

MAY 2018

# EARLY SUCCESS IN P-3 FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

*Evidence and Next Steps for Oregon's  
Education Leaders*



## WHAT IS EFFECTIVE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT?

Since the beginning of Oregon's Prenatal-through-Grade 3 (P-3) initiatives in 2010, it has become clear that deep family engagement is central to achieving the goal of increasing every Oregon student's readiness to be successful in school.

The most effective family engagement strategies go beyond traditional one-way communication methods (such as monthly newsletters), bringing schools and families together to work as partners on improving children's educational outcomes.

Communities are using the following three strategies to build relationships with families:

- 1 Helping parents** support children's at-home learning.
- 2 Strengthening parent-school partnerships** so parents feel welcome at school and can work with staff to support children's academic and social needs.
- 3 Conducting outreach, training and mentoring** to engage families in program and school leadership, decision-making and advocacy.

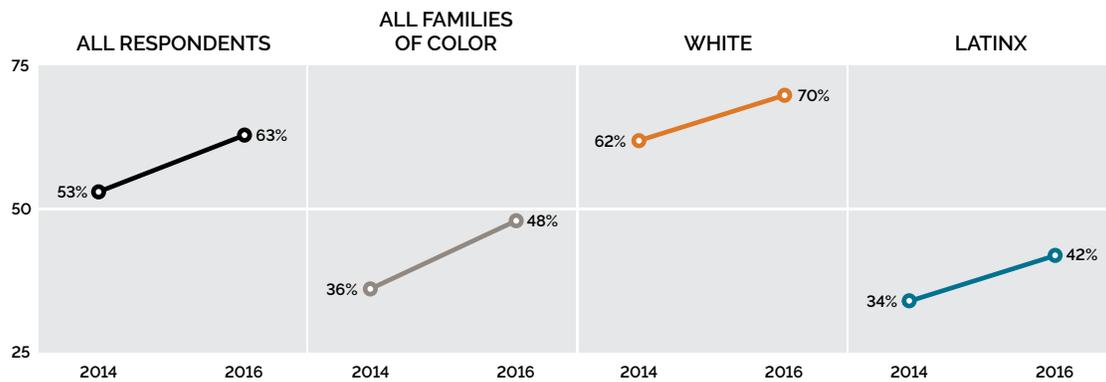
## WHAT ARE WE LEARNING ABOUT FAMILY ENGAGEMENT?



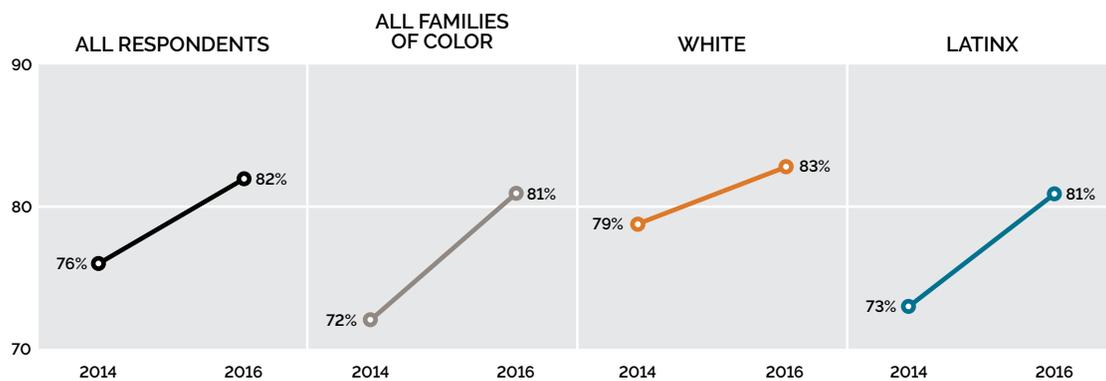
Since 2010, researchers at Portland State University have evaluated the effects of Oregon's P-3 initiatives on family engagement. Survey results from more than 2,400 parents in schools with P-3 funding highlight **important improvements** in these key areas:

- Parents in P-3 schools are **reading to their children more frequently**. The biggest increases in reading have been for parents of color. However, there are still **clear disparities** in reading between families of color and white families (see Figure 1 on reverse).
- Disparities in how welcome parents of color felt at school were **significantly reduced** (see Figure 2).
- Parents are **more confident** in their ability to support their child's learning at home.
- Parents are starting kindergarten expecting **more frequent communication** with their child's teachers.

**FIGURE 1. More families are reading at least three times a week to their children, although disparities persist\***



**FIGURE 2. The number of families who agree that they feel welcome at school increased for all groups, reducing earlier disparities\***



\*Significant difference in proportions for all groups over time ( $p < .01$ ).

## HOW CAN YOU USE THESE RESULTS?

As an education leader, there are many ways that you can improve family engagement in the schools you oversee.

**1 Expand and strengthen efforts to implement culturally responsive family engagement strategies** that address disparities for children and families of color. Successful schools have:

- Implemented culturally specific kindergarten readiness programs
- Partnered with community members to conduct one-on-one outreach with communities of color
- Devoted resources to support translation and interpretation services

**2 Make clear through words and actions that family engagement is central to educational success.** Consider convening a **working group** of staff, parents

and partners to develop and implement a **school-based family engagement plan**.

**3 Support changes in how teachers think about and do family engagement** by providing **professional development** focused on gaining new skills in partnering with families. Successful schools have:

- Implemented teacher home visits
- Used technology and social media to support frequent, meaningful communication

**4 Address contractual and other policy barriers.** Implementing more meaningful forms of family engagement often requires working creatively with staff and unions to **identify and solve contractual issues** that may constrain staff and teachers' ability to engage families in new ways.