.5%.**

## Mobile and social use improve parent satisfaction

“

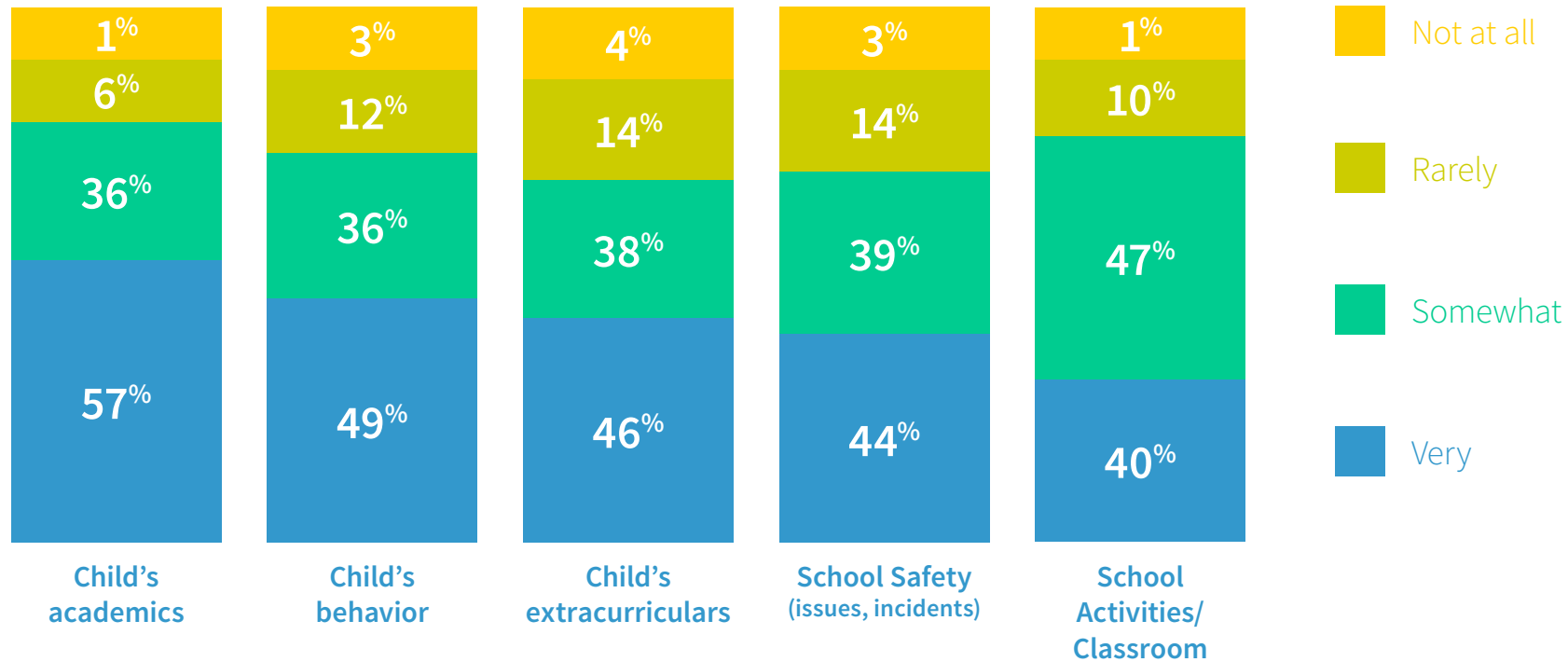
*There was a time when having a website as a school district was an option. That time has long gone. Parents want apps, they want you active on social media, they want to know what's going on instantaneously. Parents are on Facebook, kids are tweeting, and school districts need to keep up.”*

