



Grow Your Readers: 3rd-Grade Promotion and Engaging Families for Success

ADE Summit 2026
July 15, 2026



ARKANSAS
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Today's Session |

- ★ Learn what the research says about effective school-home partnership
- ★ Hear best practice examples from Southside School District
- ★ Get strategies and resources to support beginning-of-year planning

Supporting States and the Field



Introductions

Introduce yourself to the person next to you by sharing a brief (2 min.) story from one of the following prompts:

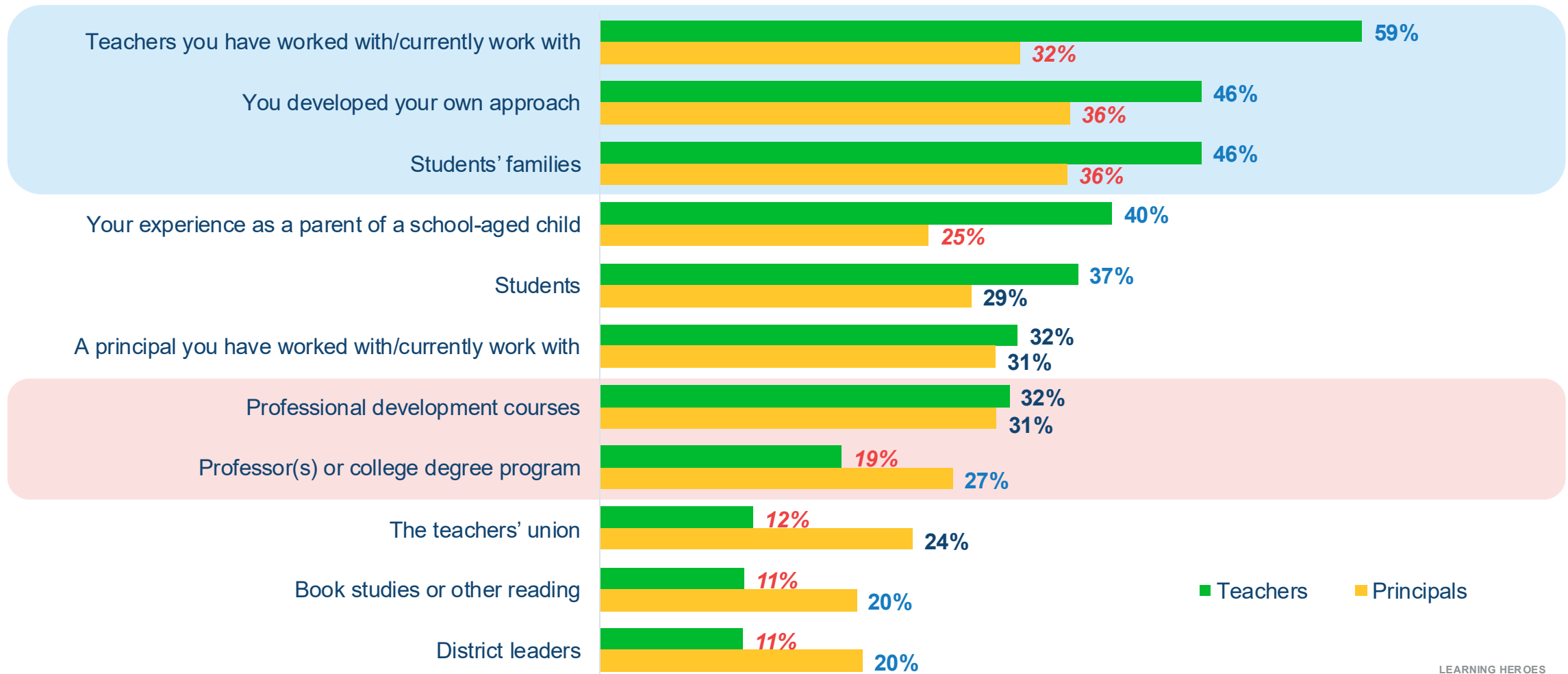
- ☆ What is one literacy tradition from your childhood that you hope today's children get to experience?
- ☆ If your children are in school, share a story about a time you felt connected or disconnected to the people in the school. Share why you felt that way.

Poll: By show of hands

Think about the teachers in your schools...have they been trained on effective family engagement?

Reliance on Informal Sources

Which of these has influenced your approach to family engagement?



