

Developing Life Skills in Children:

A Road Map for Communicating with Parents



Purpose

CONTEXT

Parent understanding will be a factor in the spread and scale of evidence-based practice supporting social, emotional, cognitive, and academic development.

GOAL

Gain a deeper understanding of how parents think, feel, prioritize, and talk about the intersection of social, emotional, cognitive, and academic development.



Project Phases



PHASE 1

Landscape analysis and partner immersion

APRIL/MAY 2017



PHASE 2

Six parent focus groups

MAY/JUNE 2017



PHASE 3

National survey of K-8 parents

JULY/AUGUST 2017



PHASE 4

Four red-flag check focus groups with parents

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2017



Research Methodology

TEN FOCUS GROUPS IN 5 CITIES:

Dayton, OH
Wilmington, NC
Oakland, CA
Philadelphia, PA
Colorado Springs, CO



NATIONAL ONLINE SURVEY OF K-8 PARENTS:

**National survey of more than 2,000 K-8
parents**

- 500 African American parents oversample;
- 500 Hispanic parents oversample;
- 100 Low income parents oversample

Fielded August 25-September 12, 2017

Offered in both English and Spanish

Quotas set so representative by key demographics

Survey conducted by Edge Research

Note: Survey recruited through Survey Sampling International online, non-probability panel

Key Insights

1



SKILLS BEGIN AT HOME; REINFORCED AT SCHOOL.

Parents believe that home and school both have a role in children's social, emotional, cognitive, and academic development, but not an equal one.

2

REAL WORLD EXAMPLES BRING STRATEGIES TO LIFE.

Video clips showing students engaged in social, emotional, cognitive, and academic development can be a powerful way to make these concepts concrete.

3



EDUCATION JARGON DOESN'T TRANSLATE.

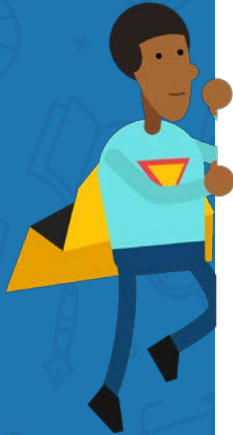
The language educators typically use to talk about social, emotional, cognitive, and academic learning and what parents understand it to mean are often quite different.

4

MEASUREMENT MISGIVINGS.

Parents object to having their child graded, rated, or formally assessed on social, emotional, and cognitive skills.

