HANOVER RESEARCH

K12 PARENT COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT THOUGHT LEADERSHIP SURVEY

Prepared for ParentSquare

October 2026

STUDY OVERVIEW

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of this study are to:

- **Understand perceptions of K-12 school communication**, including parent/guardian satisfaction with and efficacy of communication, what makes parents/guardians trust their students' schools, how effective communication makes them feel, and what impact effective communication has on school choice.
- **Identify the factors driving parent/guardian engagement with K-12 schools,** including why parents/guardians engage with schools, the barriers to engaging more, and where communication breaks down.
- **Evaluate parents'/guardian's perspectives on attendance**, including perceived frequency of, reasons for, and consequences of absenteeism.

The research aims to provide data-driven recommendations for schools to improve engagement, trust, and communication. Insights from the survey will be leveraged for back-to-school marketing, PR, webinars, and thought leadership, supporting ParentSquare's mission to be the leading platform for parent engagement and helping schools optimize their outreach and enrollment strategies.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION & SAMPLE

- The survey was administered online in July and August and respondents were recruited via a third-party panel provider.
- The analysis includes a total of 1,031 respondents following data cleaning and quality control.

RESPONDENT QUALIFICATIONS

- Adults (25+)
- Parent of at least one student enrolled in Grades K-12
- Student(s) must be enrolled in a public, private, or charter school
- Must be willing to take the survey in English or Spanish

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Communication quality is a driver of retention, enrollment and advocacy.

Communication plays an important role in how families evaluate and choose schools, with accessibility and communication practices ranking among parents' top school-selection criteria. Communication quality also factors into decisions to stay at, enroll in, and recommend a school. Effective communication helps parents feel informed, involved, and connected, while communication problems can create retention risk.

Personalization is essential to engagement.

Parents generally rate school communication positively, but personalization remains a relative weakness. Parents feel most informed and supported by communication specific to their child, particularly updates about academic progress, behavior, and well-being, as well as responses to individual questions and concerns. Effective engagement therefore depends not simply on communicating more, but on providing information that is personally relevant and actionable.

Families have gaps in visibility into attendance information.

Parents are typically familiar with school attendance policies, but many do not receive regular communication about their child's overall attendance patterns. Families are particularly concerned about the academic consequences of absences and want clearer explanations of their impacts. More proactive and contextualized attendance communication could help families recognize concerns earlier and better understand why attendance matters.

KEY TAKEAWAYS: *COMMUNICATION QUALITY IS A DRIVER OF RETENTION, ENROLLMENT, AND ADVOCACY*

- **Communication is a major consideration in school choice.** More than eight in ten parents rate accessibility of communication (86%) and communication practices (83%) as very or extremely important, placing communication accessibility behind only school safety, teacher quality, and academic performance.
- **Communication quality influences whether families remain with their schools.** Nearly two-thirds of parents (63%) say communication quality has influenced their decision to stay at a specific school
- **Communication also plays a role in attracting families.** Half of parents (50%) say communication quality has influenced their decision to enroll in a particular school
- **Positive communication experiences support advocacy.** Fifty-six percent say communication quality has influenced their decision to recommend a specific school, and communication effectiveness and satisfaction are positively associated with likelihood to recommend.
- **Effective communication strengthens families' connection to their schools.** Parents most commonly say it makes them feel informed (52%), involved (48%), and connected to teachers and staff (43%).
- **Most schools begin from a strong position.** More than three-quarters of parents are highly satisfied with school communication (77%) and consider it highly effective (76%), while 84% find it easy to reach their school.
- **Communication failures can carry meaningful consequences.** Twenty-eight percent of parents agree that they have considered transferring their child because of communication issues.

KEY TAKEAWAYS: *PERSONALIZATION IS ESSENTIAL TO ENGAGEMENT*

- **Personalization stands out as a relative weakness within otherwise positive evaluations of school communication.** While 81% agree that communication is relevant to their family's needs, only 68% agree that it feels personalized.
- **What makes communication valuable to parents is often inherently personal.** The communication types parents most frequently identify as making them feel informed and supported center on their own child's experience
- **Academic progress is particularly important, but parents want a broader view of how their child is doing.** Sixty-four percent say updates about their child's academic progress make them feel informed, the most commonly selected source of feeling informed. More than half (54%) say information about their child's behavior or well-being helps them feel informed.
- **Individual teacher communication is especially supportive.** Fifty-three percent identify communication from teachers about how their child is doing as something that makes them feel supported.
- **Personalization also means responsiveness.** Half of parents say responses from the school when they reach out make them feel supported, while 45% value communication that acknowledges or addresses their concerns.
- **Parents explicitly recognize personalization as supportive.** Forty-two percent identify communication personalized to their child's needs as a type of communication that makes them feel supported.

