

# School-to-Parent Communication and Student Outcomes



*The School Communications Agency*

During the past two decades, a significant amount of research has surfaced indicating the importance of school-to-parent communication and the implications on childhood outcomes. This paper will explore and highlight key aspects of effective communication and how it translates to the amelioration of education.

The results of stronger school-to-parent communication show significant improvements and betterment of childhood outcomes. Research supports the premise that school-to-parent communication leads to higher parent involvement, promotes better social skills, decreases student behavioral issues, and improves student achievement. By bridging the communication gap between schools and parents, vast improvements in positive educational outcomes and achievement can be seen.

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## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Greater school-to-parent communication leads to better student outcomes
- Better communication leads to student achievement and social success
- Improved communication leads to greater student engagement such as completion of homework, increase in class attendance, and more likelihood of pursuing higher education



# CONNECTING HOME AND SCHOOL LIFE

School-to-parent or parent-teacher communication is critical to children’s success and development. According to Bronfenbrenner & Ceci (1994), it is a crucial bridging of the two ‘worlds’ or ecosystems that children live and grow in, their home life and school life.

Creating continuity between these segments of a child’s life, children do not have to accommodate for any discrepancies between these ecosystems. This easily can translate to more noteworthy childhood development.

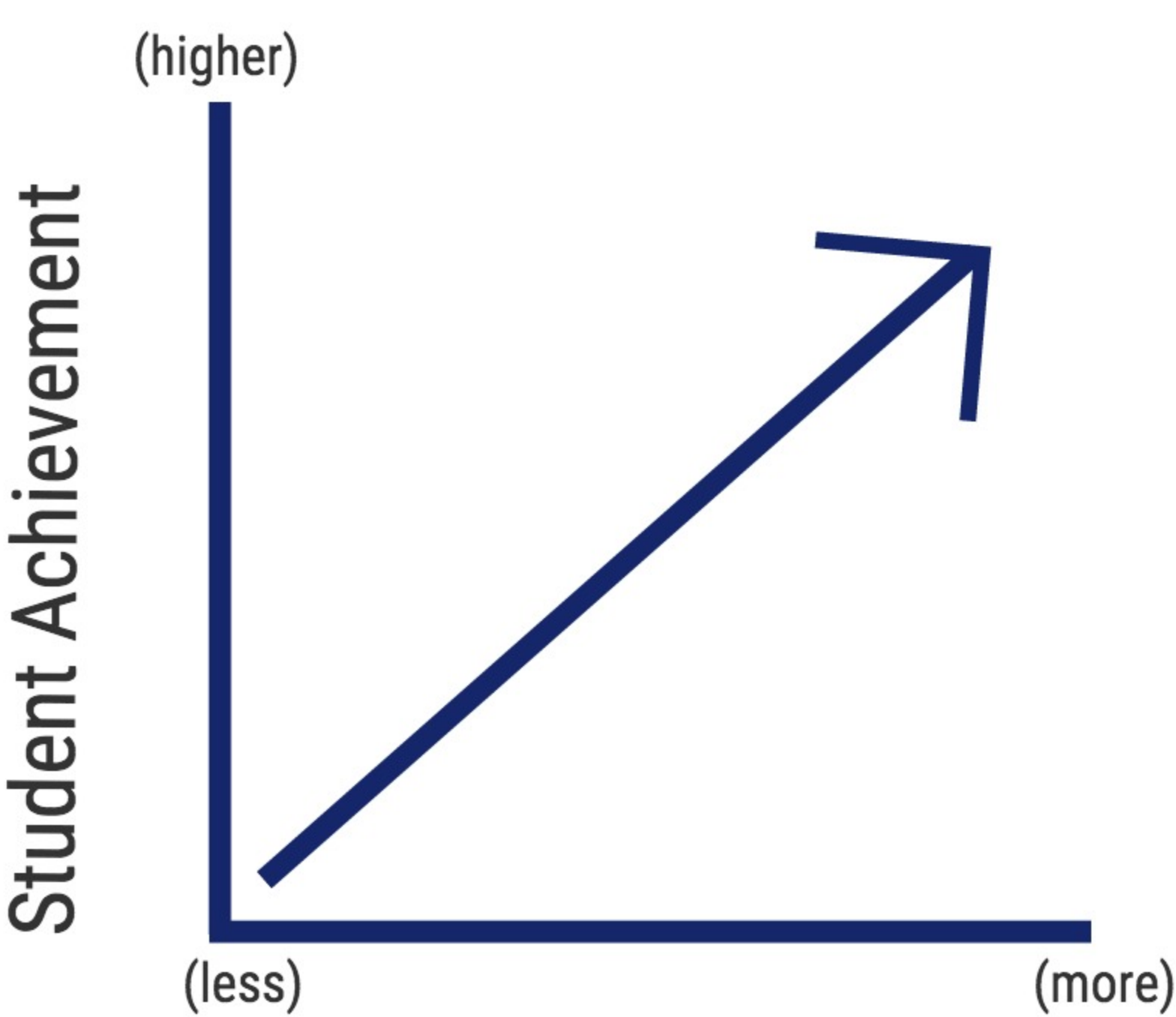
When both the school and home environment are on the same page, focusing and working towards the same goals, children have an easier time succeeding (Buttery & Anderson 1999). In fact, numerous studies have shown significant results in benefitting children’s transitions into kindergarten, as well as aid in academic success during primary grades, especially within disadvantaged and at-risk children (Kreider, 2002; Marcon, 1999; Miedel and Reynolds, 1999; Starkey and Klein, 2000).