**Matt Deichmann**

Director of Communications  
EducationPlus, Missouri



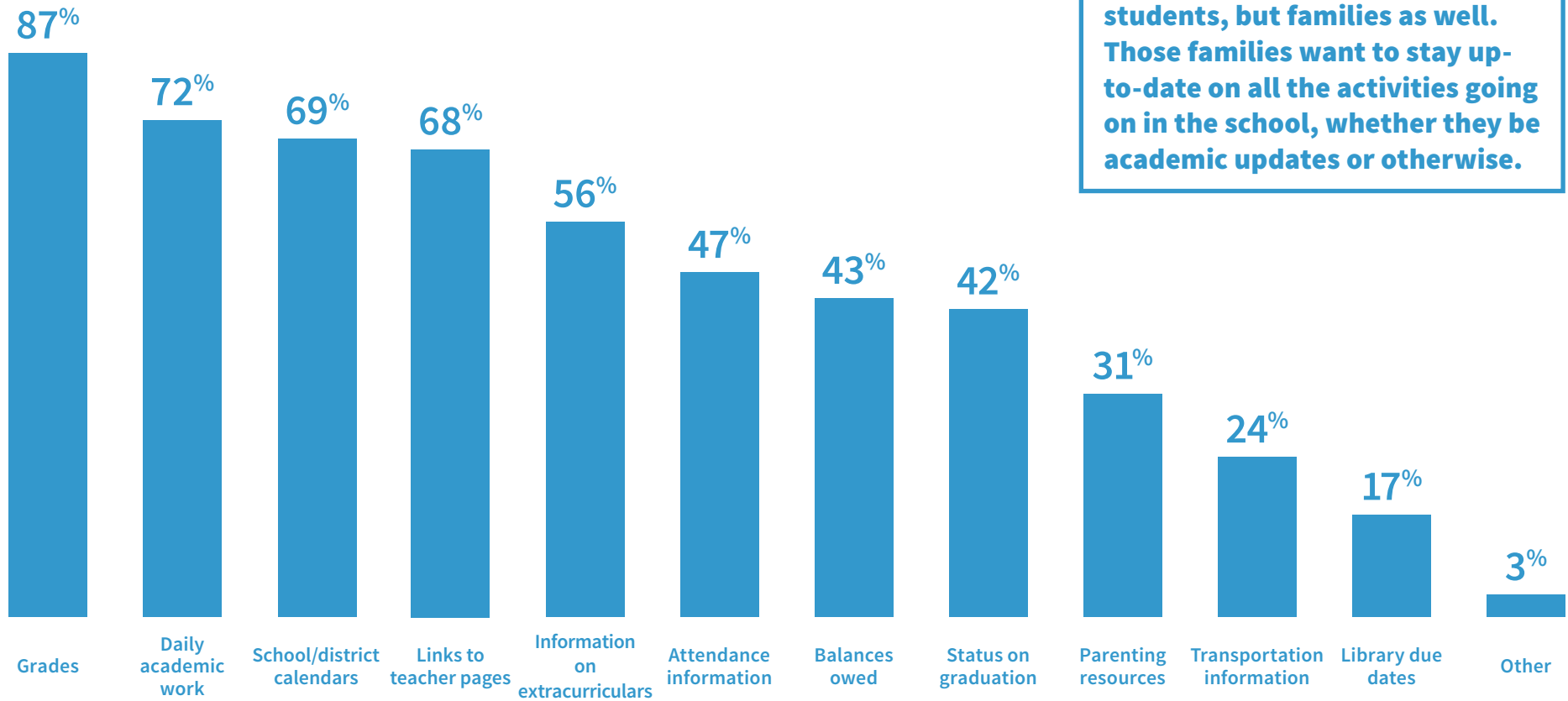
# How informed do parents feel?



Over half of parents reported feeling very informed about high-level academic information, but there is still a lot of room to improve classroom and school based communication. Teacher websites, social media, and teacher messaging are easy and effective ways to keep parents more up-to-date about classroom and school activity.