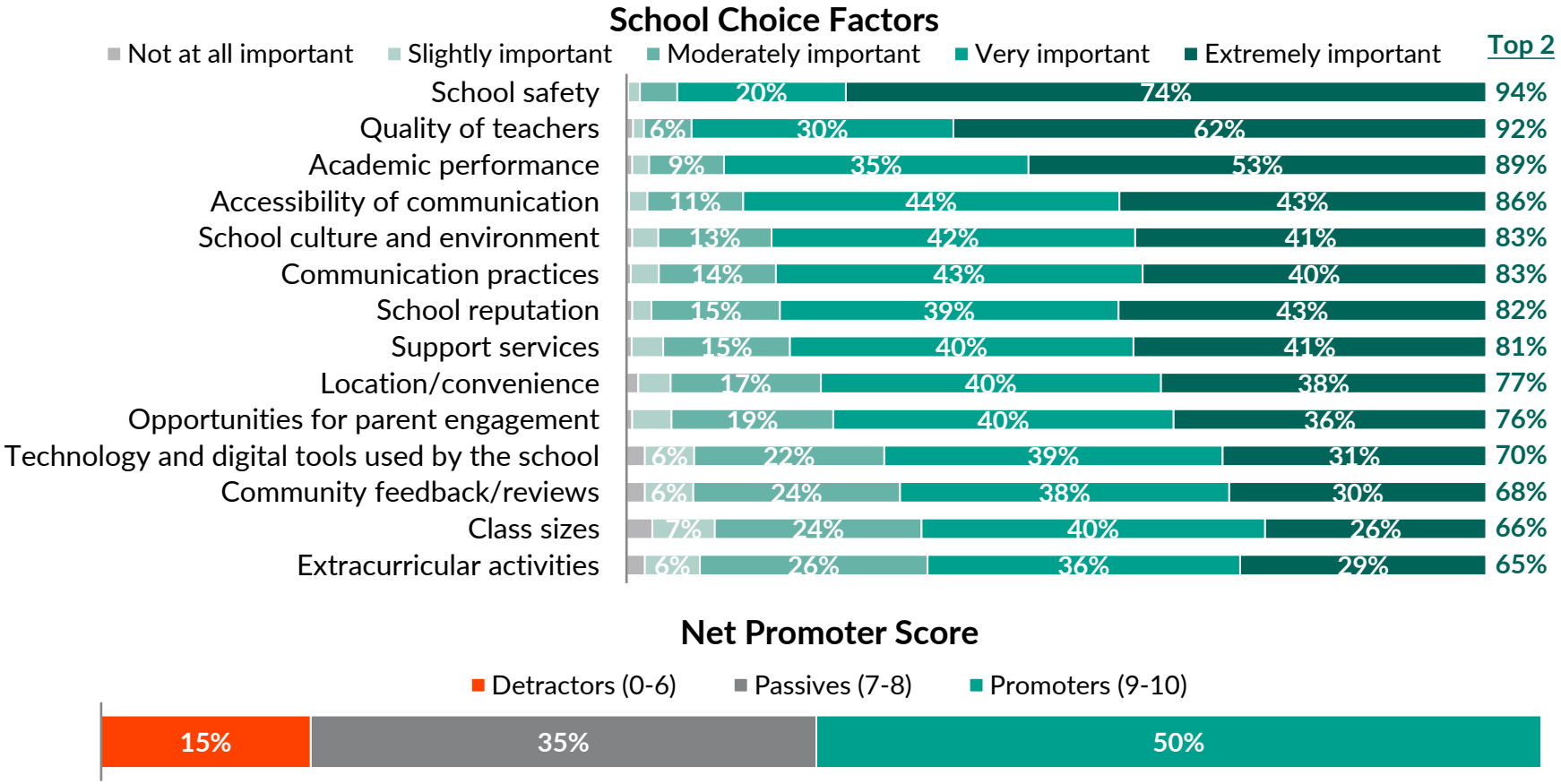
KEY TAKEAWAYS: *FAMILIES HAVE GAPS IN VISIBILITY INTO ATTENDANCE INFORMATION*

- **Parents are generally knowledgeable about school attendance expectations.** Eighty-two percent report being very or extremely familiar with their child's school attendance policy.
- **However, policy familiarity does not necessarily provide ongoing visibility into attendance patterns.** Nearly one-quarter of parents (24%) say schools rarely or never communicate with them about their child's overall attendance.
- **Some communication is reactive rather than continuous.** Another 16% say their school communicates about overall attendance only when there is a problem or concern.
- **A meaningful minority of students experience multiple absences.** About one-quarter of parents (23%) report their children missed six or more days during the most recent school year, including roughly 8% reporting 11 or more days.
- **Parents principally view absences through an academic lens.** Their leading concerns include falling behind academically (37%), missing important instruction or information (34%), difficulty catching up (31%), and impacts on grades or academic performance (31%).
- **Parents are generally receptive to communication about attendance concerns.** Eighty-three percent feel highly comfortable contacting their school about attendance.
- **When a concern does arise, families expect direct outreach.** Phone calls are the most commonly expected form of contact (71%), followed by email (46%) and text/SMS (40%).

CURRENT PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Most parents feel **accessibility of communication** and **communication practices** are highly important when selecting schools, and half would recommend their children's school to another family.

Only school safety, quality of teachers, and academic performance are prioritized over communication.

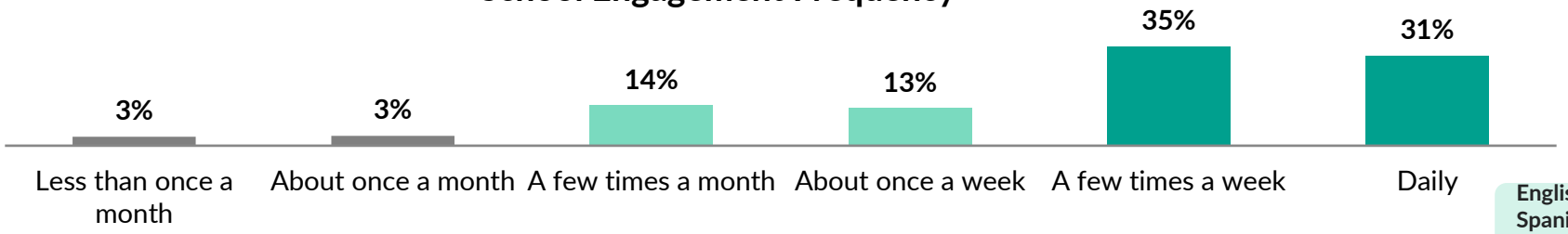


Q: NPS: On a scale of 0 to 10, how likely are you to recommend your child(ren)'s school to another family? (n=1031)
Q: How important are the following factors when choosing a school for your child(ren) in grade k-12? (n=1031)

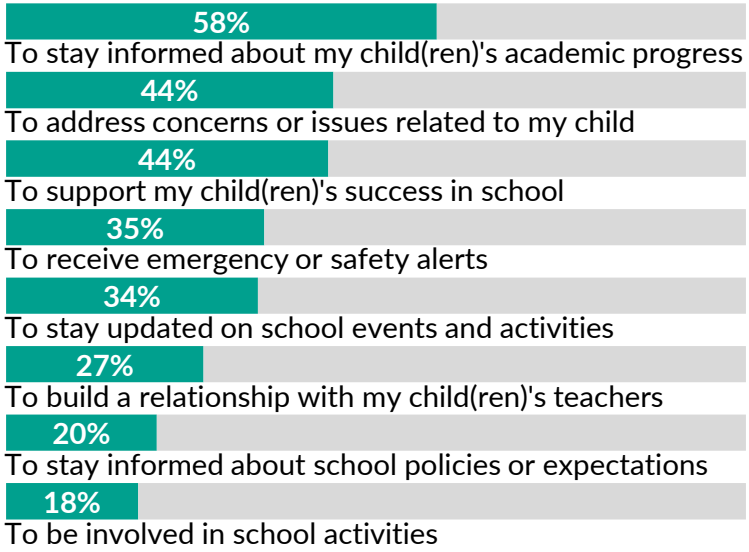
Parents typically engage with school **at least a few times a week** and do so to **stay informed about their children's progress, address concerns,** and **support their child's success.**

The most common barrier to engaging more is lack of time, especially among those who primarily speak Spanish at home, though half of parents experience no barriers. One-third of Spanish-speaking parents also face language barriers.*

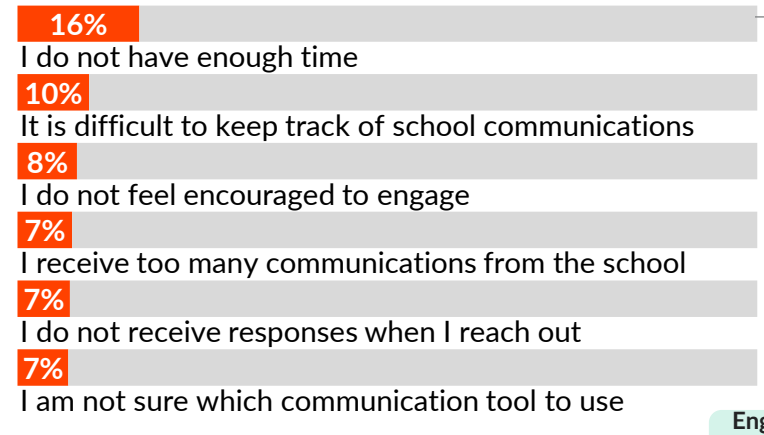
School Engagement Frequency



Reasons For School Engagement



Top 7 Barriers To School Engagement*



English: 15%
Spanish: 25%

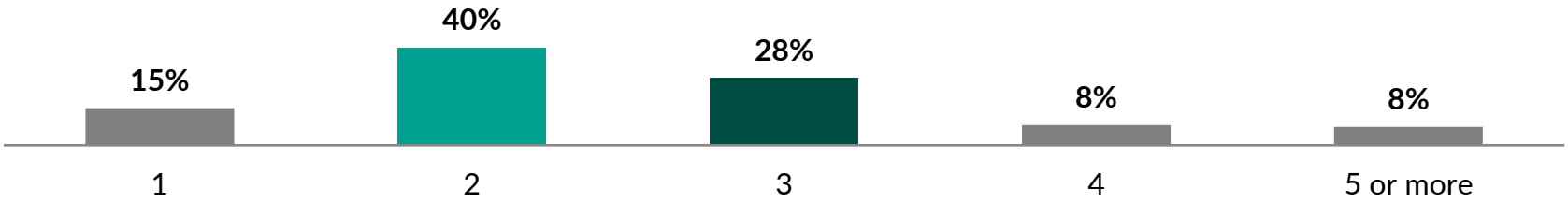
Nothing prevents me from engaging more : 54%