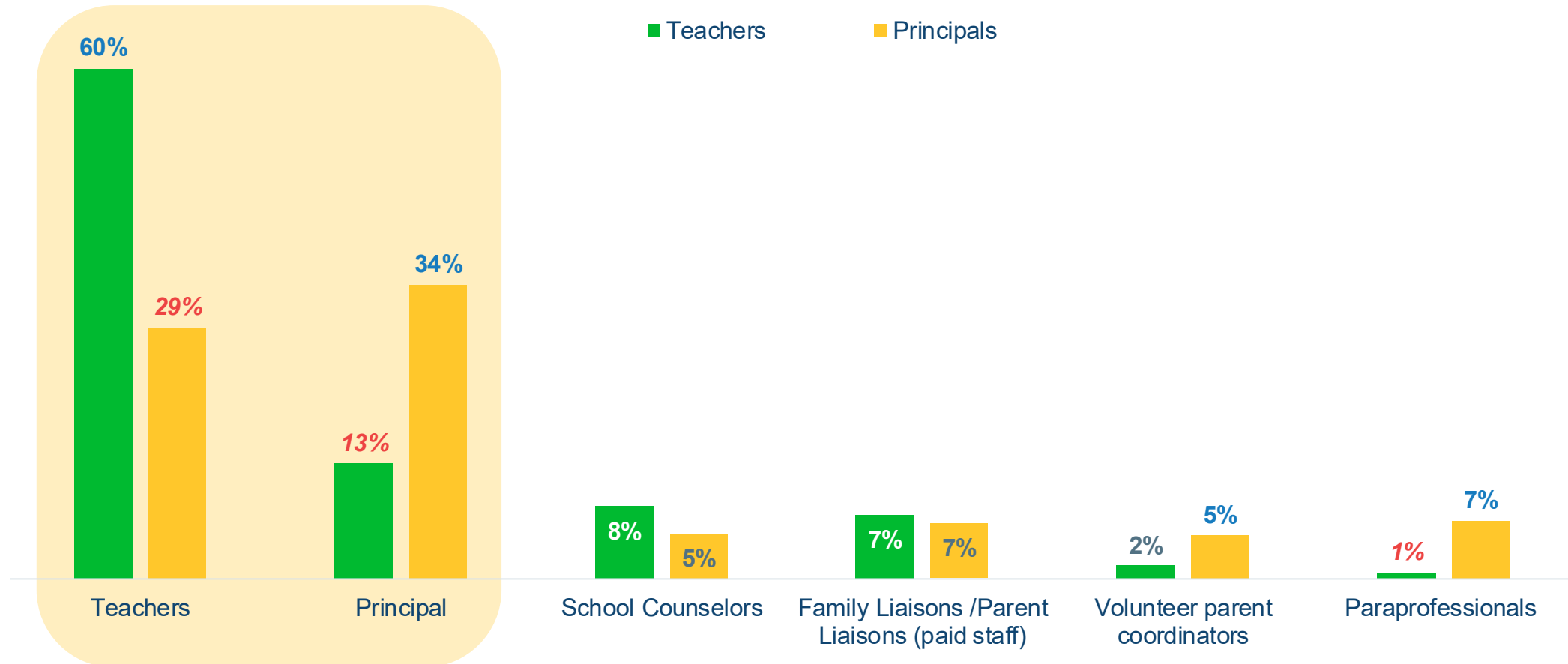
Poll: By show of hands

Who should be primarily responsible for family engagement in schools?

- Teachers
- Principals/Assistant Principals
- Counselors
- Family Liaisons

No Consensus on Primary Responsibility

Who has the primary responsibility for family engagement at your school?



Survey Methodology



Arkansas Parents Survey Methodology

- ☆ Edge Research conducted a custom, online survey among parents/caregivers of students in K-12 public schools in Arkansas (n=208, including 111 K-5 parents). The survey was conducted in English and Spanish.
- ☆ Quotas were employed across the following categories to ensure a representative sample of Arkansas public school parents: region, gender, and race/ethnicity. Quotas were based on American Community Survey (ACS) data.



Fielded March 2- March 18, 2026

Sample Distribution on Key Metrics:

Geography		Race/Ethnicity	
NW (Fayetteville) AR	22%	White	75%
Central (Little Rock) AR	27%	Black	16%
Northern AR	26%	Hispanic	8%
Southern AR	24%	Other	3%
Gender		Income	
Women	61%	Under \$50k	41%
Men	39%	\$50-under \$100k	40%
		\$100k+	19%

Spring 2026 Survey of AR Parents: Top Takeaways

- ☆ **Parents Are Satisfied with Schools:** Arkansas parents feel satisfied with their schools, and they believe they have good, open relationships with their child's teachers.
- ☆ **Parents Have Less Inflated Perceptions of Performance:** Similar to what we have seen in other cities, states, and nationwide, most Arkansas parents feel their child is at or above reading level in math and/or reading. However, this elevated perception of their child's performance is lower than nationally and other regions, especially among elementary school parents.
- ☆ **Parents Have Limited Knowledge of and Some Support for New Policy:** While many parents report hearing something about the third-grade promotion policy, few know much about it. Proponents note that reading is foundational and early intervention is key.

What percentage of Arkansas parents report their child reads at/above grade level?

A. 56%

B. 84%

C. 30%



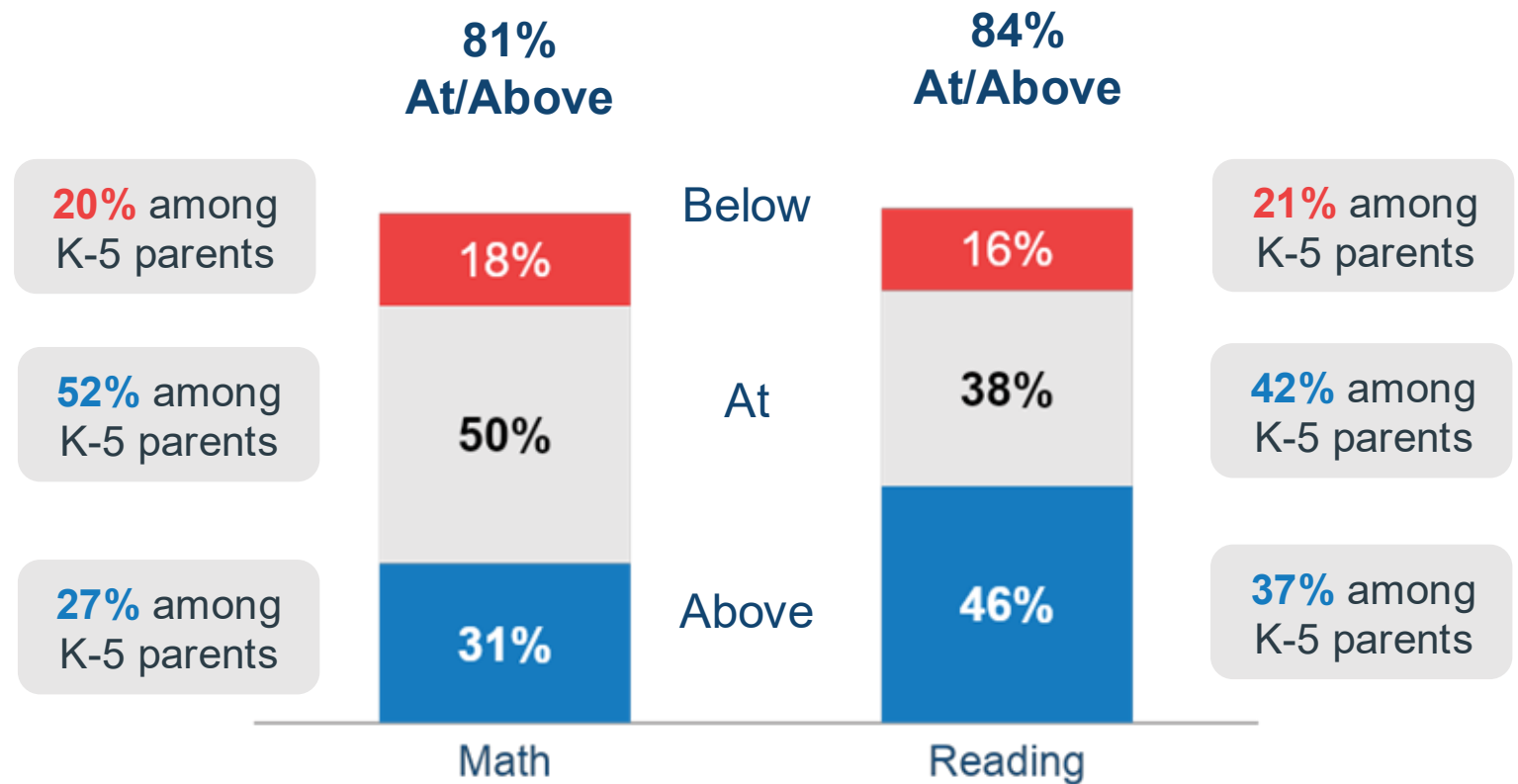
Most Arkansas parents believe their child is at or above grade level

