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1

### **Baker, Amy J. L., Piotrkowski, Chaya S., and Brooks-Gunn, Jeanne (1998) EJ580313**

The Effects of the Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) on Children's School Performance at the End of the Program and One Year Later *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 13(4), 571–588

Summary: This long-term experimental study examined outcomes for 182 HIPPY program and control-group children in New York. The study covers two cohorts of children over the course of the two-year program and one year later (at the end of first grade). The results were mixed. For Cohort I, the researchers found positive gains in the HIPPY children's school performance both at the end of the program and in first grade, compared with the control group. For Cohort II, there were no significant differences between the HIPPY and control children.

**This study looks at the impact of the HIPPY program over and above the impact of the children's classroom experience.**

HIPPY is a free two-year program, delivered through home visits, to provide educational enrichment to poor and immigrant families with four- and five-year-old children. During the program, mothers receive a series of books written for HIPPY, along with activity packets. The activities, each organized like a lesson plan that mothers follow, are designed to develop skills in three major areas: language, sensory and perceptual discrimination, and problem solving.

During biweekly home visits, a trained paraprofessional models the lesson through role-play. Mothers read the books to their children, then engage them in the activities. The home visitors, recruited from backgrounds similar to their assigned families, are trained and supervised by professional HIPPY coordinators.

The HIPPY program studied is based in a large city in New York. It is offered as a component of the school district's Early Childhood Center. All families in the study took part in the preschool program during the first year and enrolled in kindergarten during the second year. This study looks at the impact of the HIPPY program over and above the impact of the children's classroom experience. Volunteer families were assigned randomly to HIPPY or a control group.

Trained research assistants collected baseline data during home visits. At the end of the second program year, they assessed children's cognitive skills. In addition, children's performance in kindergarten and first grade was assessed through test scores, school records, and teacher ratings of classroom adaptation. Baseline and postprogram cognitive skills were assessed using the Cooperative Preschool Inventory (CPI). The test scores were from the Metropolitan Readiness Test (MRT) and the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT). Regression analysis (ANCOVA) found no significant differences (age, gender, ethnicity, attrition, and family background) between the two cohorts.

## Findings

At the end of the program, the HIPPY children in Cohort I scored significantly higher on the CPI than control children. This finding did not appear in Cohort II. On the MRT, given in kindergarten, there were no differences between the HIPPY and control groups in either cohort. In first grade, teachers found that HIPPY children in Cohort I had adapted better to school than the control children. This finding also did not appear in Cohort II. For the year-after follow-up, HIPPY children in Cohort I scored higher on the MAT than control children. Yet again, this finding did not appear in Cohort II.

**At the end of the program, the HIPPY children in Cohort I scored significantly higher on the CPI than control children.**

**Table 8. Overview of Effects in HIPPY Cohorts (mean scores)**

| OUTCOMES              | COHORT I |         | COHORT II |         |
|-----------------------|----------|---------|-----------|---------|
|                       | HIPPY    | Control | HIPPY     | Control |
| <b>End of Program</b> |          |         |           |         |
| Reading               | 47.6     | 41.6    | 44.2      | 45.8    |
| Math                  | 52.0     | 43.7    | 46.8      | 51.3    |
| Classroom Adaptation  | 3.7      | 2.8     | 3.2       | 3.4     |
| <b>One Year Later</b> |          |         |           |         |
| Reading               | 54.2     | 38.1    | 52.4      | 50.9    |
| Math                  | 55.6     | 48.6    | 56.5      | 58.3    |
| Classroom Adaptation  | 3.6      | 2.8     | 3.5       | 3.4     |

Analyses of the two cohorts to determine if differences between the two groups could explain the disparity in results did not reveal an answer. The researchers considered attrition, differences in the populations, and different levels of participation in the program. These did not differ significantly between the two cohorts.

## Conclusions

Findings from Cohort I found that HIPPY children scored higher on important measures of school success than the control group. They outperformed their peers on both tests and teacher ratings. These positive effects were over and above those of their pre-school and kindergarten experience. These findings are promising because research suggests that children who start out as high performers tend to remain that way, while children who have a poor start tend to remain poor students. If a high-quality home support program can help low-income children gain skills beyond those contributed by preschool programs, their prospects for success later in school will be improved.

Because these results did not appear in Cohort II, these conclusions are tentative. Their analysis of the data led the researchers to conclude that “we may be seeing naturally occurring variations on the effects of programs within communities . . . Clearly more research on HIPPY is called for in order to account for these mixed results. Our find-

ings also alert us to the importance of replication studies and caution us about generalizing positive or negative results from single-sample, single-site evaluations” (p. 584).

