Parents are truant--student achievement at risk

One in four parents in the Great Lakes region don’t make time to get involved in their child’s education because, they say, they don’t have time.

Those same parents say they end up paying for it later with higher levels of frustration and failure related to their child’s education.

Michigan parents are generally in step with the rest of the region, though on some measures are less engaged. One quarter of all Michigan parents are detached from the education of their child and don’t do the bare minimum—help teachers get to know their child.

Michigan parents also communicate the least with teachers, raise the fewest questions about their child’s education and have the lowest level of satisfaction about the quality of education their child is receiving.

According to results of the second Your Child parent study of 1700 parents in six Great Lakes states, parents who do not interact with their child’s teacher are more likely to feel like outsiders in their school, less likely to understand what teachers expect of them or their child and less likely to attend parent teacher conferences.

The study is Your Child’s first regional study. It covers Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin. The study, conducted by Lansing-based EPIC-MRA in early October, has an overall error rate of plus or minus three percent.

“Educators must make every effort to reach every parent, especially those who do not raise their hand and say, ‘What about my child?’” said Lu Battaglieri, president of the 160,000-member Michigan Education Association and a member of Your Child. “We cannot let any parents fall through the cracks, because the likelihood is that their children will as well.”
Your Child’s first study last spring demonstrated a significant disconnect between Michigan parents and teachers. It, too, showed lack of time for both groups as a top barrier to involvement.

Your Child is a coalition of several education and family organizations. This study was paid for by the following coalition members: MEA, The Great Lakes Center for Education Research & Practice, Middle Cities Education Association, Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association, Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals, the Michigan Alliance for Gifted Education.

The study shows the following differences between parents who ensure that teachers get to know their child and those who don’t:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parents who ensure child is known</th>
<th>Parents who do not</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feel like an outsider</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel like full partner in education</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully understand what is expected of them as a parent</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe the teachers fully understand what’s expected of them</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Say their child fully understands what is expected of him/her</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend parent-teacher conferences all the time</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give principal an A or B</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find parent-teacher conferences productive</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate communication about their child’s homework positively</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate communication about their child’s class work positively</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate communication about their child’s behavior positively</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate communication about school curriculum positively</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belong to PTO-PTA</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those who do not interact with their child’s teacher are:

- 12% more likely to have less than a college degree.
- 13% more likely to be male.
- 11% less likely to have done well on testing when in school.
Timely Tips for Parents!

Got 5 minutes?
- Introduce yourself. Indicate the best way to give you information (phone, email, notes, etc.).
- Write a note or email to the teacher just to check in and see how your child is doing.
- Call the teacher. Remember to let teachers know about out-of-school factors that may be affecting your child.

Got 10 minutes?
- Share your child’s strengths, talents and interests with your child’s teachers.
- Read classroom and/or school newsletters.
- Check out your child’s school website

Got 15 minutes?
- Share your family’s culture, values and parenting practices with your child’s teacher.
- Talk with your child’s teacher about how to support learning at home.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences with specific questions you want to ask.

30 minutes & more...
- Read and know your school’s handbook.
- Work with teachers and school administrators to develop a parent communication policy.
- Attend PTA, school board, and/or town meetings and speak to issues of concern.

Your Child’s Top
Five Things Every Parent Can Do to Connect with Your Child’s Teacher...

1. Make the time!
At the start of the school year, make arrangements to meet with your child’s teacher. This is an ideal time to share information about your child with the teacher so that he/she can best connect with your child.

2. Banish the blame.
Take a "no fault" approach when dealing with difficult issues relating to your children.
Blaming teachers or classmates only strains relationships. Join forces with teachers to reach a common goal: helping your children overcome difficulties and find success.

3. Drop a Line!
Any time is a good time to drop your child’s teacher a note. Do you have a question about homework? Is your child upset about something that happened at home? Were you really impressed by a project that your child has been working on? Take a moment and write a note to the teacher.

4. It’s Your Call!
Call your child’s teacher for a particular reason- or for no reason at all. Teachers don’t always have the time to call you, but they do appreciate hearing from you. Ask teachers before hand for good times to call.

5. Be prepared.
Bring a list of questions to parent-teacher conferences. Prepared questions help the conference stay focused and keep you on the issues that matter.