English: 57%
Spanish: 32%

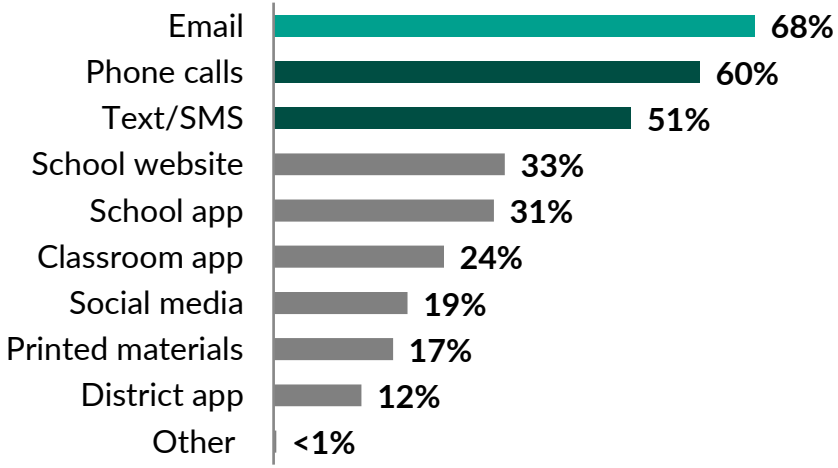
Q: How often do you engage with your child(ren)'s school (e.g., reading emails/announcements, communicating with teachers, attending events, responding to messages)? (n=1031) **Q:** What are the primary reasons you engage with your child(ren)'s school? Select up to three (3). (n=1031)
Q: What prevents you from engaging more with your child(ren)'s school? Select all that apply. (n=1031)

Most parents use **2 to 3 channels** to receive communication from school. **Email**, **phone calls**, and **text/SMS** are both the most common and most preferred channels.

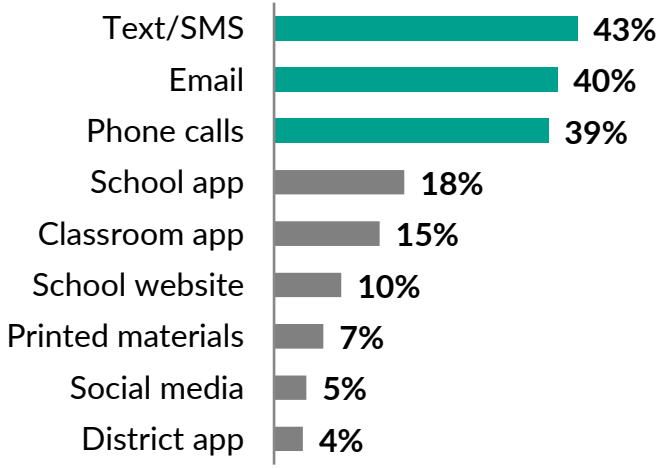
Number of Communication Channels



Channels Used



Preferred Channels

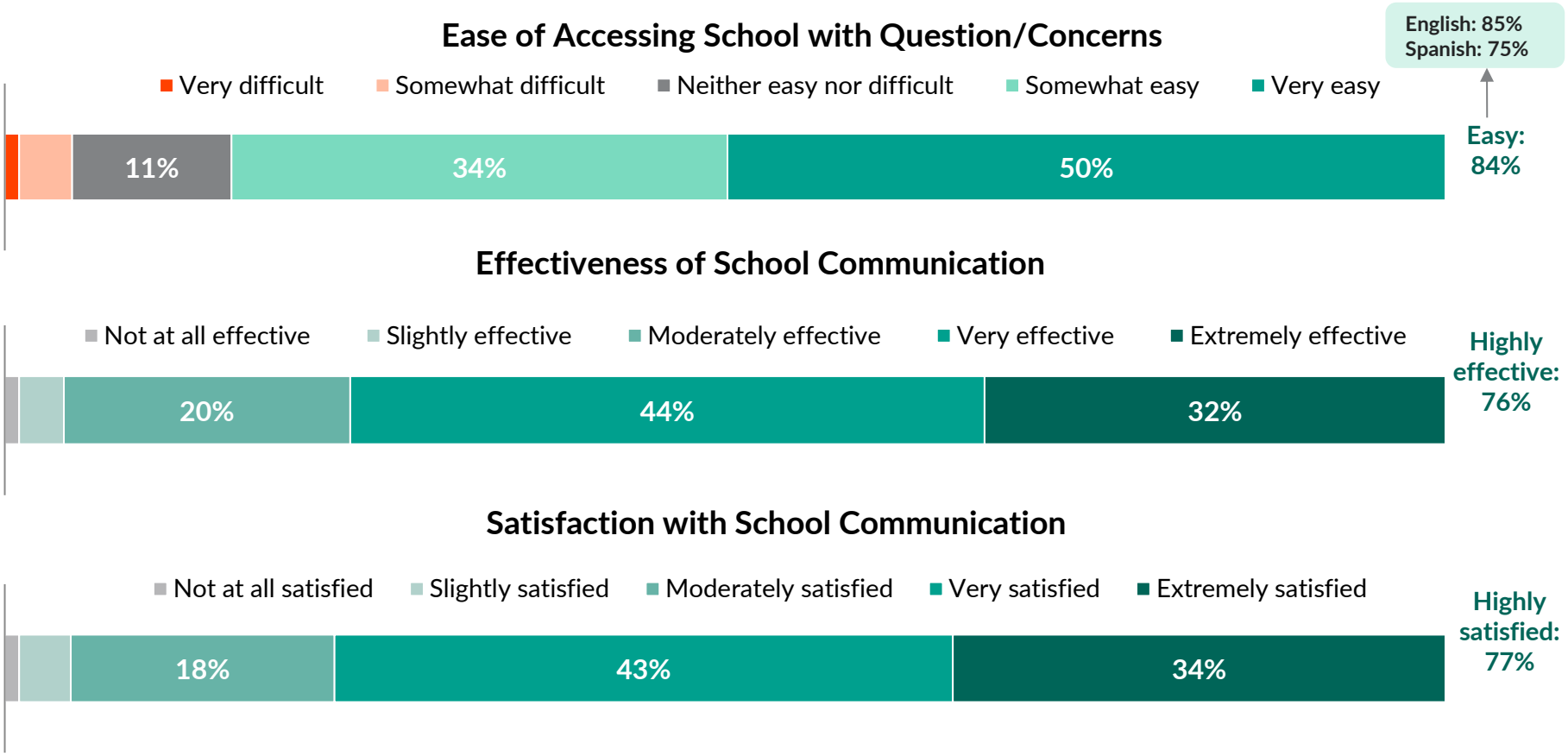


Q: How many different channels or platforms do you regularly use to receive communication from your child(ren)'s school? (n=1031)
Q: Which of the following channels or platforms do you regularly use to receive communication from your child(ren)'s school? Select all that apply. (n=1031) **Q**: Which of the following channels or platforms would you prefer to use to receive communication from your child(ren)'s school, even if you do not currently use them? Select up to two (2). (n=1031)

PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Parents have positive experiences with school communication, as most find it easy to reach the school with questions, find the communication effective, and are satisfied with the communication they receive.

Although, the majority of parents who primarily speak Spanish at home feel it is easy to reach the school, this feeling is more common among English-speaking parents.