In addition, Baker and her colleagues recommend that research follow HIPPY families to determine longer-term effects. Gains from participation may grow or decline over time. If they decline, there may be a need for follow-up services to assist children in making the transition to formal schooling. Research can also examine how parents are affected by the program and what impact that has on children. Perhaps, they suggest, certain groups of families are more likely to benefit from the program than others. Ideally, HIPPY families will have higher expectations for their children and apply their skills to support learning throughout their children’s time in school.

2

**Baker, Amy J. L., and Soden, Laura M. (1997) ED407127***Parent Involvement in Children's Education: A Critical Assessment of the Knowledge Base*

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL, 1997

**Summary:** This paper reviews more than 200 studies, reviews, papers, and articles on parent involvement and raises important issues about their quality and rigor. The authors conclude with recommendations for researchers.

**The reviewers identify several issues in the quality and rigor of the 108 empirical studies about engaging parents in their children's education.**

The 200 studies reviewed in this paper fall into two basic categories: non-empirical (not based on direct research) and empirical. The 67 non-empirical articles included opinion papers, program descriptions, articles about theory, and reviews of research. The 145 empirical studies include 37 that describe the benefits of parent involvement for parents, and 108 examine the link between parent involvement and student achievement.

**Findings**

The reviewers identify several issues in the quality and rigor of the 108 empirical studies about engaging parents in their children's education:

- Using a true experimental design. Children are assigned randomly to a program group and a control group, and tested before and after the intervention to compare results. Only three of the studies met this standard.
- Isolating the effects of engaging parents from other components of the program, or other influences.
- Defining parent involvement consistently. Some defined "parent involvement" as parent aspirations; others as activities at home (helping with homework) or at school (attending events, meeting with teachers); still others as parenting styles or behaviors. Reliable measuring tools have not been developed for any framework or definition.
- Using objective measures of parent involvement, rather than parent, student, or teacher reports. Only 27 of these studies used objective measures or direct observation.

Closed-ended self-report surveys cannot fully capture the dynamic transactional nature of parents' involvement in their children's education. Many of these processes could better be explored through open-ended and observational techniques which would produce rich data, shed light on complex processes, and generate new hypotheses. (p. 15)

It is not surprising that program evaluations were empirically weak. Indeed, they may be the most challenging form of applied educational field research that exists. In addition to the constraints of conducting research in an applied setting, program evalua-

tions pose special obstacles for the researcher. Interventions are typically applied to special needs populations (such as at-risk students, low-income families, and families with limited English proficiency) heightening clinical and ethical issues. (pp. 15–16)

In many cases program evaluation must be paid out of the program budget, which is difficult in a setting where the needs of the program take priority over the demands of science (p. 16).

**“While the research evidence is less than conclusive, years of practice wisdom, theory, and related areas of research . . . all strongly suggest that parent involvement in their children’s formal schooling is vital for their academic success.”**

### **Recommendations for future research**

The authors suggest that research in each of these areas is needed to provide new evidence of the impact of parent involvement on student achievement:

- Use experimental procedures, whenever possible. This will require more funding and new levels of partnership between program staff and researchers.
- Isolate the specific effects of parent involvement. This will require measuring the type and level of parent involvement separately from other aspects of the program and assessing the difference when the content is delivered by a parent or another adult.
- Clarify the definition of parent involvement. This will require being specific about how that type of involvement is being measured and how it fits into the larger field.
- Measure parent behavior objectively. This will require direct observation of parent behavior and standard data-collection tools.
- Represent family influences accurately. This will require expanding the measure to include adults other than just the mother.
- Examine relationships among parent involvement, student achievement, and gender.
- Take into account the complex and transactional nature of interrelationships between parent involvement and its outcomes.

### **Conclusions**

“While the research evidence is less than conclusive, years of practice wisdom, theory, and related areas of research . . . all strongly suggest that parent involvement in their children’s formal schooling is vital for their academic success” (p. 17). In particular, the cumulative knowledge of the studies reviewed suggest the importance of these types of involvement:

- A stimulating literacy and material environment.
- High expectations and moderate levels of parent support and supervision.
- Monitoring of TV viewing and homework completion.
- Joint learning activities at home.
- Emphasis on effort rather than ability.
- Promoting of independence and self-reliance.