# What information do parents want from schools?



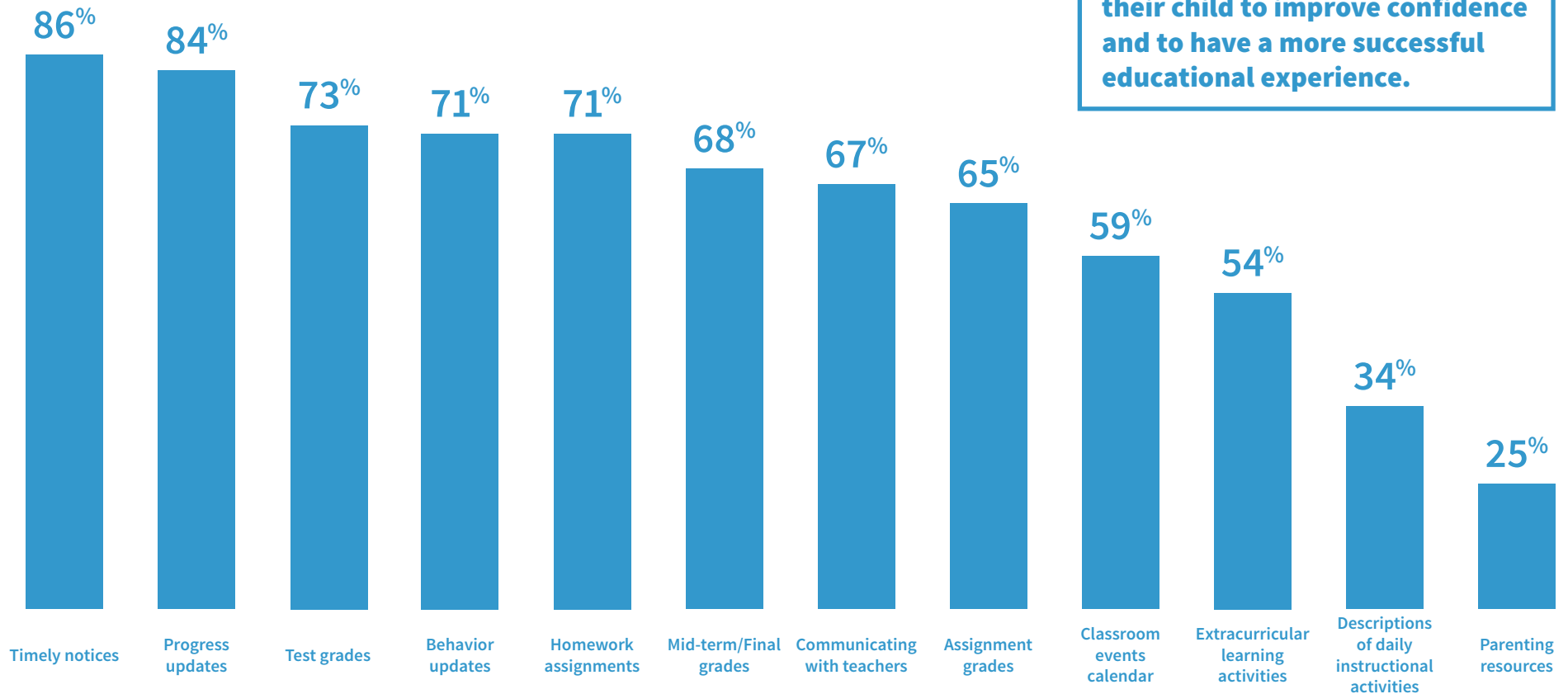
**Schools play a considerable role in the day-to-day lives of not just students, but families as well. Those families want to stay up-to-date on all the activities going on in the school, whether they be academic updates or otherwise.**

Parents are most interested in receiving information regarding grades, daily academic work, teacher pages/assignments, and school/district calendars. Parents clearly want as much information as schools and districts can provide.