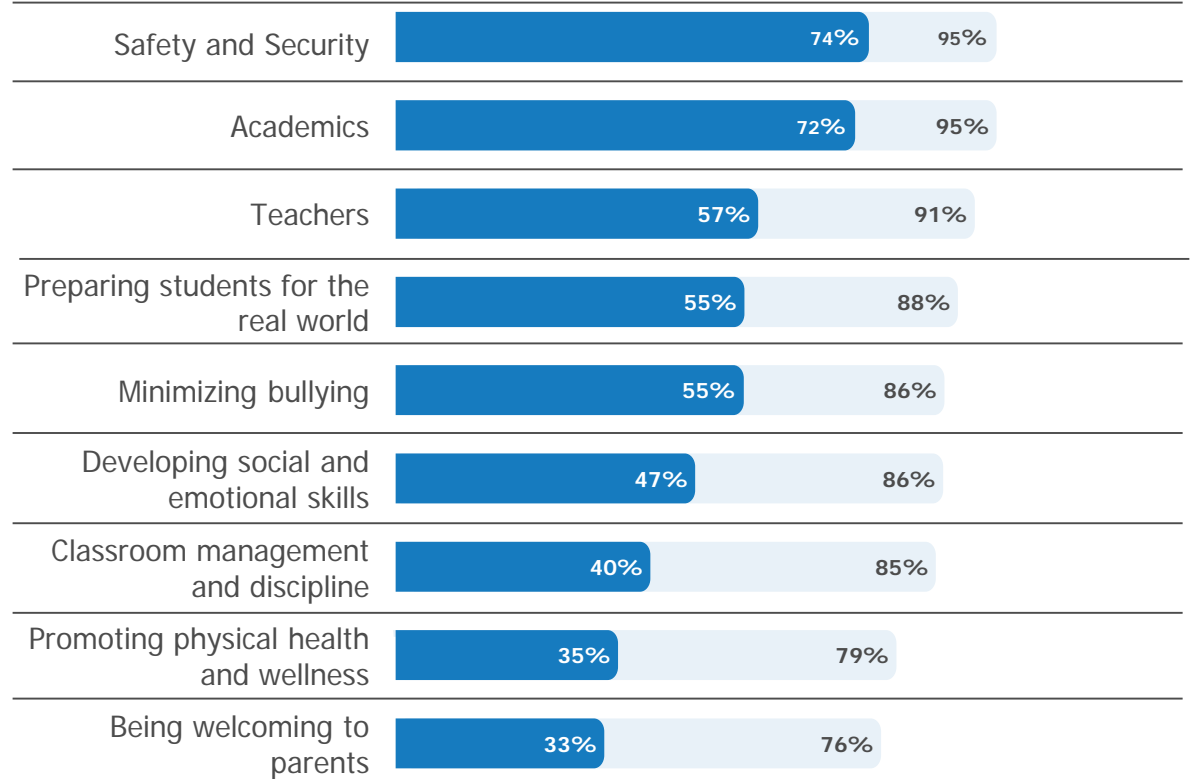
Parents Expect Schools to Play a Role



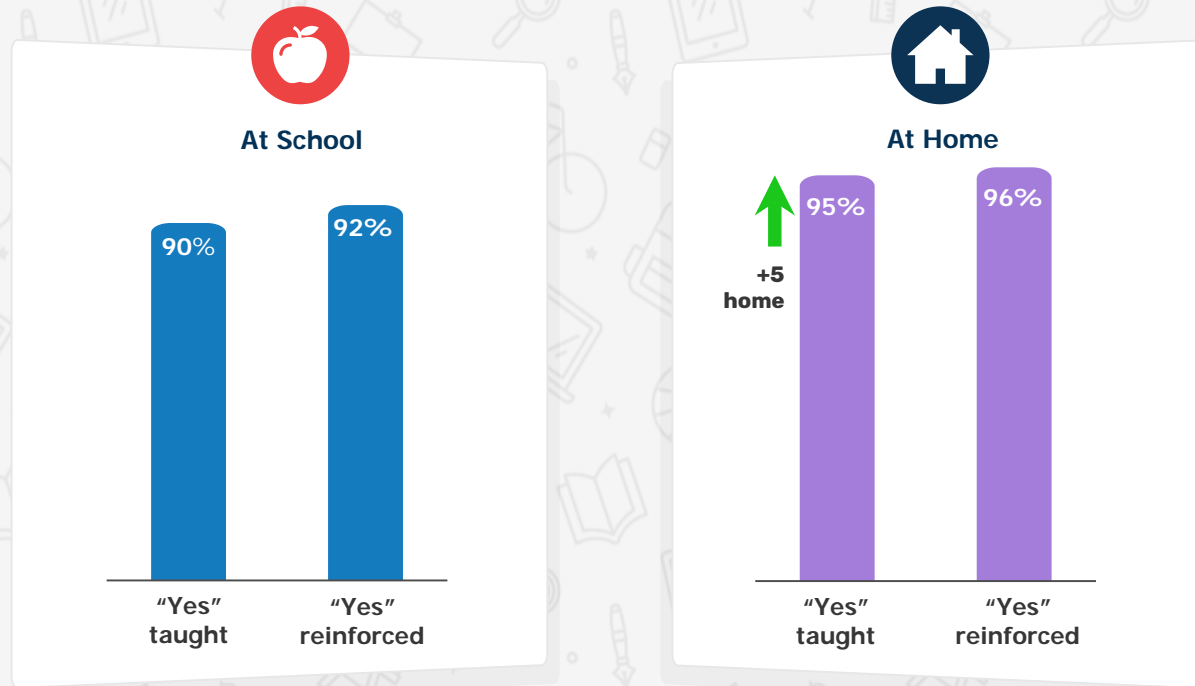
Question:

