Parent Empowerment in Education
Measuring What Matters

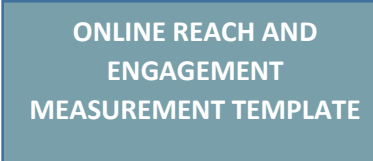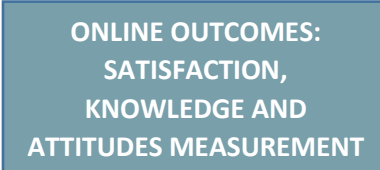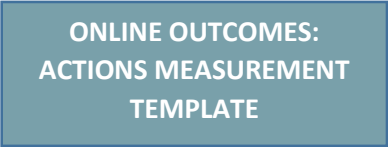# Online: Internet and Social Media

Online refers to the use of the internet and social media to inform and organize individuals so that they take action – either individually or in collaboration with an organization.

Downloadable measurement template

Below are templates of common measures organizations use in the parent empowerment space to manage online reach, engagement and action.

As a reminder, your organization should 'Goldilocks' what it measures. You should only capture measures that help your organization make better decisions to increase impact (and are practical to collect).

We have broken online measures into three components:

1. **Measures of online reach and engagement:** Organizations use a large number of measures to track reach and engagement (outputs) on the internet and social media platforms. This template provides the most common measures used by organizations we interviewed, as well as some additional measures used by a smaller subset. These measures become a starting point in building a 'pipeline' of parents who not only take online action, but then also get involved in real-world actions across all four parent empowerment strategies.

   > **ONLINE REACH AND ENGAGEMENT MEASUREMENT TEMPLATE**

2. **Measures of online outcomes – satisfaction, knowledge and attitudes:** A smaller subset of organizations (3 or fewer, depending on the topic) also measured elements of satisfaction, knowledge and/or attitude in their online efforts.

   > **ONLINE OUTCOMES: SATISFACTION, KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES MEASUREMENT**

3. **Measures of online outcomes – actions:** For issue and electoral campaigns, some organizations employ and measure online actions parents can take to express their power.

   > **ONLINE OUTCOMES: ACTIONS MEASUREMENT TEMPLATE**

Internet and social media platforms can provide a wealth of measures for organizations to consider. Google Analytics is commonly used to track and report measures, and Facebook, YouTube, etc. provide analytic reports. Some organizations also use web hosting services and 3rd parties to track, analyze and report online measures.

Overview of online (internet and social media)

Online efforts can be valuable for all four parent empowerment strategies. The internet and social media are critical ways to reach large numbers of people (as well as smaller numbers of targeted audiences) to provide them critical information and the means to organize and take action.

- **Strategy 1 – Parents as Partners:** The internet and social media are channels for organizations to provide a broad array of information to parents on how to support the education of their children.

- **Strategy 2 – Exercising the Power of Their Choice:** Most organizations supporting parents in this strategy would emphasis the importance of real-world engagement to help parents navigate their options. However, the internet and social media can be crucial channels to reach out and find parents to make them aware of these supports, and for parents to find their way to these organizations.

  Organizations can also provide online platforms to help with navigating through choice options. For example, **Families Empowered** developed and maintains their **Apply Houston** platform where families in Houston can apply to multiple school lotteries through a single website.

- **Strategy 3 – Exercising the Power of Their Collective Voice** and **Strategy 4 – Exercising the Power of their Vote:** Debate continues regarding if, when and how online efforts translate into issue and electoral power.

  Online efforts can reach large numbers of people increasingly where they spend their time and interact with others. The internet and social media provide low barrier ways for people to take online actions such as filling out a petition, completing a survey, reaching out to an official through email, etc.

  However, some discount the value that these actions have in influencing people in positions of authority precisely because these actions are so easy to take. In contrast, showing up to a real-world action requires more effort and therefore is believed to demonstrate greater commitment to a campaign and its agenda.

  At the same time, even if these actions are of limited influence (and that is not a given), they can still be effective ways to allow people to take initial online actions that serve as stepping-stones to taking real-world actions. Also, because online actions are easier to take, even if on a per-person basis they have less impact and influence than a real-world action, they may ultimately allow many more people overall to take action.

  Online is also a very effective way to inform people about real-world actions, even if it is not as powerful a way to get them to commit to attending as a real-world, personal outreach.

  Ultimately, online and real-world actions will continue to be more integrated, and we believe the evolving sophistication of online actions will make them more valuable – not as a replacement to real-world actions, but as a complement to them.

  "*The successful campaign is going to be one that **integrates all the various elements of the digital channel** – email, text, website, mobile apps, and social networks – together as one digital program **and also mixing the digital program together with the offline reality of field organizations**,*" noted Joe Rospars, President Obama's Chief Digital Strategist, in **2012.**

  Or as Jeremy Bird, President Obama's National Field Director advices:

  > **"There's no online and offline organizing. There's organizing."**