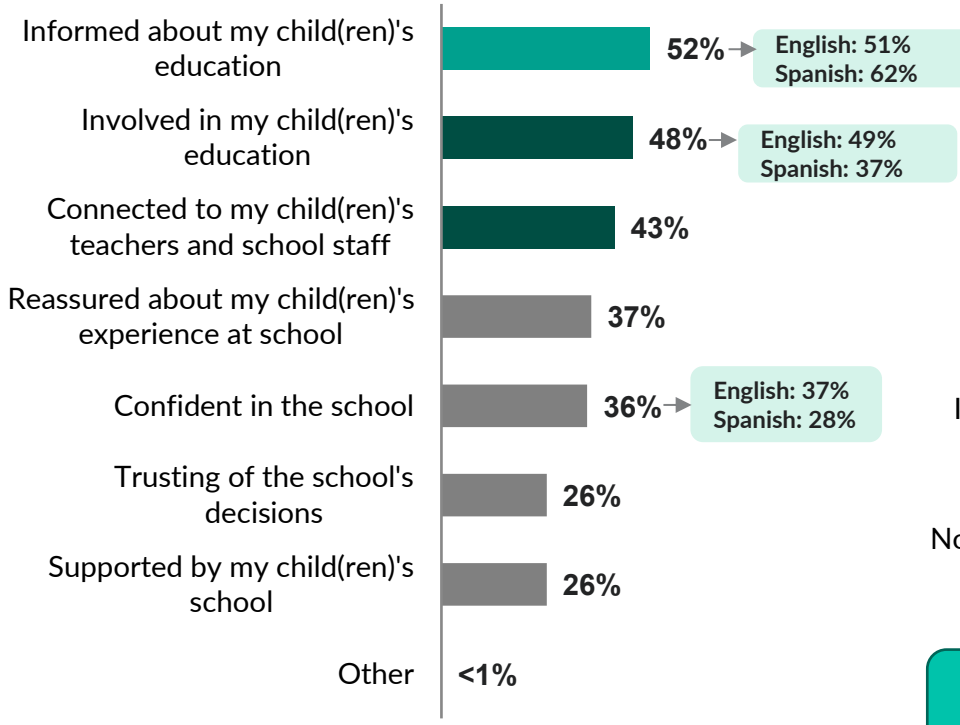


Q: To what extent is it easy or difficult to reach your child(ren)'s school when you have a question or concern? (n=1031) **Q**: To what extent does your child(ren)'s school provide effective communication (i.e., communicating the information that you need to receive in a clear and timely manner)? (n=1031) **Q**: Overall, how satisfied are you with the communication you receive from your child(ren)'s school? (n=1031)

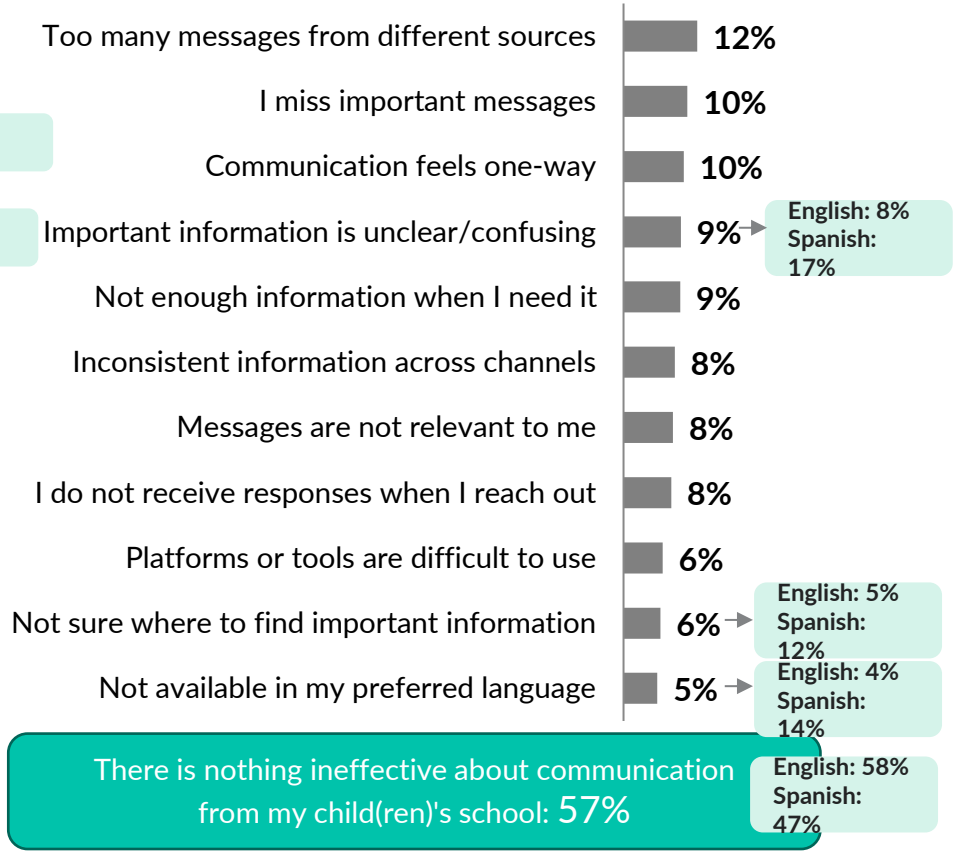
Effective communication helps parents feel **informed**, **involved**, and **connected** to their child's school, and half of parents find nothing *ineffective* about current school communication.

Parents who primarily speak Spanish are less likely to feel there is nothing ineffective, more commonly citing sources such as information is unclear/confusing, uncertainty on where to find important information, and communication unavailable in their preferred language.

Feelings Resulting from Effective Communication



Sources of Ineffective Communication*

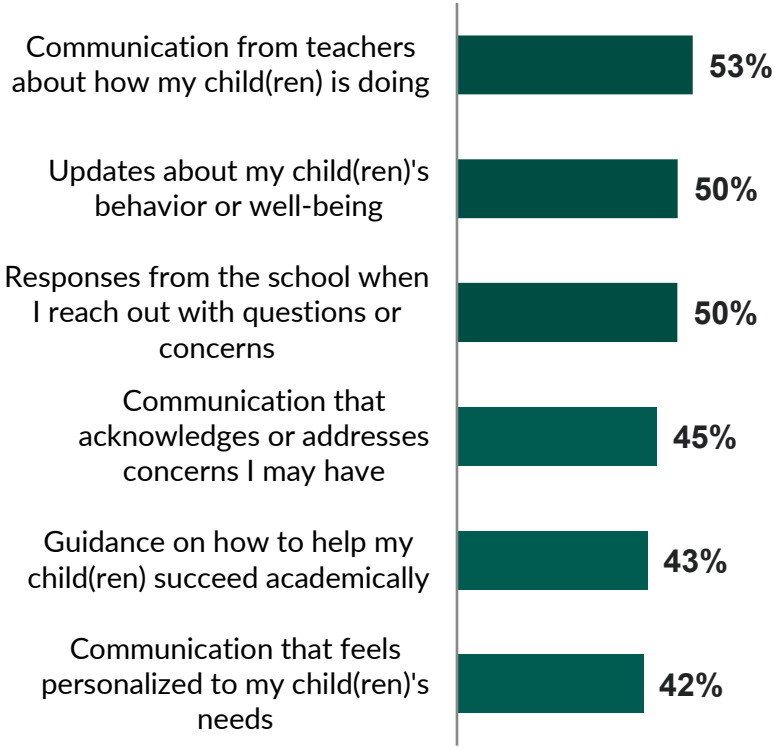


Q: Which of the following best describes how effective communication makes you feel? Select up to three (3). (n=1031) **Q**: In what ways, if any, is communication from your child(ren)'s school not effective? Select all that apply. (n=1031)
*Note: Some response options shortened for brevity.