Importance as you think about your child and his/her school

■ Top priority
■ High priority

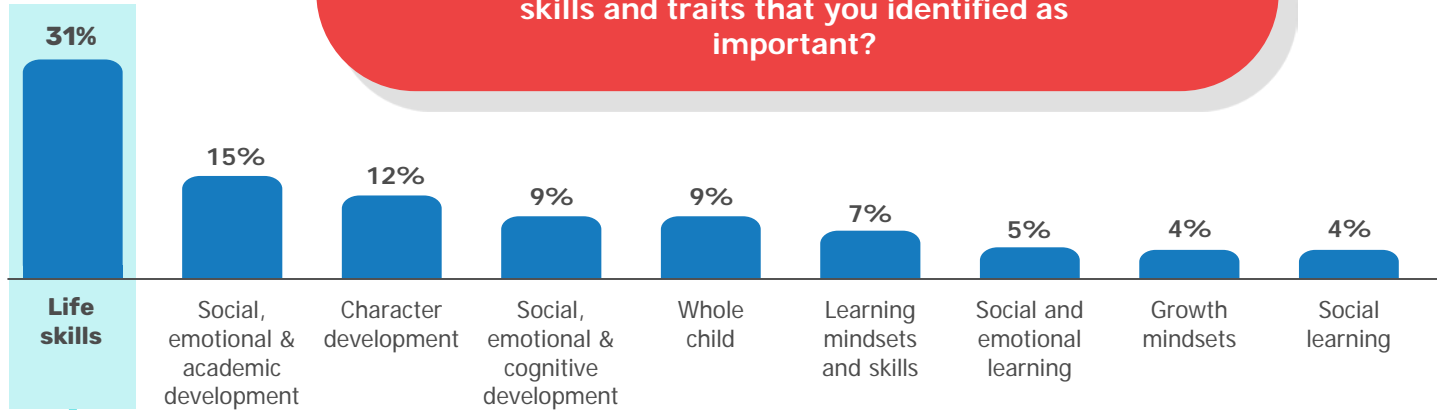


While Both School and Home Have a Role, Home is at the Center for teaching Life Skills



Parents Choose “Life Skills”

QUESTION:
Which one term do you prefer to describe the skills and traits that you identified as important?



“Simple”

“All encompassing”

“Because you use them everyday in life, schools, jobs and family”

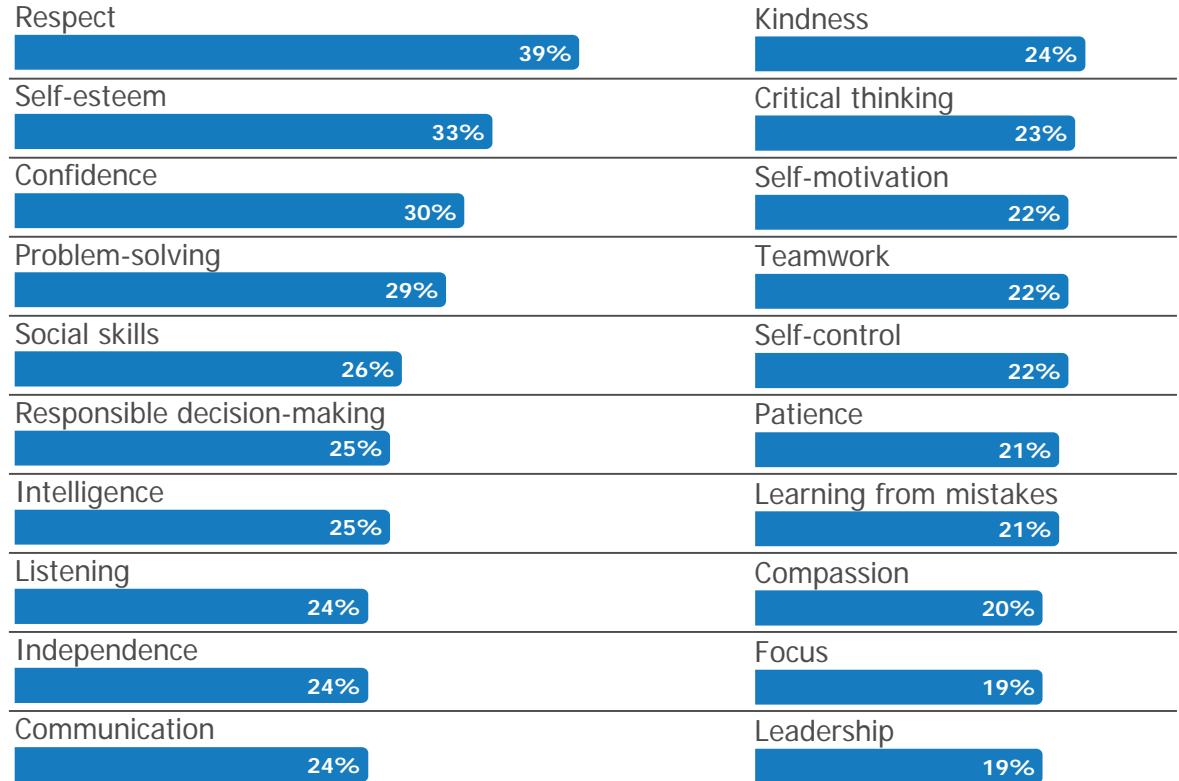
Identifying Skills & Traits that Parents Prioritize

