

Parent Involvement Matters

Hundreds of research studies show that when parents get involved, children do better in school.

What Every Parent Should Know

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 by Henderson, a consultant at New York University's Institute for Education and Social Policy, and various coauthors that examine parent involvement research; and from publications by Joyce Epstein, director of the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University; the National Center for Parent Involvement in Education, which Henderson helped found; and 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

More Is Better

Parents can serve many different roles in the educational process: home teachers, advocates for their children, volunteers, fundraisers, boosters. And they can even serve in decision making and oversight roles for the school. The more parents participate in a sustained way at each of these levels, the better for student achievement.

Start Early

When parents get involved early in their children's education, the results are more pronounced and long-lasting.

At All Levels

Studies indicate that parent involvement in education has a positive effect at all grade levels: elementary, middle, and high school.

Dads Matter

In both two-parent and father-only households where dads are highly involved in their schools, 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

A Significant Difference

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

Also Significant

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 that reported low levels of outreach to parents.

Home and School

A three-year study of 12,000 high school student 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."

Reading and the Parent Group

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

A Final Note

Why should parents get involved? Because involvement can make a dramatic difference for their children.

Parent involvement is a powerful tool. Spread the word.