

Involvement Matters: What Parents Should Know

Why should you get involved in your child's education? Because it can make a dramatic difference in your child's achievement at school and beyond.



Researchers have been studying the effects parent attitudes and actions have on their children's academic success for more than 30 years. The results have been consistent. Anne Henderson and Nancy Berla summed it up in their book *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family Is Critical to Student Achievement*, which reviewed the existing research: "When parents are involved in their children's education at home, they do better in school. And when parents are involved in school, children go farther in school and the schools they go to are better."

Much of the information here is taken from publications that examine parent involvement research by Henderson, a consultant at New York University's Institute for Education and Social Policy, and various coauthors; from publications by Joyce Epstein, director of the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University; from the National Center for Parent Involvement in Education, which Henderson helped found; and from summaries of research prepared by the Michigan Department of Education, San Diego Unified School District, and others.

Major Benefits

Research shows that when parents are involved in their children's education, the children are more likely to:

- earn better grades.
- score higher on tests.
- pass their classes.
- attend school regularly.
- have better social skills.
- show improved behavior.
- be more positive in their attitude toward school.
- complete homework assignments.
- graduate and continue their education.

Schools with involved parents enjoy:

- better morale among teachers.
- higher ratings of teachers by parents.
- more support from families.
- a better reputation in the community.

More Is Better, at All Levels

As a parent, you can serve many different roles in the educational process: home teacher, advocate for your child, volunteer, fundraiser, booster. You can even serve in decisionmaking and oversight roles for the school. The more parents participate in a sustained way at each of these levels, the better for student achievement.

When you get involved early in your child's education, the results are more pronounced and long-lasting. And studies indicate that parent involvement in education has a positive effect at all grade levels: elementary, middle, and high school.

Dads Matter!

In two-parent households as well as father-only households where dads are highly involved in their children's schools, those children are more likely to:

- succeed academically.
- participate in extracurricular activities.
- enjoy school.

They are less likely to:

- have to repeat a grade.
- be suspended or expelled.

Significant Effects

One study found that students from families with above-average parent involvement were 30 percent more successful in school than those with below-average parent involvement. Success was measured by GPA; test scores in math, science, reading, and social studies; promotion and retention rates; and teacher ratings.

Another study found that in schools where teachers reported high levels of outreach to parents, test scores grew at a rate 40 percent higher than in schools reporting low levels of outreach to parents.

Home and School

A three-year study of 12,000 high school students concluded that "When parents come to school regularly, it reinforces the view in the child's mind that school and home are connected and that school is an integral part of the whole family's life."

A two-year study of home and school influences on literacy achievement among children from low-income families found that the single variable most positively connected to all literacy skills was formal involvement in parent-school activities, such as PTO participation, attending school activities, and serving as a volunteer.

Parents Benefit, Too

When parents become involved in their children's education, the parents are more likely to:

- be more confident at school.
- be more confident in themselves as parents and their ability to help their children learn.
- be held in higher esteem by teachers and have teachers expect more from their children.
- enroll in continuing education to advance their own schooling.