A recent NSPRA survey found that parents not only expect more and consistent communication from the school, but also prefer certain channels of communication. Several communication tools parents like to use are:

- Email
- E-newsletter
- School or District Website
- Mobile Applications
- Phone Calling System



(NSPRA Survey, 2011)



School-to-Parent Communication

Communication from schools-to-parents gives insight to their children’s school lives. When the school effectively communicates deadlines, current events and other insights into school life, such as academic schedules and tests, parents engage in more valuable dialogue with their children.

As Anne Henderson explored, over the course of three decades of research there are a variety of ways identified which parent and family involvement significantly contributes to improved student outcomes, and it begins with more robust communication (Henderson, 1987).

Although children spend a significant amount of time at school, what they learn needs to be reinforced in the home environment as well. Schools, communities, and families must cooperate and work collaboratively to improve the learning experience of all children (White, 1998).



# Benefits of Communication

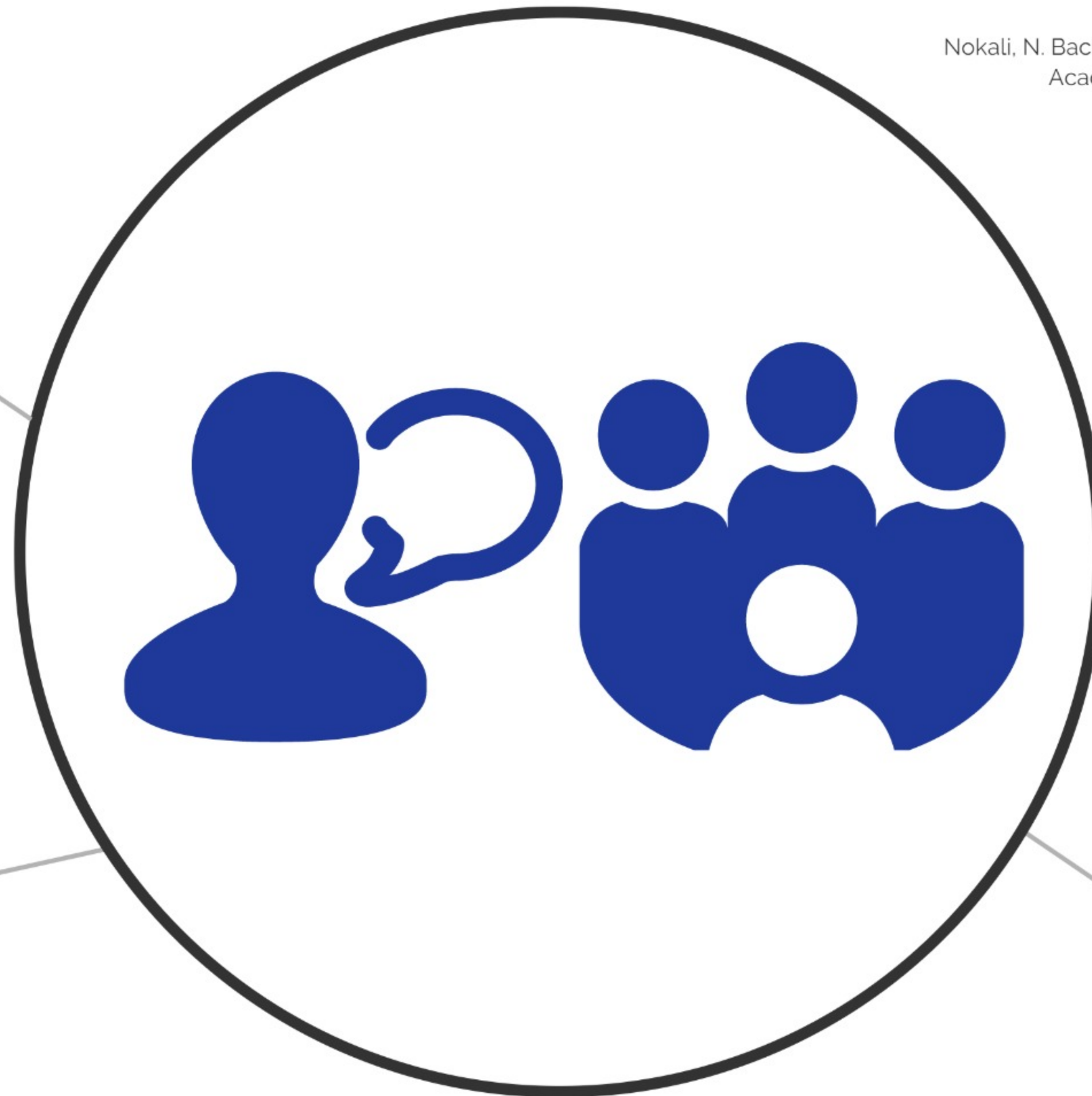
**40%**

More homework turned in

**25%**

Less disciplinary measures given

The statistical difference parent-teacher communication makes



Nokali, N. Bachman, H. Votruba-Drz. E. Parent Involvement and Children's Academic and Social Development in Elementary School. (2010) Child Development.

**15%**

Higher class participation

## COMMUNICATION TRANSLATES TO SUCCESS

As Dougherty and Kraft (2013) explored, frequent school-to-parent communication immediately increased student engagement as measured by homework completion rates, on-task behavior, and class participation.

Dougherty and Kraft found, on average, teacher-family communication increased the odds that students completed their homework by 40%, decreased instances in which teachers had to redirect students' attention to the task at hand by 25%, and increased class participation rates by 15% (Dougherty & Kraft, 2013).

Engagement is key to student achievement and success. Without it, students struggle to find meaning and motivation to succeed in school. When students are engaged, we see tremendous differences both within school achievement and in social settings.

## COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL IMPROVEMENT

Beyond improvements within school, Nokali et al. (2010) found better school-to-parent communication leads to a greater rate of parents involvement in their children's lives. Their further research of a between-child analyses demonstrated children with highly involved parents had enhanced social functioning and fewer behavior problems.