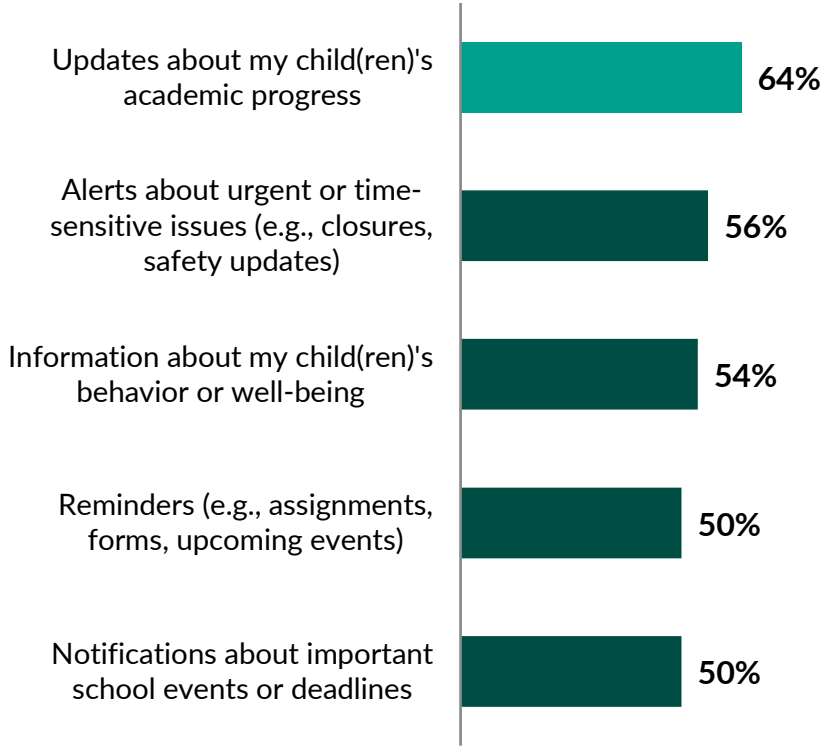
Parents feel most supported and informed when communication focuses on **personalized and direct insight into student progress and well-being.**

Feelings of support also stem from school responsiveness when parents reach out and voice concerns.

Top 6 Communication Strategies that Make Parents Feel Supported*



Top 5 Communication Strategies that Make Parents Feel Informed*

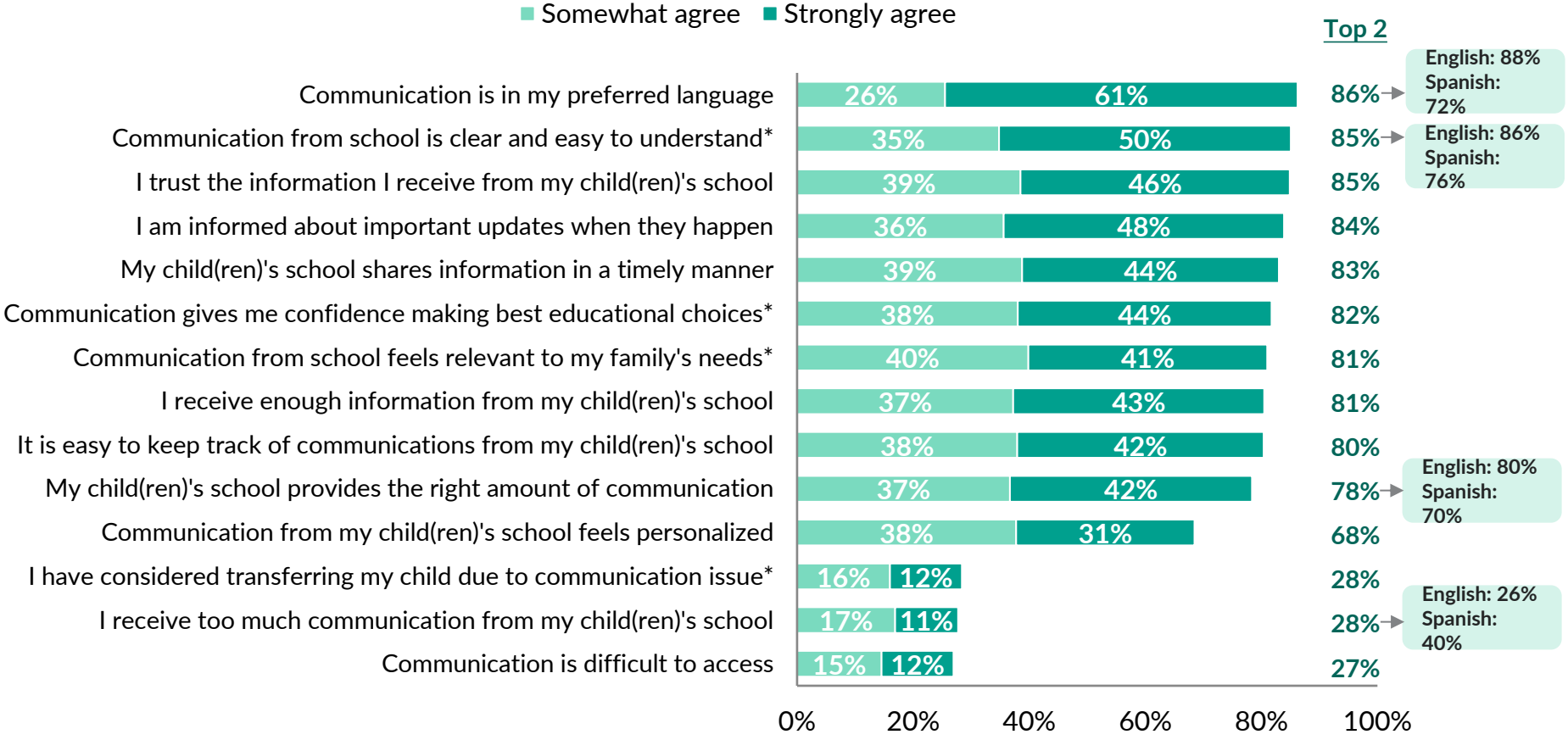


Q: Which of the following types of communication make you feel most supported by your child(ren)'s school? Select all that apply. (n=1031)
Q: Which of the following types of communication make you feel most informed by your child(ren)'s school? Select all that apply. (n=1031)

Most parents have **positive perceptions of the communication** they receive from their children's schools, though only two-thirds feel the communication is personalized.

Those who primarily speak Spanish at home are less likely to feel communication is clear or that it is delivered in their preferred language, and they are more likely to feel schools communicate too much.

School Communication Evaluation**

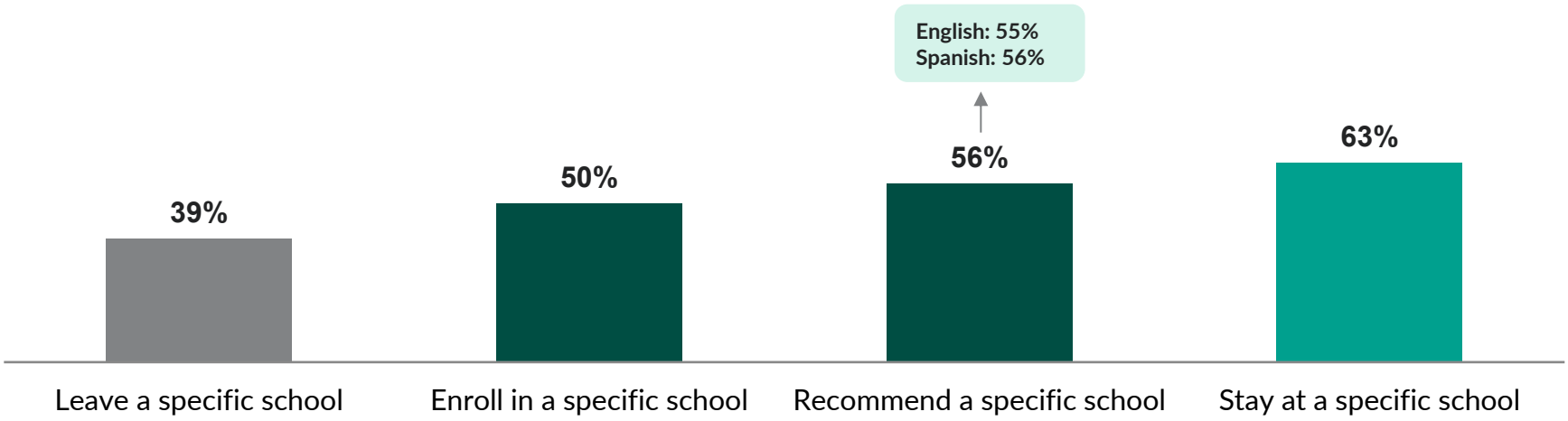


Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about communication from your child(ren)'s school? (n=1031)

