




STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



**TO:** Superintendents of Schools

**FROM:** Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer 

**DATE:** July 8, 2019

**SUBJECT:** Family Engagement High-Impact Practice – Sharing Data with Families

This is the fifth in a [series of monthly memos](#) intended to support Connecticut’s new definition and framework for family engagement, [Full, Equal and Equitable Partnerships with Families](#). The Framework includes a set of [guiding principles](#), one of which speaks to the importance of sharing information frequently with families about how their children are doing.

A report by the [Global Family Research Project](#) demonstrates that data sharing is a high-leverage area for engaging families. When families and schools communicate about student performance, they are more effective at planning learning opportunities and promoting children’s success. However, [other research](#) indicates that the information parents commonly use to understand achievement often leads them to believe that their children are performing better than they actually are. The sources of this disconnect, common characteristics of successful data-sharing programs, and resources for equitable collaboration are discussed below.

**The Disconnect between Parent Perceptions and Student Data**

A new [national study by Learning Heroes](#) found that nine in ten parents of children in kindergarten through eighth grade believed that their child was achieving at or above grade level in both reading and math. This finding was consistent regardless of parents’ race, income or education level. Yet national data indicates only about one third of students actually perform at that level.

Why is there a disconnect? When parents were asked how they knew their child was achieving they said they relied primarily on report cards. The nationally representative sample of teachers in the study, however, said that report card grades reflect effort, progress and participation, and are not the best indicator of grade-level mastery.

Teachers have a number of sources available to judge student achievement, from diagnostic assessments measuring math and reading levels to class assignments and teacher-made tests and quizzes. When parents in the study had access to and understanding of additional sources of data, such as state test results, and a school performance rating, their thinking shifted – from nearly 9 in 10 believing that their child is at or above grade level before exposure, to just over half (52%).

**Effectively Sharing Data with Families**

Sharing data effectively with families is not a one-time event, but is an ongoing relational practice that encourages connections between school life and home life. [Effective data-sharing programs](#) provide information and also put that data in context and make it meaningful for families. Best practices include helping families understand how their child’s performance relates to age and grade-level expectations and opportunities for families to share information about out-of-school life. Teachers and parents then are in a better position to co-develop the next steps, such as creating learning goals and identifying resources to extend learning.

## **Ensuring Equitable Access to Data**

Families have varying levels of familiarity with English and with technology as well as different levels of access. [The Global Family Research Project](#) suggests not only providing online access to data but also offering training on how to log in and access reports and instructions translated into different languages. Community centers and libraries can be key partners in providing access points for those families who might not have devices or connectivity at home. With support from the school, community organizations also can be allies in reaching out to families to help them access, understand, and act on student data.

## **Resources and Strategies for Sharing Data with Families**

Below are resources and strategies for providing families with student data that is accessible, understandable and actionable.

- [All the Information in One Place: Family Worksheets](#)  
Learning Heroes designed Family Worksheets as a simple tool to promote conversations between teachers and families and elicit parents' insights on their child's learning. The Worksheets align grade-level goals with a student's current mastery level in terms that are clear and understandable. Worksheets also provide parents with questions they can ask their child's teacher and include skills-based resources parents can use to help their child at home. Family Worksheets are available for [elementary](#) and [middle school](#) grades.
- [Understanding School Performance: The New Connecticut Report Cards](#)  
The Connecticut State Department of Education recently released the "[Connecticut Report Cards](#)." The report cards are user-friendly visual reports for all schools, districts and the state. The report cards use simple charts to visualize data and trends in an accessible and understandable format. Each report card provides essential information about:
  - Students (e.g., enrollment, demographics, attendance, discipline);
  - Educators (e.g., capacity, demographics, attendance);
  - Instruction/Resources (e.g., course participation, time with non-disabled peers, per-pupil expenditures); and
  - Performance (e.g., state test achievement and growth, high school graduation, college readiness, physical fitness, college entrance).
- [A Data-informed Plan to Support Learning at Home: Academic Parent Teacher Teams](#)  
The [Academic Parent-Teacher Teams \(APTT\)](#) model uses both individual and classroom student data in 75 minute group meetings with families that replace traditional parent-teacher conferences. Families gain a hands-on understanding of what all the complex performance measures such as grades, test scores, and rankings mean, and how they might impact children's likelihood to stay on the path to graduation and college. Parents and teachers create a data-informed plan to support learning at home and identify milestones and communicate about progress. The APTT model has been shown to increase parents' sense of effectiveness, improve teachers' perceptions of families' willingness to support learning goals, and improve reading outcomes for children.

When parents have a complete picture of their child's academic performance and strong relationships with teachers, they are more prepared to be a true partner in their child's learning.

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