88%

of parents nationally, regardless of race, income, and education level, believe their child is **at or above grade level in reading and math.**

National data from March 2023

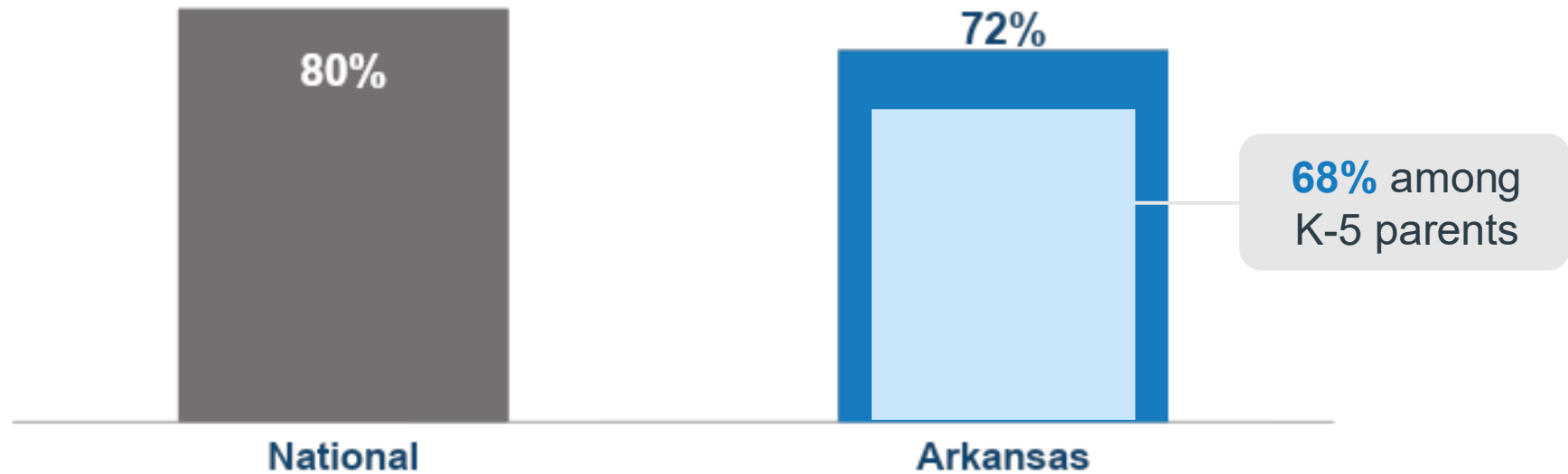
Parents of elementary students are less likely to feel this way about reading than parents of older students



7 in 10 parents report their child gets mostly B's or better

When you think about your child's report cards, does he/she typically get...

Mostly B's or Better



For Parents, Good Grades = Grade Level

Parents and teachers rank the most important ways to know how a child is achieving



Teachers

#1

Your/the teacher's in-class observations

#2

Results from classroom tests/quizzes from the teacher

#3

Interactions with the student

#4

Results from benchmark tests

#5

Results from student's year-end tests

#6

Report card grades

#7

Homework

#8

Parent feedback



Parents

#1

Written or verbal feedback from the teacher

#2

Report card grades

#3

Results from classroom tests/quizzes from the teacher

#4

Your child

#5

Results from your child's year-end state tests

#6

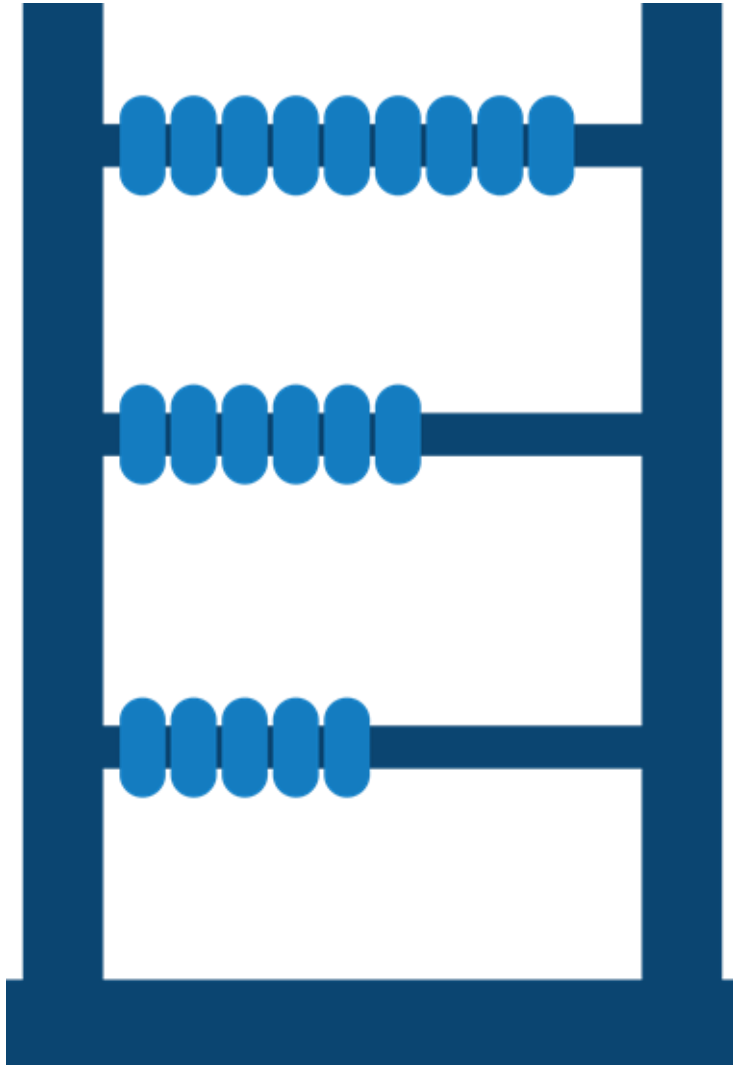
Benchmark tests

#7

Homework

*National Data

With multiple measures, parents' mindsets shift



88%

of parents think their child is at or above grade level in math.