Please select up to 10 skills and traits that you think are the most important for your child to have.



Learning from Mistakes	Managing Emotions & Behavior	Perseverance	Taking on Challenges	Prosocial Behavior	Self-motivation	Social Skills	Self-management
Communication	Responsible Decision-making	Social Awareness	Love of Learning	Perspective Taking	Kindness	Critical Thinking	Creative Problem Solving
Respect	Problem-solving	Relationship Skills	Resilience	Executive Function	Compassion	Persistence	Self-directed Learning
Confidence	Teamwork	Adaptability	Engaged Learning	Coping	Independence	Caring	Optimism
Self-esteem	Self-control	Conflict Resolution	Tolerance	Managing Stress	Self-awareness	Gratitude	Mindfulness
Setting Goals	Empathy	Focus	Curiosity	Being Organized	Learning Mindsets	Grit	Cognitive Regulation
Courage	Dedication	Flexibility	Emotional Intelligence	Patience	Intelligence	Self-Regulation	Leadership
Listening	Accepting Others	Academic Mindsets	Growth Mindsets				

Parents Top Skills & Traits



Fewer Select These Skills & Traits



Optimism
10%

Tolerance
10%

Persistence
10%

Curiosity
10%

Resilience
8%

Coping
8%

Growth mindset
8%

Mindfulness
8%

Self-directed learning
7%

Flexibility
7%

Learning mindsets
7%

Self-regulation
6%

Prosocial behavior
4%

Cognitive regulation
4%

Grit
3%

Executive function
3%

Perspective taking
3%

WHEN WE SAY...

Self-Regulation...

Grit...

Executive
Function...

Growth
Mindset...

PARENTS HEAR...

...Like therapy?

...A negative
struggle?

...Going to the
bathroom?

...Ability for my
child's mind to
expand and grow?

Concepts Resonate, but Education Jargon Doesn't Translate

WE SAY...	PARENTS THINK...	PARENTS SAY...
Resilience • Perseverance • Persistence	"Don't use fancy words. Just say what you're trying to say. Taking responsibility for yourself?"	Bouncing back • Overcoming obstacles • Learning from mistakes • Sticking with it
Grit	"Strikes me as negative, like a struggle."	Taking on challenges • Pushing yourself • Not giving up
Executive Function	"Is that going to the bathroom?"	Organizational skills • Setting goals • Ability to focus • Managing time well
Self-Regulation	"That sounds like my child is going through some sort of therapy."	Self-control
Growth Mindset	"Not sure what that means?"	Hard work pays off • It's all in the effort • Learn and grow from mistakes

Parents Are Interested in Learning More

"Very Interested" in Different Programs		Identifies w/ Benefits	Identifies w/ Benefits and Risks	Identifies w/ Risks
Blended into the learning environment	53%	68%	43%	30%
Occasional lessons or activities	53%	66%	46%	30%
Specific program or lesson plan	49%	62%	40%	31%
District-wide commitment	47%	60%	39%	26%
Opportunities to practice outside of school	47%	58%	40%	29%

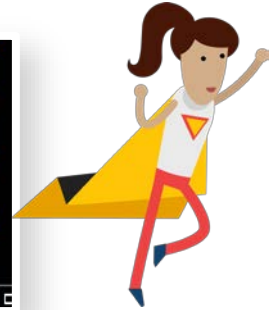


Parents Need Real World Examples

Parents responded positively to videos that show student participation:

They provided a frame of reference and parents were able to see it for themselves.