Communication quality is associated with **enrollment stability** and greater **likelihood to recommend** schools, and the latter is especially true among parents who primarily speak Spanish

Outcomes of Communication Quality

Top 2 Box includes "Very" and "Extremely" Agree



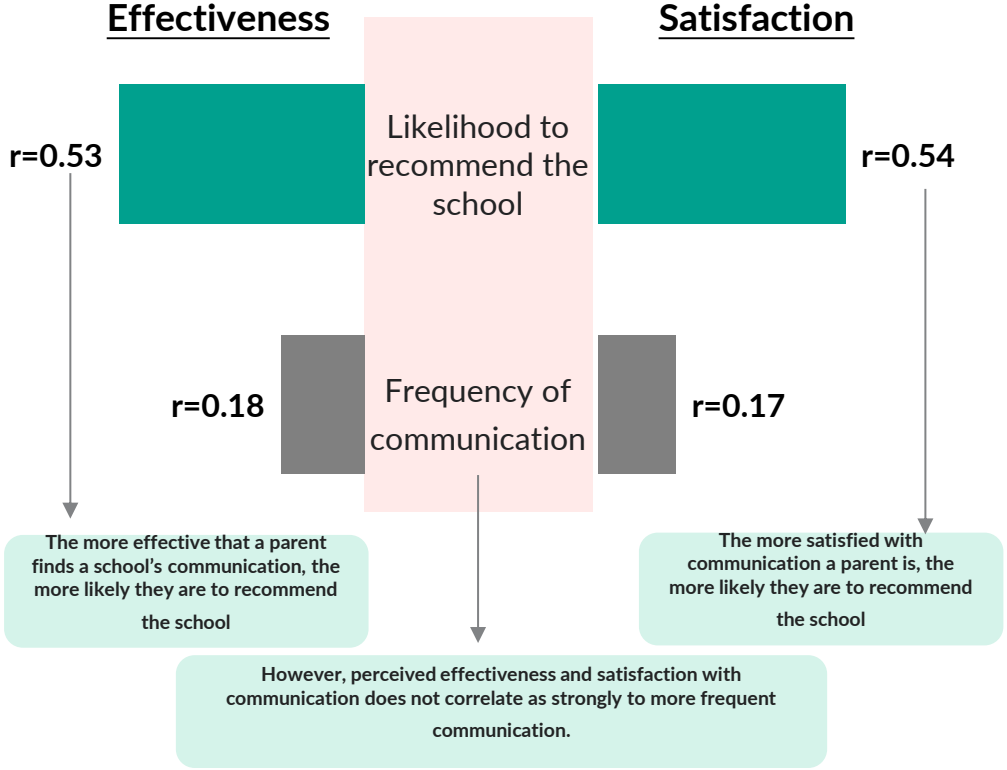
Q: To what extent has the quality of communication you received from your child(ren)'s school(s) influenced each of the following decisions? (n=1031)

The **more satisfied** a parent is with their child's school's communication – or the **more effective** they feel the school's communication is - the **more likely they are to recommend the school to others**

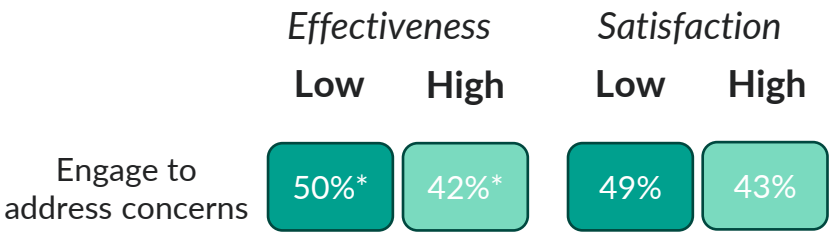
Those who are less satisfied with school communication and those who don't find school communication effective are more likely to cite reactive addressing of concerns as their reason for engaging with school.

Impact of Communication Effectiveness

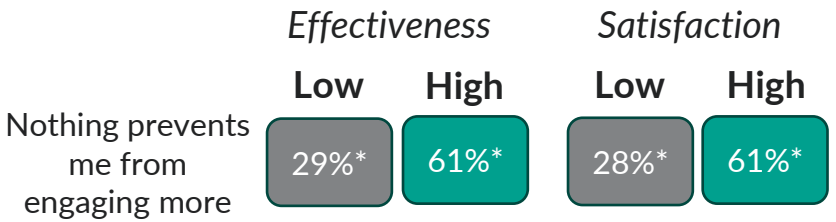
Impact of Communication Satisfaction



Primary Reasons for Engaging With School



Factors Preventing More Frequent Engagement



Q: To what extent does your child(ren)'s school provide effective communication (i.e., communicating the information that you need to receive in a clear and timely manner)? (n=1031) **Q**: Overall, how satisfied are you with the communication you receive from your child(ren)'s school? (n=1031) **Q**: NPS: On a scale of 0 to 10, how likely are you to recommend your child(ren)'s school to another family? (n=1031) **Q**: How often do you engage with your child(ren)'s school (e.g., reading emails/announcements, communicating with teachers, attending events, responding to messages)? (n=1031) **Q**: What are the primary reasons you engage with your child(ren)'s school? Select up to three (3). (n=1031) **Q**: What prevents you from engaging more with your child(ren)'s school? Select all that apply. (n=1031)

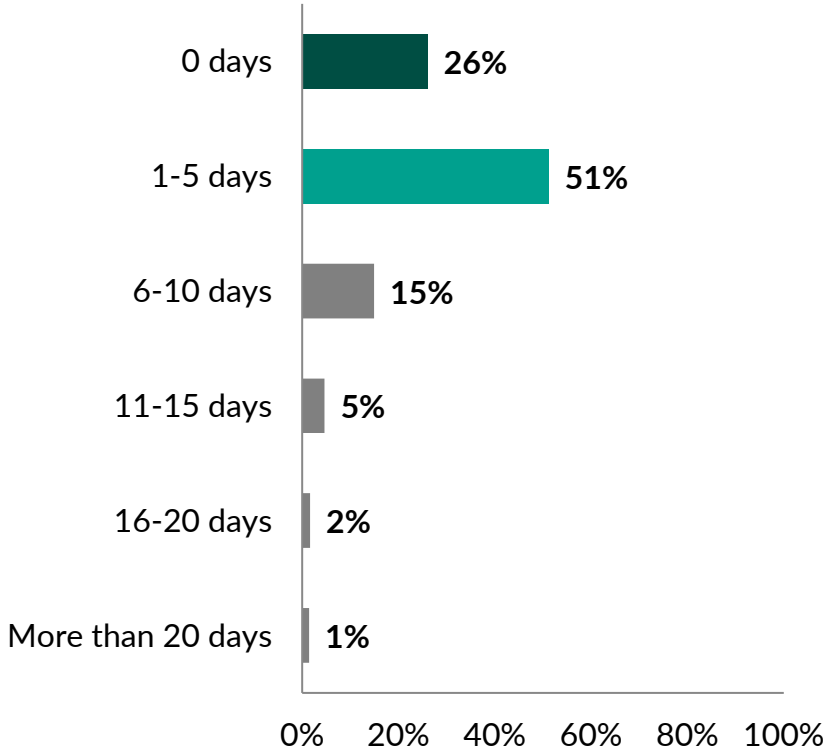
PERSPECTIVES ON ATTENDANCE

Attendance issues are relatively limited among most families, and parents are highly familiar with attendance policies.