44%

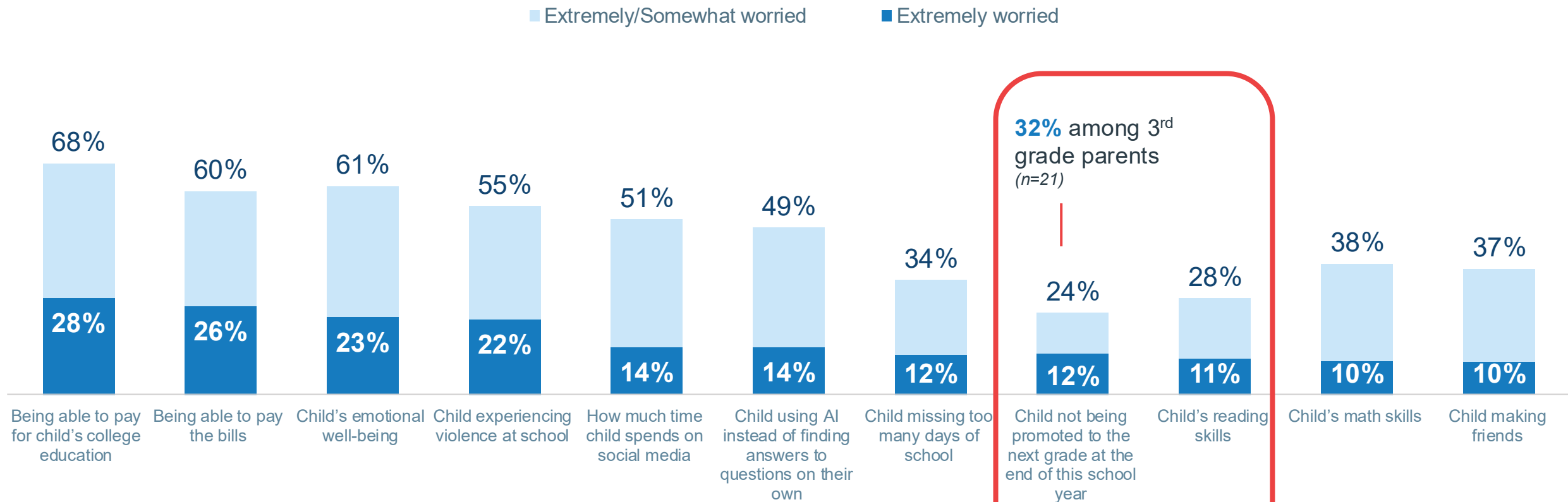
of parents think their child is at or above grade level in math when told...

- Their child received a B in math
- Their child's state test results indicated below grade level in math
- Their child's results on benchmark tests indicated child below grade level in math

*National Data

Pocketbook issues keep parents up at night – academic skills fall to the bottom

As a parent, to what extent do you worry about each of the following?

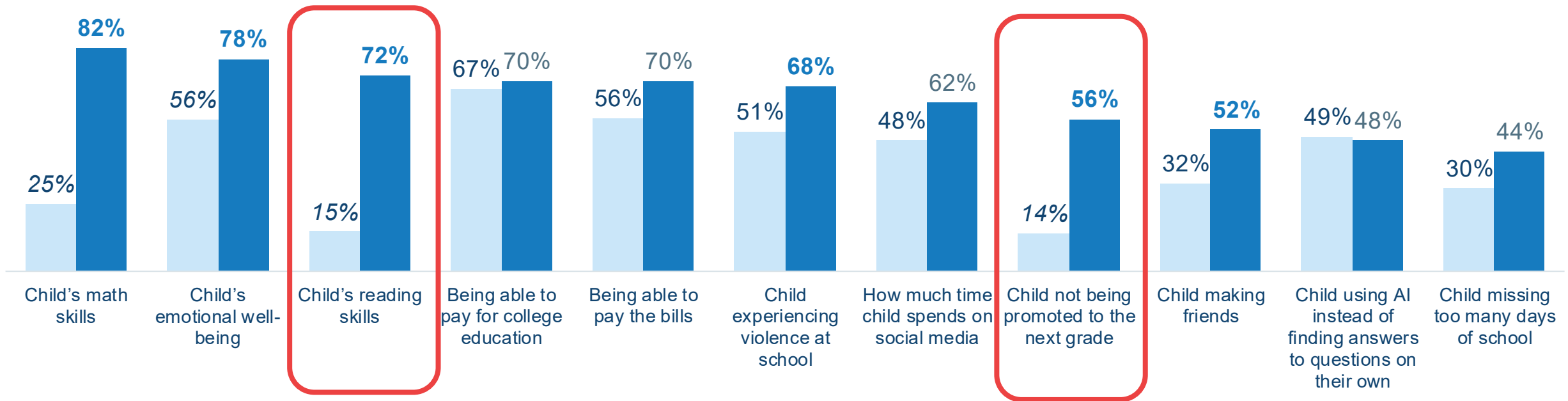


Ranked by % Extremely worried

When parents know their child is behind, worries flip

As a parent, to what extent do you worry about each of the following?