Writing: Building a Community



"It makes the kid feel he's important. I feel like my kids are not heard. It's important to show kids their value. This will help them be better people when they grow up."

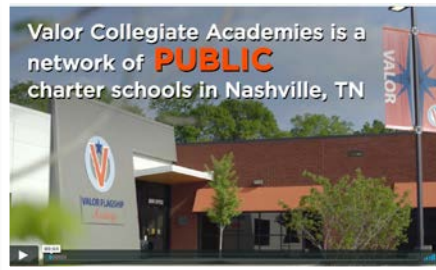
— CO, Parents

Parents Need Real World Examples

Parents responded positively to videos that show student participation:

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Valor: Site Tour Video



"Be proactive, that's good, and there is a lot of stuff I like, but don't have it going on an hour... Do 5 mins, and then get back to math."

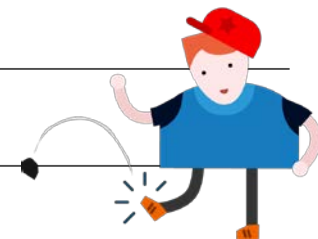
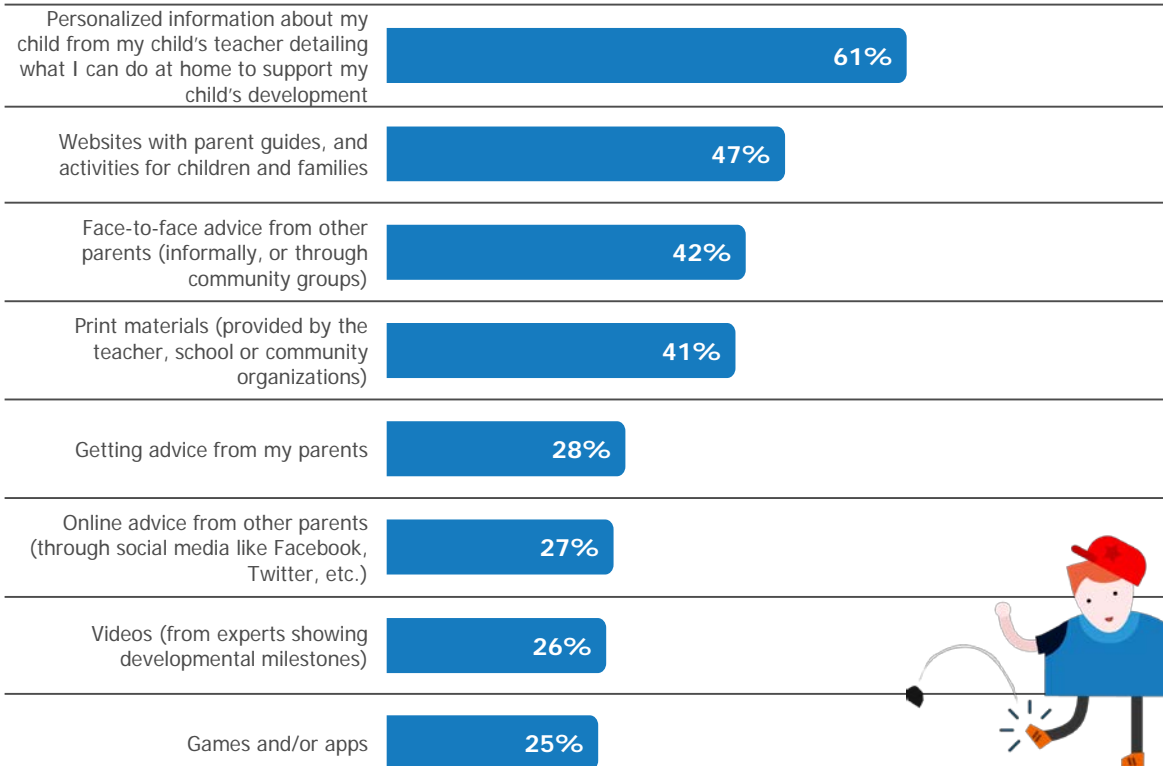
— CO, Parents

Resources Tailored for Their Child Most Helpful

% of parents selecting, with the option to select multiple responses. No major differences across sub-groups

Question:

Which resources are most helpful to you as a parent to support your child in this type of learning?