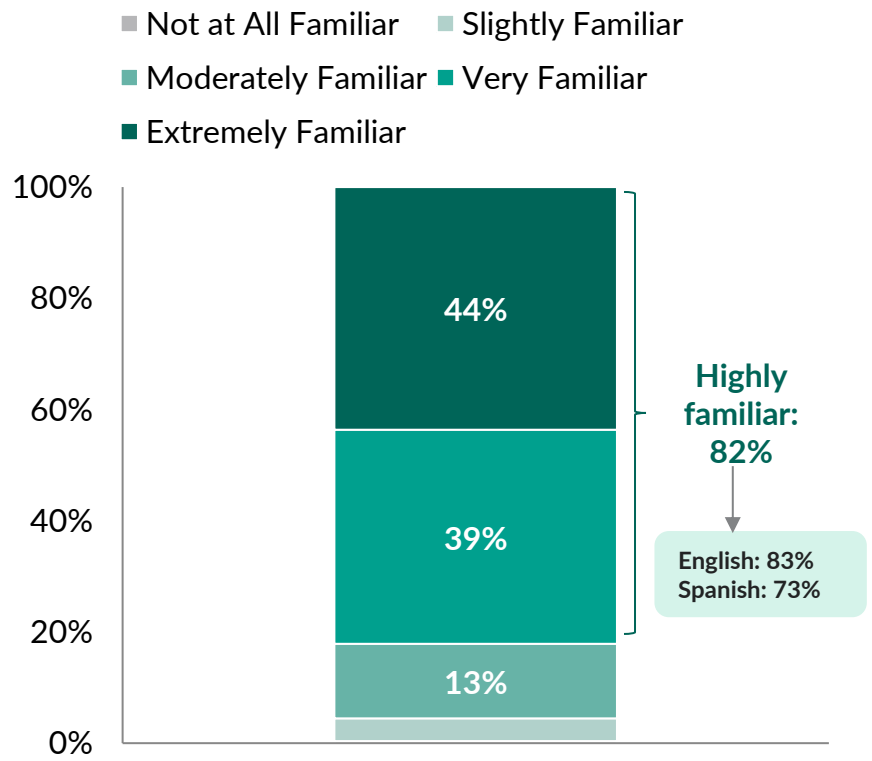
Overall, parents of students with less absenteeism have more positive perceptions of school communication, such as great communication frequency, satisfaction, and recommendation likelihood. They also experience fewer barriers to communication and feel more comfortable contacting schools with attendance concerns*.

Though parents report limited attendance issues, the national chronic absenteeism was 23.5 percent in 2024, up from 13.4 percent in 2017.**

School Absence Frequency



Attendance Policy Familiarity



CORPORATE

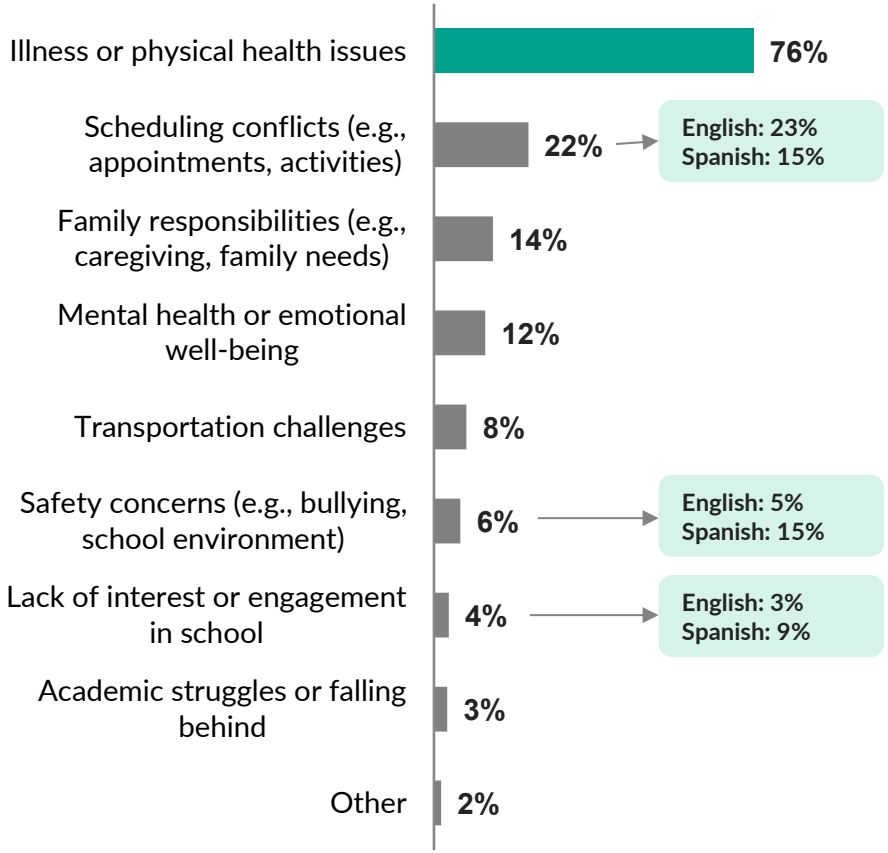
Q: Thinking about the most recent school year, how often has your child(ren) been absent from school? (n=1031) **Q:** To what extent are you familiar with the attendance policy at your child(ren)'s school? (n=1031)

*Note: Data not visualized. **Geduld, A. (2025, August 22). *K-12 Chronic Absenteeism Rates Down From Peak, But Remain Persistently High.* The74. https://www.the74million.org/article/k-12-chronic-absenteeism-rates-down-from-peak-but-remain-persistently-high/.

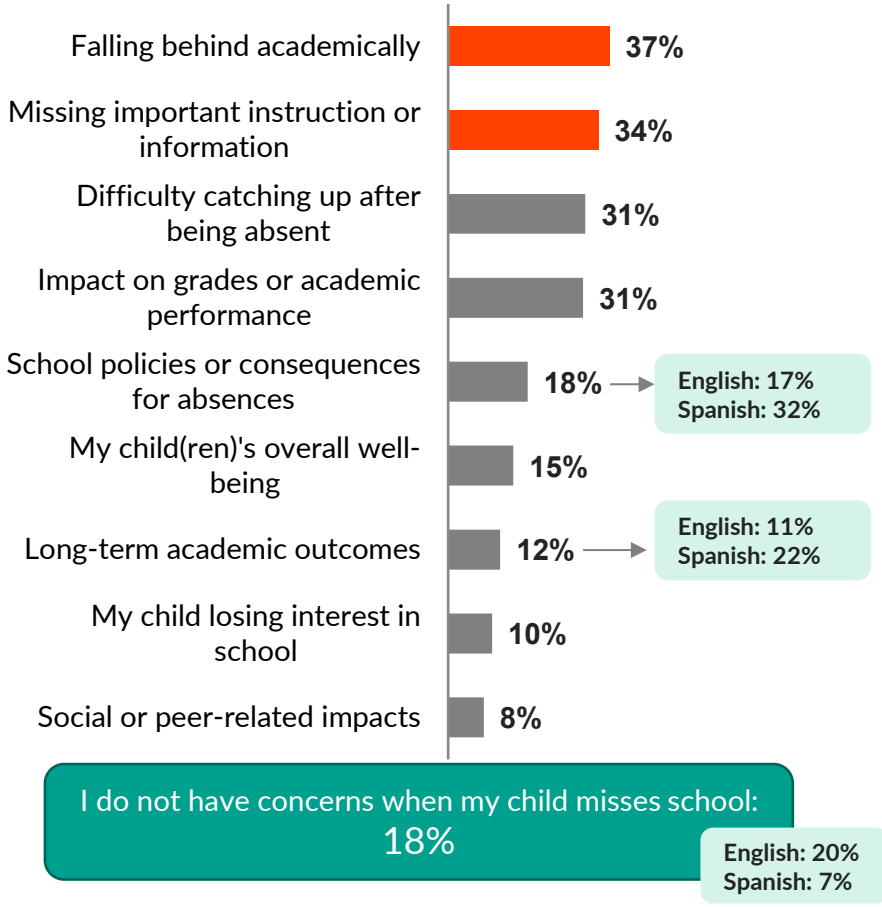
Illness is the most common reason students miss school, and top concerns of absenteeism include **falling behind academically** and **missing important instruction** persist.

Absence reasons vary somewhat based on preferred language spoken at home, and those who primarily speak Spanish cite more concerns, such as school policies/consequences and long-term academic outcomes.