■ At/Above in Both ■ Below in Math and/or Reading (n=50)



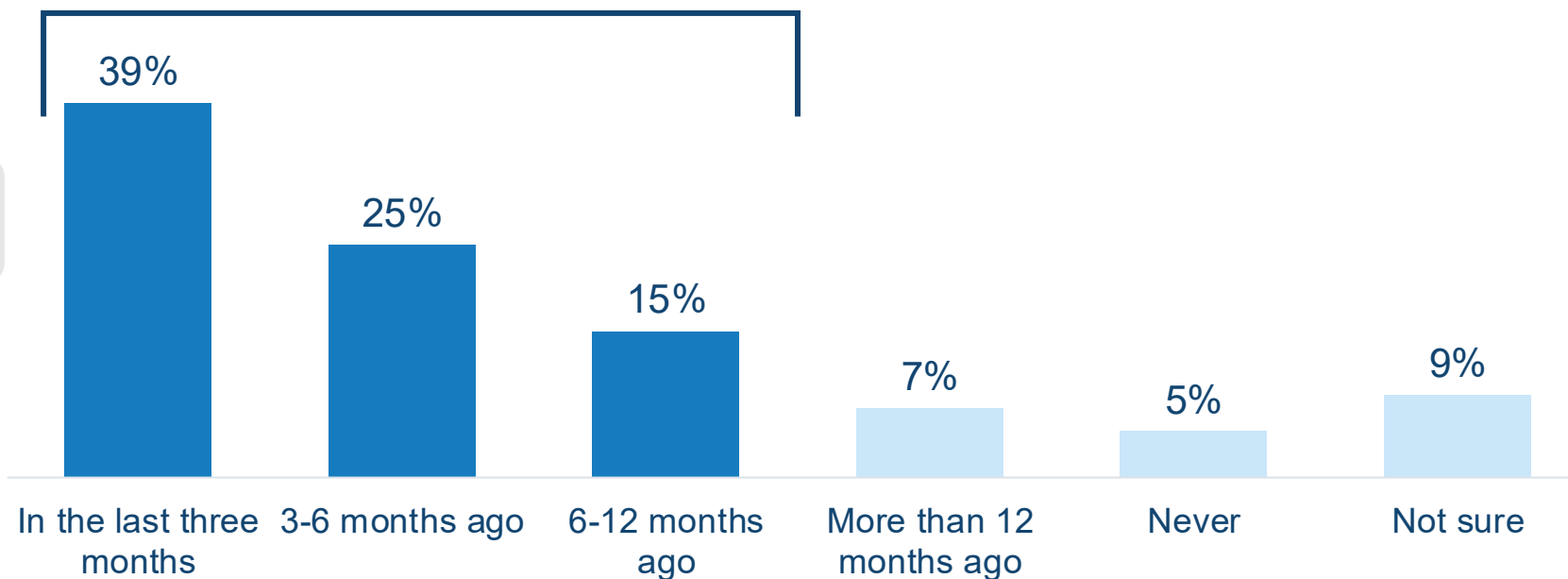
Ranked by % Worried among parents with a child below grade level

Parents pay attention to ATLAS results

Last time looked at child's state test (ATLAS) scores

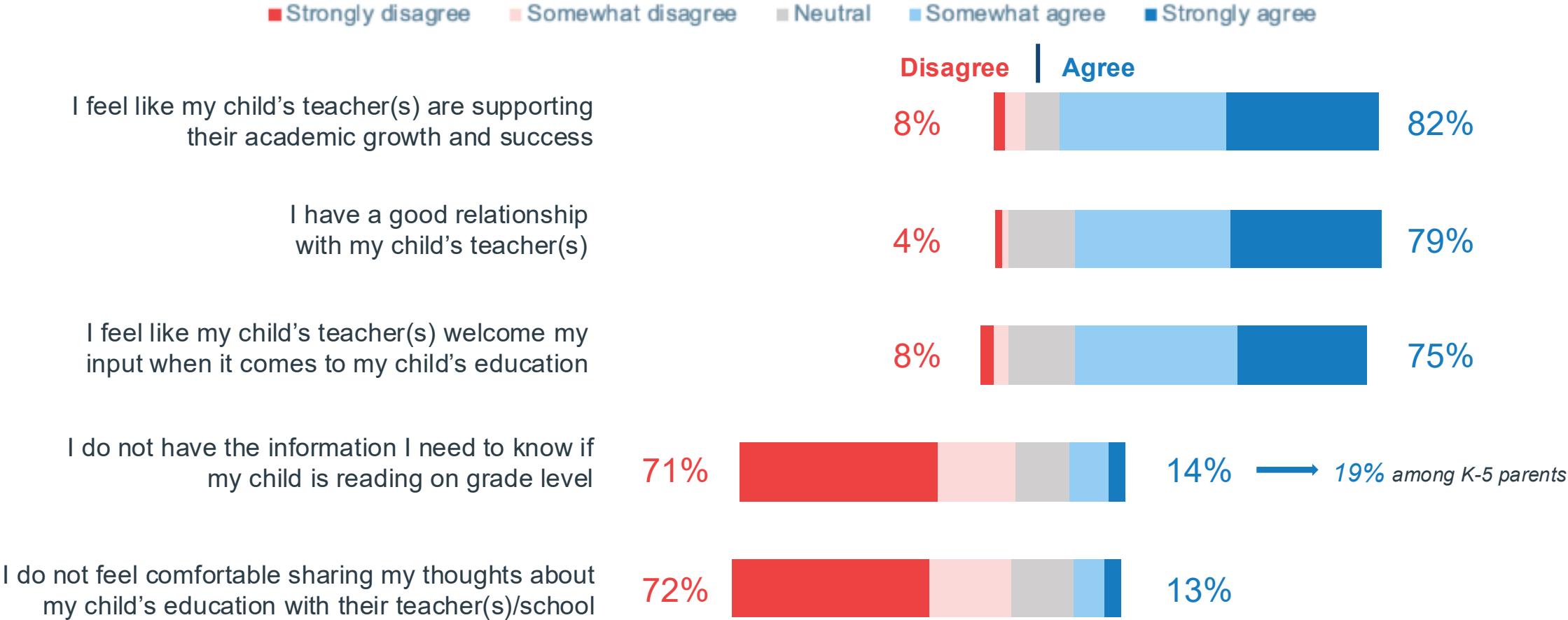
Most (79%) have looked in last year.