3

**Balli, Sandra J., Demo, David H., and Wedman, John F. (1998) EJ573101**

Family Involvement with Children's Homework: An Intervention in the Middle Grades

*Family Relations*, 47(2), 149–157

**Summary:** The study looked at a mathematics homework intervention that was designed to increase family involvement in homework. The study was based in three mathematics classes taught by the same teacher, with students who were similar in achievement level. Families of students who were prompted to involve a family member in the homework (by directions on involvement and requests for parents' comments and signature) were significantly more involved in mathematics homework than families who did not receive prompts. There were no significant differences in posttest achievement.

Researchers investigated how differences in levels of family involvement in homework and in student achievement on a posttest were related to differential prompts for involvement in homework. The only variable manipulated in the study was prompting for family involvement. In the three sixth-grade mathematics classes she taught, a teacher distributed 20 homework assignments that required students to interact with a family member. By random selection, some students received assignments prompting them with “directions on how to involve a family member,” some received assignments that also prompted families to write comments and requested a parent signature, and some received no prompts.

Participants were 74 Caucasian sixth graders (31 boys and 43 girls) and their predominantly middle-class families. The three mathematics classes were nearly identical in terms of students' previous mathematical achievement, with similar ranges of academic ability and family background.

The teacher gave out 20 homework assignments that required students to interact with a family member and randomly assigned students to one of three groups. In Group 1, students received no prompts to involve family in the homework; students in Group 2 were prompted to involve family members; and in Group 3, not only were students prompted to involve family, but family members were also prompted to be involved. Students were tested before and after the intervention. Additional data were gathered from surveys completed by all students about family involvement in homework and from parents' written comments and telephone interviews.

Multivariate and regression analyses of the data were conducted to assess the effects of the differential prompts, compare mean mathematics scores on the pretest and posttest, and determine influences of the prompts and selected demographic variables (family structure, family size, and parent educational level) on family involvement with mathematics homework.

## Findings

Each student completed all 20 homework assignments. Parents in groups 2 and 3 reported significantly more family involvement in mathematics homework than Group 1. Evidence of differences in family involvement between groups 2 and 3 was mixed: while parents reported no significant differences, students reported that family members were much more involved with homework for Group 3 than for Group 2. The study found no differences in involvement based on family size or family education level, nor was posttest achievement correlated with the demographic variables. Achievement on the posttest was explained more by achievement on the pretest than by parent involvement in homework. From the comments of parents, the study also found that families benefited from workshops and other homework help since many of them were not taught the concepts or were not taught in the same way as their children.

## Conclusions

The authors found that “although the intervention significantly increased family involvement [in students’ mathematics homework], the increases in children’s achievement directly attributable to family involvement were not powerful enough to be statistically significant” (p. 154). They suggest that this is because of the small sample. They did find a pattern of higher homework scores in Group 3, with prompts for involvement from both students and teachers, as compared with Group 2, which had only student prompts and Group 1, which had no prompts for family involvement in mathematics homework. The data suggest that if prompted by both teachers and students, parents are more likely to be involved with homework, a finding that is contrary to trends in the literature that report a decline of parent involvement in middle school.

**The authors found that “although the intervention significantly increased family involvement [in students’ mathematics homework], the increases in children’s achievement directly attributable to family involvement were not powerful enough to be statistically significant.”**

4

**Catsambis, Sophia (1998) ED426174**

*Expanding Knowledge of Parental Involvement in Secondary Education—  
Effects on High School Academic Success*

Baltimore, MD: CRESPAR (Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk), Johns Hopkins University, Report No. 27  
<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/Reports/report27entire.htm>

**Summary:** Using a large, long-term national database, the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS: 88), sponsored by the National Center of Education Statistics, this study examined effects of Epstein's six types of parent involvement in the high school setting. It found that the strongest effects on 12th-grade student achievement stemmed from parents' actively encouraging their children to plan for and attend college. The effects are weakest for reading and strongest for math.

Parent involvement in education takes many forms, and some may have more impact on achievement than others. Using Epstein's six types of parent involvement as a base, Catsambis defines high school parent involvement as shown in Table 9.

**Table 9. Activities Related to Six Types of Parent Involvement**

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Type 1. Parent obligations  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Parent-teen communication</li> <li>– Parent-teen activities</li> <li>– Supervising behavior</li> <li>– Knowing what courses student is taking</li> <li>– Supervising academic work</li> </ul>                                       |
| Type 1. Parent obligations  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– School-parent contacts about academic performance</li> <li>– Parent-school contacts on student's academic program</li> <li>– Parent-school contacts on postsecondary plans</li> <li>– Problems communicating with school</li> </ul> |
| Type 2. Communications      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Volunteering at school and attending school activities</li> </ul>   |
| Type 3. Supporting school   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Encouraging college</li> <li>– Encouraging high school graduation</li> <li>– Learning about postsecondary education</li> </ul>  |
| Type 4. Learning activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Private educational expenses</li> </ul>   |
| Type 5. Decision making     | Not included in the NELS:88 12th-grade questionnaire   |
| Type 6. Community           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Parent-to-parent communication</li> </ul>   |