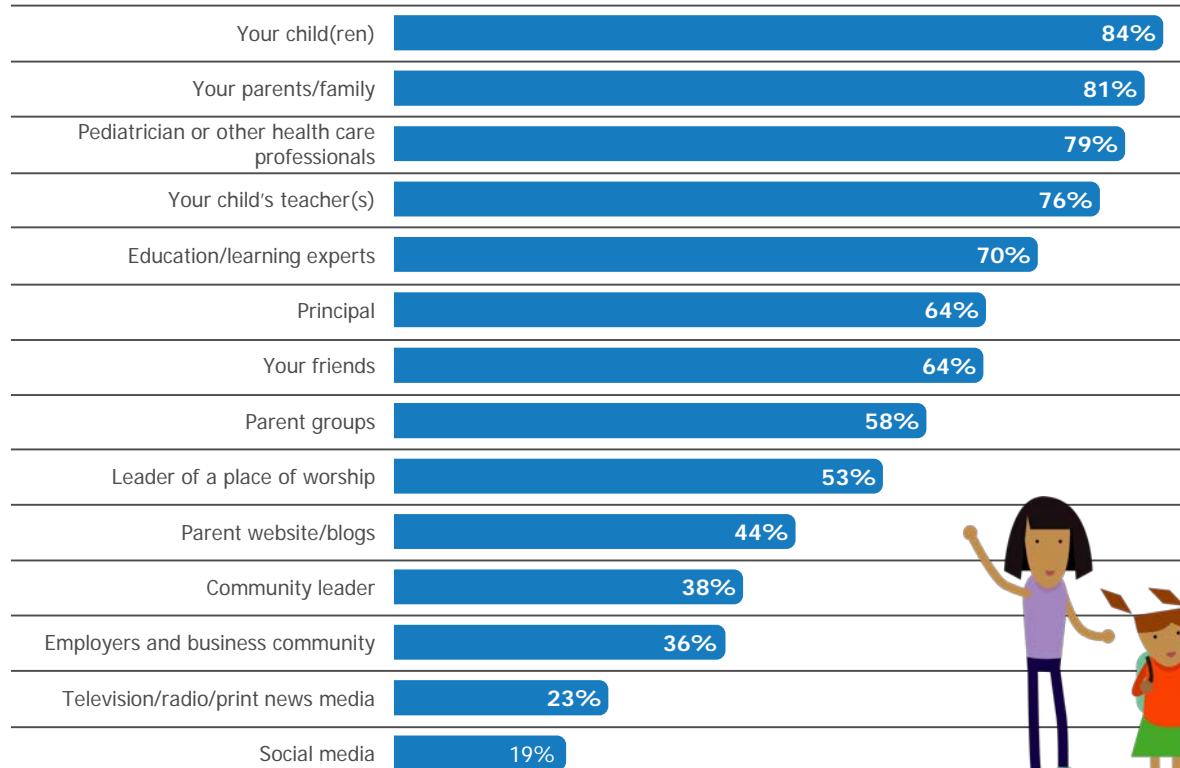


Who Parents Trust

% of parents rating trust as 4 or 5 out of 5. No major differences across sub-groups.

Question:

How much do you trust the following sources when it comes to information about this topic?



Pushback on Formal Assessment

Parents want to know how their children are doing – they prefer frequent, informal communication.

When shown real-world measurement examples, most think they go too far.

Parents say ratings and grades are not helpful information.

Parents reject metrics around “Grit,” “Hope” and “Love.”

Parents balk at 1-5 scales or Y/N, and prefer measures of visible behavior over internal capacity.