Parent involvement, then, correlates directly with a decline in problem behaviors in children and an improvement in social skills (Nokali et al., 2010).

A separate meta-analysis found several associations between parent involvement and a multitude of increased positive learning-related or academic skills, such as achievement, motivation, task-persistence, and receptive vocabulary (Fan & Chen 2001).



Additionally, Bub, McCartney, & Willett (2007) found increases in parents' involvement to benefit increases in children's social skills and simultaneous declines in problem behaviors. This means beyond a measurable increase in achievement at school and with school related work, children also see a measurable increase in social skills with more informed parents.

"Not only do the current findings extend past cross-sectional associations between parent involvement and socio-emotional functioning, but these improvements in socio-emotional skills may hold longer-term implications for future academic performance and behavior" (Bub, McCartney, & Willett, 2007).

Furthermore, the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory released a report which summarized 51 studies on the topic of school-to-parent communication, and found that regardless of socioeconomic status, background, or race, students with involved parents were more likely to:

- Earn higher grades and test scores
- Enroll in higher-level programs
- Be promoted, pass their classes and earn credits
- Attend school regularly
- Have better social skills & show improved behavior
- Graduate and go on to post-secondary education

(Henderson and Mapp, 2002)

## CONCLUSION:

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Overall, the results of stronger school-to-parent communication show significant improvements and betterment of childhood outcomes. Schools' communication with parents is one of the most effective ways to improve K-12 student learning outcomes. Research supports the premise that school-to-parent communication leads to higher parent involvement, promotes better social skills, and decreases student's behavioral issues. There is also a proven correlation between improved school-to-parent communication and both higher completion rates for homework and academic success. By bridging the communication gap between schools and parents, a vast improvement in positive educational outcomes and achievement can be seen.

"When families, communities and schools work together,  
students succeed and the entire community benefits.  
The more collaboration, the more children succeed."

(Henderson and Mapp, 2002)



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