48% among
K-5 parents



Parents generally feel teachers are supportive and relationships are strong

Feelings on relationship with teachers and school





The Engagement Advantage

Findings from a Mixed-Methods Study
of Family-School Partnerships





UNLOCKING THE "HOW"

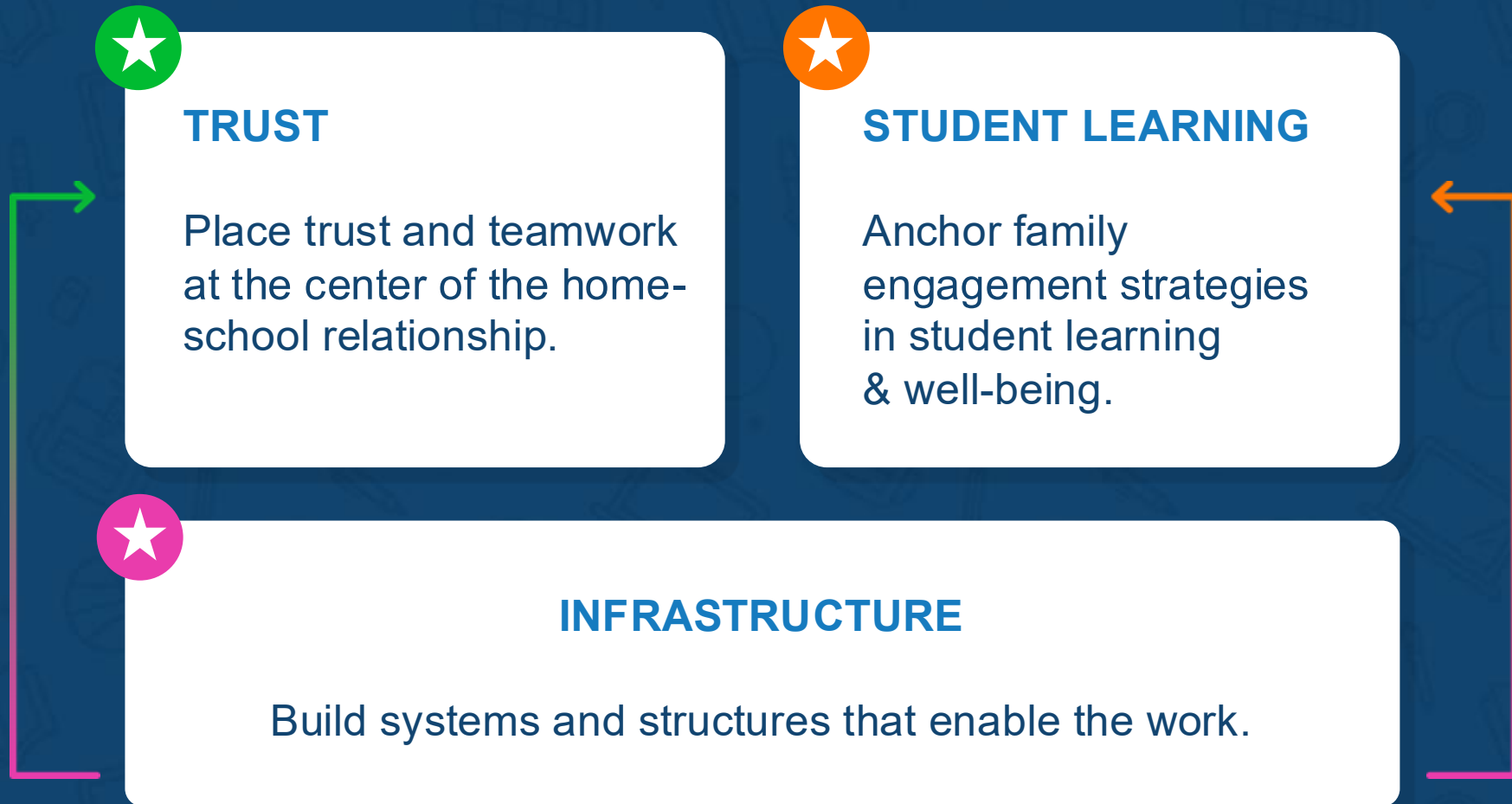
**DESIGNING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES
THAT LEAD TO SCHOOL SUCCESS**

www.BeALearningHero.org

Three key sources

1. Seven years of Learning Heroes national data
2. *Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships (Version 2)*
3. *Embracing a New Normal: Toward a More Liberatory Approach to Family Engagement*

3 Pillars of Effective Family Engagement



Leadership Look Fors (*Examples*)

PILLAR ONE **TRUST**

☆ **Prioritize deep listening**

☆ **Be honest**

PILLAR TWO **STUDENT LEARNING & WELL-BEING**

☆ **Focus on strengths & share positive news**

☆ **Meet families where they are (literally)**

PILLAR THREE **INFRASTRUCTURE**

Leadership Look Fors (*Examples*)

PILLAR ONE **TRUST**

- ☆ **Communicate grade-level progress**
 - at, above, or below grade level
- ☆ **Check for understanding with families**

PILLAR TWO **STUDENT LEARNING & WELL-BEING**

- ☆ **Share key expectations**

PILLAR THREE **INFRASTRUCTURE**

- ☆ **Co-design learning plans**
- ☆ **Show families what to do at home to support specific skills**

Leadership Look Fors (*Examples*)

PILLAR ONE **TRUST**

- ☆ **Define clear roles and expectations**
- ☆ **Make time for 1-on-1s with families**

PILLAR TWO **STUDENT LEARNING & WELL-BEING**

- ☆ **Create feedback loops**

PILLAR THREE **INFRASTRUCTURE**

- ☆ **Integrate into core systems**
 - **Meeting agendas**
 - **PD**

District Spotlight | Southside School District

Kayla Turner,
Director of
Curriculum &
Federal Programs

Southside Elementary boosts K-3 literacy with state-funded tutoring

JaTerrica Wilson, Northeast Arkansas News Nov 17, 2025 Updated Nov 18, 2025



Arkansas Democrat Gazette

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Arkansas' new grade-level reading requirement has Independence County school ramping up tutoring

November 22, 2025 by [Josh Snyder](#)

District Spotlight | Southside School District

- Customized 3-step tool to strengthen parent-teacher conferences
- Reviewed the tool with teachers to support them in having 1:1 data conversations with families
- 23-24 served 33% of students identified. By 25-26 served 90% of students identified.



