

# Research Basis

---

## Parental Involvement Best Predictor

In a study by Dauber and Epstein (1993) of 2,317 inner-city elementary and middle school students, the best predictor of parental involvement was what the school did to promote it. School attitudes and actions were more important than the parents' income, educational level, race, or previous school volunteering experience in predicting whether the parent would be involved in school.

## Positive Teacher-Parent Contact

The Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning at Johns Hopkins University has found that "parents who receive frequent and positive messages from teachers tend to become more involved in their children's education than do other parents."

In a study of elementary schools, Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie (1987) found that teacher efficacy (feeling that one is an effective and capable teacher) is related to the strength of school programs of parental involvement. The author also found that schools with more confident teachers, on average, report more support from parents.

Another study of parental involvement in elementary schools found that parents and principals rated teachers higher in overall teaching ability and interpersonal skills if the teachers frequently used practices of parental involvement (Epstein 1985-1986).

## Parenting Activities At Home

Most parents want to be involved in their children's education. According to Epstein, "family requests for involvement are constant." Studies show that the majority of parents "want to know how to help their children at home and what they can do to help their children succeed." Research suggests that "the most effective forms of parental involvement are those which engage parents in working directly with their children in learning activities at home." The earlier in a child's education this process begins, the more effective it will be.

Learning at home requires every teacher to understand the important connections between what is taught and learned in school and what is encouraged, practiced, discussed, and celebrated at home (Epstein, 2001).

In another study, Epstein (1982) found that teacher leadership in parent involvement in learning activities at home contributes independently to positive changes in reading achievement from fall to spring, even after teacher quality, students' initial achievement, parents' education, parents' improved understanding of the school program, and the quality of students' homework were taken into account.

## Parent Training

Quigley (2000) reported that 29 schools in Los Angeles implemented a parenting project that included parent training, an emphasis on parent/teacher communication, and learning at home. Results showed a positive impact on the students' behavior, homework, and academic performance in the form of higher reading achievement test scores than students in comparison groups.

.....

---

## Home-To-School Communication (Feedback Forms)

Research by Van Voorhis (2000) has shown that home-to-school communication that invites parents to record an observation, comment, and to share skills their children demonstrate at home increases parent participation.

When teachers differ culturally and educationally from their students (as with schools that have many below-average students), or when they teach greater numbers of students (as in departmentalized programs), they are less likely to know the students' parents, and therefore, more likely to believe that parents are uninterested or uninvolved. If teachers believe that parents are not interested in becoming involved in their children's schooling, teachers make fewer efforts to contact, inform, and work with them, especially with those parents who are hard to reach (Becker and Epstein, 1982).

## Parents Rate Teachers

Teachers who include the family in the children's education are recognized by parents for their efforts. They are rated higher by parents than are other teachers on interpersonal and teaching skills, and they are rated higher in overall teaching ability by their principals (Epstein, 1985 [Reading 4.3], 1986)

## Father Involvement

The involvement of fathers in the education of their children can make a significant difference in overall achievement. A 1996 study by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that high father involvement improves the likelihood that children in grades one to twelve will earn high grades, and reduces the likelihood that children in grades six to twelve will be suspended or expelled from school (NCES, 1996).

## Middle School & High School

A study by Henry Becker and Joyce Epstein (1982) found that most adults believe that parents want to avoid or minimize family involvement in their children's education as they get older. Data from students from elementary through high school suggest the opposite. Students want families to be knowledgeable partners with their schools in their education and available to be helpful sources of information and assistance at home.

## Summary

1. Families provide the primary educational environment.
2. Parent involvement at home in their children's education improves student achievement.
3. The benefits of parent involvement are not limited to early childhood or the elementary level; there are continuing positive effects through high school.
4. Children from low-income and culturally and racially diverse families have the most to gain when schools involve parents.
5. Parent involvement is most effective when it is comprehensive, supportive, long-lasting, and well-planned.

# Character Development & Community Involvement Research

---

## Character Development

The average student enrolled in a program that emphasizes the social and emotional development of that student averages 10 percentage points higher on achievement tests compared to students who do not participate in such programs. (Report from Joseph Durlak, Loyola University and Roger Weissberg, University of Illinois at Chicago. Cited in the New York Times. August 16, 2005.)

Character education works: School systems across the country have implemented effective character education elements and have seen the results: a more civil school, fewer absentees, and higher grade averages. (Phillip Vincent, David Wangaard and Paul Weimer. *Restoring School Civility*, 2006.)

## Community Involvement

The “school community” includes all family and community members who care what happens to the school and to children, whether or not they have children in the school. Because children are the future citizens, workers, and families in communities, it is important to foster positive and productive connections with all who have a stake in good schools and student success.

Ties with businesses and industries, organizations, agencies, and other groups and individuals in the community should be designed to support, enrich, and extend the school’s agenda to promote success for more students. (Michelson, 1996; Sanders, 1999.)

Students are either in school, or out. When they are out of school, their families, peers, and communities either reinforce or redirect school goals for student learning and development. If the community *reinforces* school and families goals for student learning and success, the spheres of influence of home, school, and community “overlap” more in their messages to students about the importance of school and learning. (Joyce L. Epstein. *School, Family, and Community Partnerships*, 2001.)