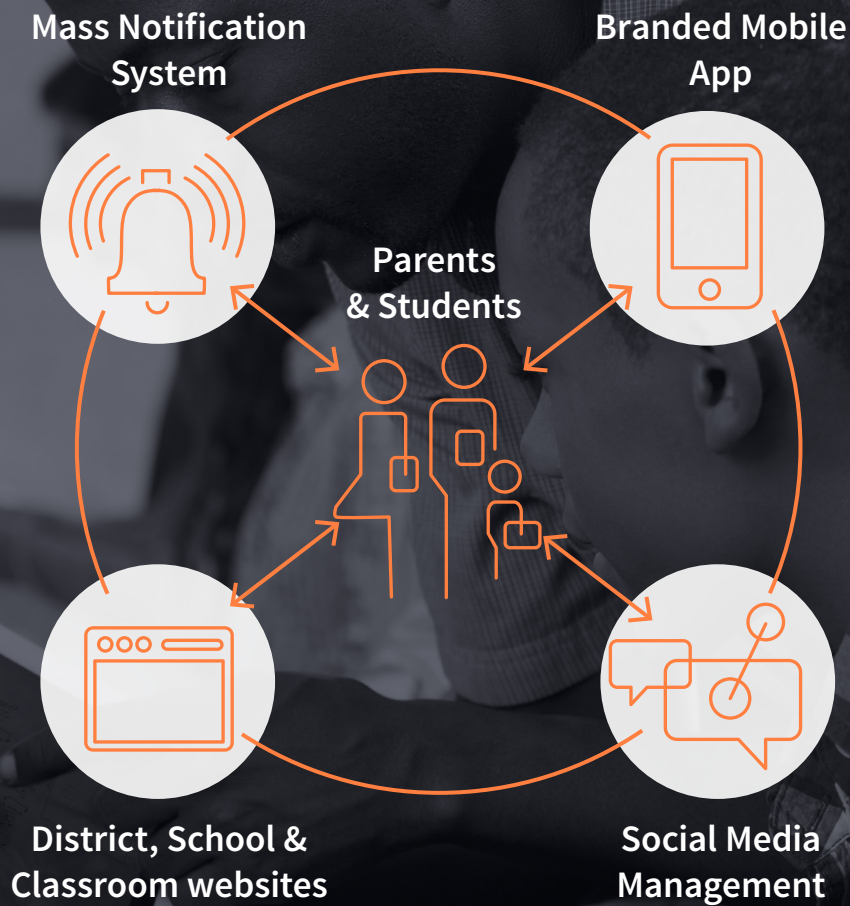
# What information do parents want from teachers?

Parents want this information to identify how well their child is performing. This information empowers parents to work with their child to improve confidence and to have a more successful educational experience.



Parents are most interested in receiving performance, classroom and grade updates from teachers.

Click on an image to learn more about how Blackboard can help you create a comprehensive communication strategy:



# Learn more about how you can engage your community and parents

“

*It really takes each and every one of us, all of our stakeholders to be a part of learning for students, whether you're a parent, a teacher or a community member. Everyone should be focused on the same goal. That's learning for our students.”*

**Diedre Powell**  
Chief Communications Officer  
Santa Ana USD, California





# Additional Resources



See how one district is using Blackboard's Community Engagement Solution to make a difference in their community



Can't wait to get started?  
Request a 1-on-1 consultation with a Blackboard representative



Join one of our upcoming webinars to see how Blackboard's solutions make an impact in your district

**Follow us:**





# About Blackboard

Blackboard is a global leader in education technology that transforms the experience of millions of students and teachers every day. Blackboard works with states, K-12 districts, and virtual to expand educational opportunities, create collaborative learning communities, and increase engagement for students, teachers, parents, and administrators. With Blackboard's website, online learning, mobile, and mass communication solutions, educators are closing the gap between the way students live and the way they learn through personalized, connected learning experiences that meet the needs of the K-12 classroom and the 21st century.

**Learn more:** [www.blackboard.com/k12](http://www.blackboard.com/k12)





# Appendix: About Blackboard's parent engagement survey

This parent engagement survey was conducted by SurveyMonkey on behalf of Blackboard Inc. The survey included over 1,400 parents of school-aged children. Here is some information about participants:

- Parents with a child in either public, private, charter or independent schools
- Parents between ages 18 - 59
- Households with incomes between \$0-\$100k
- Households geographically dispersed throughout the US
- Participants included both men and women