Family Engagement Resources

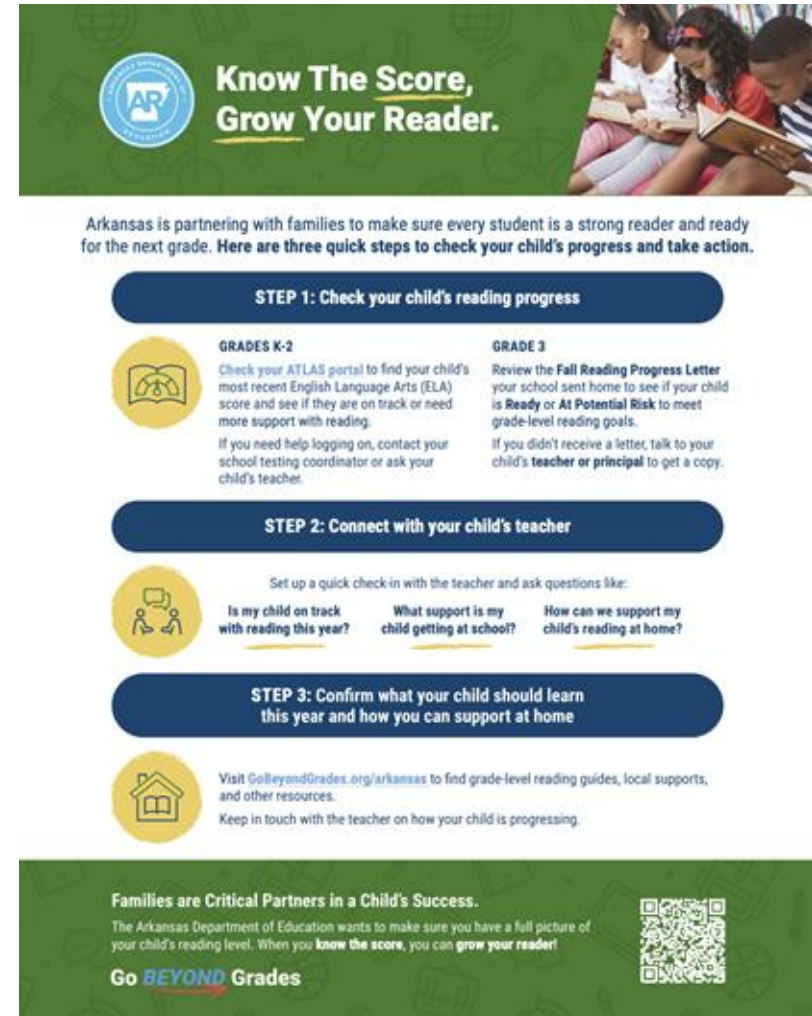


GoBeyondGrades.org/arkansas

Designed to inform families on the 3rd grade promotion law and how to support reading at home

- 3 concrete call to actions
- Website with links to key resources in English & Spanish
- One page flyer
- Partner resources including the AR Library interactive map to find local libraries
- Teacher page
- Social Media Kit for sharing

Relaunch for SY 26-27



The flyer is titled "Know The Score, Grow Your Reader." and features the Arkansas Department of Education logo. It outlines three steps for parents to check their child's reading progress and take action. Step 1: Check your child's reading progress, which includes instructions for grades K-2 and grade 3. Step 2: Connect with your child's teacher, which includes a quick check-in with the teacher and questions to ask. Step 3: Confirm what your child should learn this year and how you can support at home, which includes visiting the website for grade-level reading guides and local supports. The flyer also includes a QR code and the text "Families are Critical Partners in a Child's Success." and "Go BEYOND Grades".

Know The Score, Grow Your Reader.

Arkansas is partnering with families to make sure every student is a strong reader and ready for the next grade. Here are three quick steps to check your child's progress and take action.

STEP 1: Check your child's reading progress

GRADES K-2
Check your ATLAS portal to find your child's most recent English Language Arts (ELA) score and see if they are on track or need more support with reading.
If you need help logging on, contact your school testing coordinator or ask your child's teacher.

GRADE 3
Review the Fall Reading Progress Letter your school sent home to see if your child is **Ready** or **At Potential Risk** to meet grade-level reading goals.
If you didn't receive a letter, talk to your child's **teacher or principal** to get a copy.

STEP 2: Connect with your child's teacher

Set up a quick check-in with the teacher and ask questions like:

Is my child on track with reading this year? What support is my child getting at school? How can we support my child's reading at home?

STEP 3: Confirm what your child should learn this year and how you can support at home

Visit GoBeyondGrades.org/arkansas to find grade-level reading guides, local supports, and other resources.
Keep in touch with the teacher on how your child is progressing.

Families are Critical Partners in a Child's Success.
The Arkansas Department of Education wants to make sure you have a full picture of your child's reading level. When you **know the score**, you can **grow your reader**!

Go **BEYOND** Grades



Go Beyond Grades | District Website Examples



Glen Rose School District

Dedicated to excellence in education



Bryant Public Schools

Creating Opportunities for Success

Important Links

Go Beyond Grades in Arkansas

Parent and Family website created by the Arkansas Department of Education

Family and Educator ATLAS Toolkits

Third Grade Promotion Information

Accessing Your Child's Scores and IRPs

Grades K-3 Screener results for the 2025–2026 school year are available. ATLAS Grade 3 Summative data for 2025-26 will be available summer 2026. Parents and guardians will be able to view their child's ATLAS scores and Individual Reading Plans (IRPs) in the Atlas Family Portal. If you did not receive an access code contact your child's school.

For more information about the Arkansas Learns Act and third-grade promotion requirements, visit the Arkansas Department of Education's website at dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/learning-services/third-grade-promotion.

Bryant is committed to partnering with our families to support every child's reading success. If you have questions about your child's progress or need assistance accessing resources, please contact your school.