Character Grades		Scoring Scale: 3 = Frequently; 2 = Sometimes; 1 = Rarely			
Character Strength		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
GRATITUDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows appreciation for opportunities Shows appreciation for others 	1	3	2	
GRIT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finishes what he or she starts Never gives up in the face of a challenge Takes risks to solve problems 	1	2	2	
HOPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Believes his or her choices make a difference Demonstrates resiliency 	1	1	1	
SELF CONTROL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively listens Follows instructions Regulates feelings & controls behaviors Stays focused & resists distraction 	1	1	1	
SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE / LOVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asks questions to deepen understanding Embraces similarities and differences Shows love by asking for help Shows love by giving help 	2	3	2	
ZEST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively participates Eager to explore new things Invigorates others 	2	2	2	

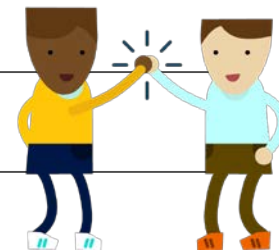
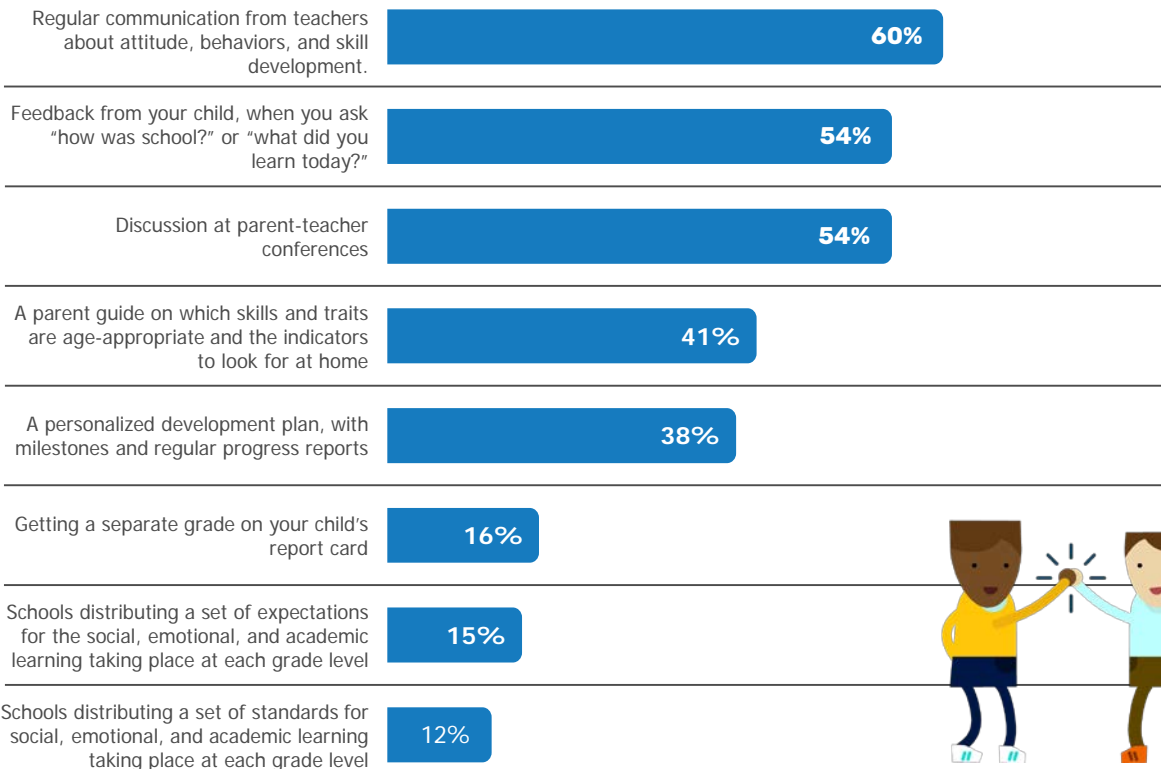


Parents Don't Want Their Child Graded or Rated

% of parents selecting, with the option to select multiple responses. No major differences across sub-groups

Question:

What type of feedback is most helpful to you as a parent to understand your child's progress in this type of learning?



Acknowledgements

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LEARNING HEROES



Thank you!

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