Absence Reasons



Concerns About Absence



Q: What are the main reasons your child(ren) has been absent from school in the most recent school year? Select up to two (2). (n=762) **Q:** What are your biggest concerns when your child(ren) misses school? Select up to three (3). (n=1031)

While over half of parents receive positive information from schools and most feel highly comfortable contacting school about attendance concerns, parents want clearer explanations of absence impacts and expect contact by phone calls.

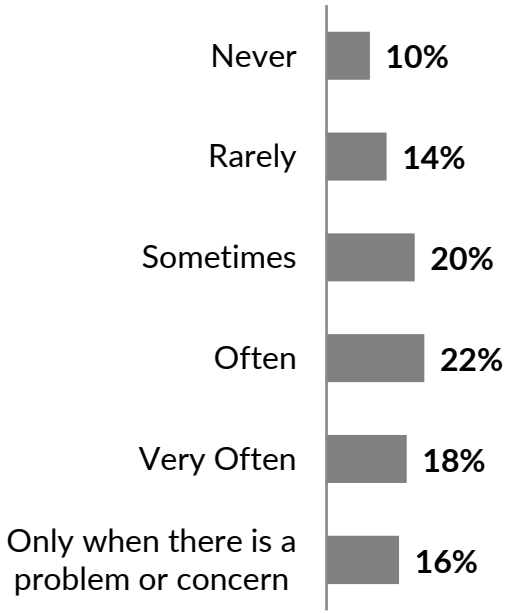
Those who primarily speak Spanish at home are less likely to feel comfortable contacting schools about attendance concerns and endorse more strategies that would help attendance communication.*

59% of school often communicate **positive information** about children's attendance

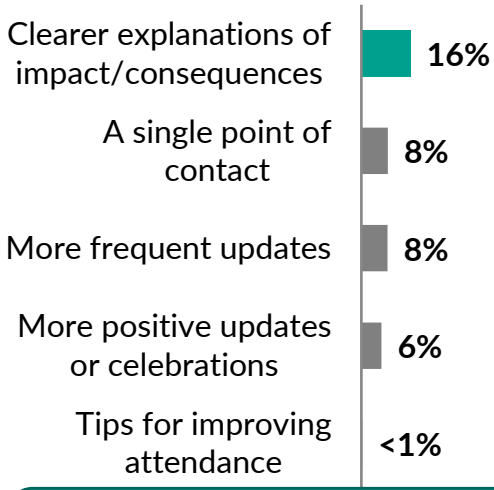
83% of parents **feel highly comfortable** contacting school about attendance concerns

English: 84%
Spanish: 73%

Attendance Communication Frequency



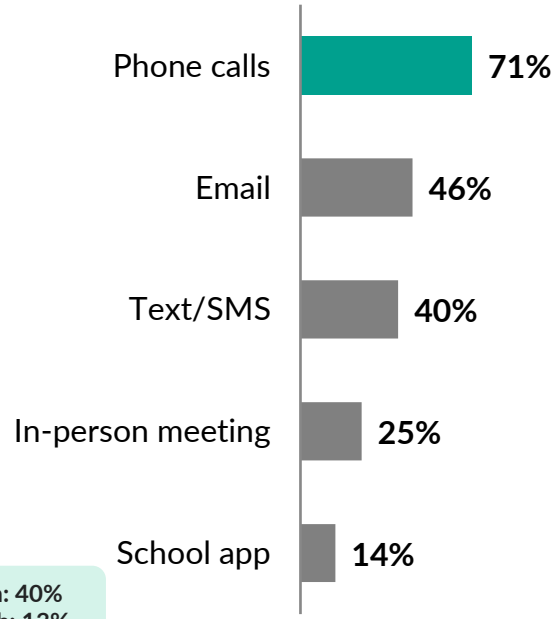
Top 5 Helpful Attendance Communication Tactics**



Nothing would make communication about my child(ren)'s attendance more helpful to me: 37%

English: 40%
Spanish: 13%

Top 5 Preferred Absence Contact**



CORPORATE

Q: How often has your child(ren)'s school communicated positive information to you about your child(ren)'s attendance? (n=1031) **Q**: To what extent do you feel comfortable contacting your child(ren)'s school about attendance concerns? (n=1031) **Q**: How often does the school communicate with you about your child(ren)'s overall attendance patterns? (n=1031) **Q**: Which of the following tactics would make communication about your child(ren)'s attendance more helpful to you? Select all that apply. (n=1031) **Q**: If your child(ren)'s absences were becoming a concern, how would you expect the school to contact you? Select all that apply. (n=1031)

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS (1/2)

Gender (n=1031)	
Female	63%
Male	37%
Prefer not to answer	<1%

Urbanicity (n=1031)	
Urban area	40%
Suburban area	37%
Rural area	22%
Prefer not to say	1%

Race/ethnicity (n=1031)	
American Indian or Alaska Native	3%
Asian	2%
Black or African American	26%
Hispanic	20%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1%
White	60%
Prefer not to say	<1%

Education level (n=1031)	
Some high school	4%
High school diploma/GED	33%
Some college	20%
2-year degree	14%
4-year degree	18%
Some graduate school	1%
Graduate degree	10%
Prefer not to say	<1%

Employment status (n=1031)	
Employed full-time	58%
Employed part-time	8%
Self-employed	6%
Unemployed	6%
Stay-at-home parent/caregiver	11%
Student	1%
Retired	4%
Unable to work	4%
Prefer not to say	1%

Marital status (n=1031)	
Single, never married	33%
Married	47%
Separated	4%
Divorced	12%
Widowed	3%
Prefer not to say	1%

Household income (n=1031)	
$0 to $24,999	15%
$25,000 to $49,999	26%
$50,000 to $74,999	21%
$75,000 to $99,999	15%
$100,000 to $124,999	6%
$125,000 to $149,999	7%
$150,000 to $174,999	3%
$175,000 to $199,999	2%
$200,000 or more	2%
Prefer not to say	1%

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS (2/2)

Preferred communication language(n=1031)	
English	90%
Spanish	9%
French	<1%
Arabic	<1%
Chinese (Mandarin, Cantonese)	<1%
Korean	<1%
Other	<1%
Prefer not to say	<1%

Children in household (n=1031)	
Children under 5 years old	20%
Children 5 to 12 years old	68%
Children between 13 and 18 years old	53%

Children aged 5 to 18 (n=1031)	
1	54%
2	34%
3	9%
4	2%
5 or more	1%

School type (n=1031)	
Private/Independent/Religious/Parochial	5%
Public (non-charter)	92%
Charter	9%
Other	<1%

Grades enrolled (n=1031)	
Kindergarten	12%
1st grade	13%
2nd grade	12%
3rd grade	12%
4th grade	13%
5th grade	13%
6th grade	12%
7th grade	11%
8th grade	12%
9th grade (Freshman)	12%
10th grade (Sophomore)	12%
11th grade (Junior)	12%
12th grade (Senior)	14%

School district enrollment (n=1031)	
Fewer than 2,500 students	40%
2,500 to 24,999 students	33%
25,000 or more students	6%
Not sure	21%

ABOUT PARENTSQUARE

ParentSquare

ParentSquare is the leading family engagement platform, helping K-12 districts nationwide reach every family with an award-winning, all-in-one communication platform. Reaching over 22 million students, ParentSquare helps districts consolidate disconnected tools and outdated communication systems with personalized messaging, websites, forms, payments, attendance solutions, and more, in one easy-to-use platform. With powerful features for achieving 100% contactability, two-way translation into 190+ languages, and purpose-built AI enhancements, ParentSquare empowers districts to invite every family to be involved in their student's education, no matter their home language or the device they use.

Recognized for growth and innovation by Inc. 5000, GSV 150, and more, ParentSquare was founded in 2011 in Santa Barbara, California. Learn more at parentsquare.com.

HANOVER RESEARCH

Thank you.

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