Additional Resources

[Understanding 3rd Grade Reading Requirements](#)

[Understanding 3rd Grade Reading Requirements \(Spanish\)](#)

[DESE Third-Grade Promotion Webpage](#)

[Approved HIT Tutor List](#)

[Go Beyond Grades](#)

Family Engagement Resources

BOY Welcoming Call Script

Example Welcoming Call Script

- Hello, this is _____, I'm _____'s teacher this year. I'm calling today to learn about you and your child.
- I'd love to know more about what your child likes and what helps _____ be successful.
- If it's ok, I'd like to start by hearing about what your hopes and dreams are for _____.
- What else can you tell me about your child so that I can be their best teacher?
- I have enjoyed our time together today and appreciate you giving me the opportunity to get to know you better and to learn more about _____.
- Do you have any questions for me?
- On _____ we are having a family learning event at school. I would love it if you could join us.
- In the future, don't hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions, or concerns. The best way to contact me is by _____.
- Thank you so much for our time together today!

Parent-Teacher Planning Tool

(to strengthen Fall Conferences)

Together, let's use the 3 steps below to make a personalized learning plan for your child

Help me get to know your child

Share reading and math data and progress

Team up on a plan

Back-to-School Night Deck

With information about Third-Grade Promotion Law

Agenda

- Why Third Grade Reading Matters
- How We Check Progress
- What Scores Mean
- How We'll Communicate
- Resources for Families
- Q&A

Navigating Candid Conversations

LEARNING HEROES

MARGATE CANDID CONVERSATIONS

Frequently Asked Parent Questions

Candid conversation
An open exchange of ideas and information on a particular topic. Think of the "tough" as an opportunity to support student success.

Review and thought
Review and thought are key to candid conversations.

ACADEMICS AND

What's most important

- Shows that being in the classroom is not just about academics, but also about the whole child.
- Emphasizes that it's the whole child that counts, not just the academic side.
- Explain that when a student is struggling, it's not just about the academic side, but also about the whole child.
- Let families know that we can support learning, not just grades.

Look-likes

- Use clear, parent-friendly language
 - e.g., "I understand how you feel" or "I'm sorry you're having a hard time"
- Name specific skills
 - e.g., "reading words accurately" vs. "reading fluently"
- Balance honesty with belief
 - e.g., "I know you're having a hard time, but we're here to help you grow"
- Focus on finding solutions
 - e.g., "Does that make sense?" or "What would you like to try?"
- Includes partnership
 - e.g., "Let's make a plan together"

WHOLE CHILD SUPPORTS

How can I continue to support my child's development at home?

- Support Communication and Confidence. Give families ideas on how to talk to their child about their learning and ask for help when they don't understand something.
- Build Routines. That Support Strong Learning Habits. Encourage families to create simple daily routines (e.g., set time for reading, homework, and bedtime). To build responsibility, have children take ownership of small tasks like packing their backpack, keeping track of assignments, etc.
- Encourage Productive Struggle. Remind families that it's okay—and important—for children to work through challenges. Support language like:
 - "Let's try that again together." "What strategy could you use to solve that problem?"

During Candid Conversations: What to Avoid

Even with the best intentions, candid conversations can either build trust or create confusion—these look-likes and non-examples can help you stay grounded in what's effective, partnership-driven communication sounds like.

Look-likes

- Use clear, parent-friendly language
 - e.g., "I understand how you feel" or "I'm sorry you're having a hard time"
- Name specific skills
 - e.g., "reading words accurately" vs. "reading fluently"
- Balance honesty with belief
 - e.g., "I know you're having a hard time, but we're here to help you grow"
- Focus on finding solutions
 - e.g., "Does that make sense?" or "What would you like to try?"
- Includes partnership
 - e.g., "Let's make a plan together"

Non-examples

- Over-relying on generalities that can be confusing or misleading
 - e.g., "They're just a little behind" or "They're not"
- Sending families data without explanation of what it means
 - e.g., "Your child's reading score is 75"
- Talking more than listening to families
 - e.g., "I know you're having a hard time, but we're here to help you grow"
- Avoiding the hard truth or softening it so much it becomes unclear
 - e.g., "Your child's reading score is 75"
- Ending a conversation without clear next steps
 - e.g., "Let's make a plan together"

Read-at-Home Plan



Read-at-Home Plan

Reading Support for End of the Year

Prepared for: John Davis Ziegler

Teacher: Mrs. Duncan

Third Grade

This **Read-at-Home Plan** helps you support your child's reading growth this summer and into next school year. You'll find simple ways to practice and strengthen reading skills at home.

WHY THIS PLAN MATTERS — Reading is one of the most important skills your child will learn. **Students who read on grade level are more likely to succeed in school, graduate on time, and be ready for college or a career. Based on your child's ATLAS end-of-year assessment, they need more time and support to build the reading skills needed for the next grade.** This means your child will either repeat their current grade or move forward with additional support at school.

HOW AND WHEN TO USE THE PLAN — Try to spend 20–30 minutes each day practicing reading and writing. You can split the time in ways that work best for your family — for example, 10 minutes of a quick activity at breakfast and 20 minutes of reading later.

For more details about your child's ATLAS scores, visit atlasportal.org/families. To log in, contact your child's school for their unique access code.

How to Help at Home

Reading Fundamentals & Vocabulary			
Skills to Work on	Activities	Resource Links	Resource QR Codes
Answer Questions about a text	When reading informational texts together ask: -What is this story mostly about? -What details helped you figure that out? Ask students to support their answers with the text. While reading stories together, pause and ask simple questions such as: -Who are the main characters? -What happened in the story? -Where did the story take place? -Why did the character make that choice?	RACE Strategy Parent and Student Guide	RACE Strategy Parent and Student Guide 
Use key details to understand a main idea	The main idea is the most important point of the text. Key details help explain that idea.	Main Idea Graphic Organizer	Main Idea Graphic Organizer

Resources and BOY Planning Sheet



From folder download:

- ★ Customizable Resources
- ★ BOY Planning Sheet to use with your district/school teams

Leveraging Resources for High Impact BOY Strategies

- ★ Welcoming Calls within the first 2 weeks of school
- ★ Restructuring Open House or Back-to-School Nights to include:
 - 1:1 conversations with families and information about the 3rd grade promotion law and literacy tutoring
- ★ Restructuring existing touchpoints like Parent-Teacher Conferences to:
 - Ensure parents have an accurate and actionable understanding of their child's reading progress

Questions & Reflections

What resonates for you?

**Please share
your feedback.**



Reflection to Action | Start, Stop, Continue

Start

What should we start doing to advance more effective family engagement in service of student outcomes?

Stop

What isn't working that we need to stop doing?

Continue

What is working well that we should build on and sustain?



Contact

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