**This study confirms the importance of considering the many dimensions of parent involvement in education. Within Epstein's six types of parent involvement, only some have a significant positive effect on achievement in high school.**

Using data from the long-term NELS:88, this study tracked the behavior of 13,580 parents whose children remained in school through the 12th grade. Catsambis measured the impact each type of involvement had on student achievement. Student achievement was measured by standardized test scores and total credits completed in math, English, and science. Also included was enrollment in an academic (higher level) high school curriculum.

Catsambis compared families by their social background (race, education, job, and income) and composition (size, number of parents in the home and working) to see if these factors affected how parents interact with school and their children. She also compared students by their language background (English spoken at home or not), engagement in school (attendance, homework completed, tardiness), and achievement record. The study considers the effects to be significant only if they appear in families of all backgrounds.

### Findings

This study confirms the importance of considering the many dimensions of parent involvement in education. Within Epstein's six types of parent involvement, only some have a significant positive effect on achievement in high school.

First, Catsambis looked at the impact of parent involvement while their teens were in 12th grade. She found that parenting practices tend to have weak effects on students' test scores. Knowledge of their students' coursework and monitoring their progress have "very small positive effects." In 12th grade, three forms of involvement have very limited or no effects. These are communicating with school, supporting the school by attending events, and communicating with other parents.

Enhancing learning opportunities at home has the strongest effect. When parents express high expectations, discuss attending college, and help students prepare for college, students are more likely to enroll in an academic program, earn credits, and make higher test scores. This finding holds across all family backgrounds. The impact was somewhat greater for math and science than for English, and for earning credits than scoring well on tests.

Second, Catsambis looked back at the parents' type of involvement when their children were in eighth grade. Do activities in middle school have an impact on 12th-grade achievement? She found that parents' educational expectations (for high achievement and attending college) in eighth grade had the strongest effects on 12th-grade test scores in all subjects.

For some activities, the effects appeared to be negative. In families where parents were making contact with the school, encouraging their teens to graduate from high school (as opposed to attend college), and supervising behavior, student achievement was lower. When she controlled for problem behavior (coming to school late or unpre-

pared, cutting classes), the negative effects disappeared. This suggests that parents whose children have academic or behavior problems tend to seek help from the school.

## Conclusions

The author concludes that:

- Parent involvement does influence educational outcomes in the 12th grade, but its effects are weaker than those reported for earlier grades.
- Parents' educational expectations and encouragement are "by far the most important type of family practice that affects all measures of senior achievement."
- Other family practices that support learning at home also have a positive effect, especially being aware of the courses their students are taking. However, parenting activities have only small effects at this age.
- In general, the most effective types of 12th-grade parent involvement are not aimed at supervising students' behavior, but rather are aimed at advising and guiding teens' academic decisions.

High educational expectations, consistent encouragement and actions that enhance learning opportunities of students and, to a lesser extent, support by the school and other parents, are the major ways through which families . . . positively influence the educational achievements of their teens . . . The results confirm that maintaining high levels of parent involvement in students' education from the middle grades to the last year of high school does "make a difference." School efforts to encourage sustained parent involvement through the twelfth grade may therefore be a fruitful avenue for improving students' educational success. (p. 26)

5

**Chrispeels, Janet, and Rivero, Elvira (2000)***Engaging Latino Families for Student Success—Understanding the Process and Impact of Providing Training to Parents*

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA

**Summary:** The study examined the impact of a program intervention called the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) on a group of 198 Latino immigrant parents in San Diego, California. The researchers explored the effect of participation in a series of parent information classes on immigrant parents' sense of place in their children's education. The findings from their study suggest that parents developed higher levels of engagement both with their children and with the school, especially with the teachers, as a result of participation in the PIQE program.

The PIQE program consisted of eight 90-minute sessions using a prescribed curriculum translated into the parents' language. An important component of the training was the use of PIQE instructors who acted as "cultural brokers." The researchers adopted this term from Delgado-Gaitán (1996), who used the term to refer to a white educator who, because of his long affiliation with the Latino community, was able to translate between his ethnic and cultural group and the Latinos. The instructors selected for the program were from backgrounds and life experiences similar to the participants, had succeeded in the U.S. system, and could interpret this system for the Latino parents.

The researchers assessed parents' perceptions of their role and place in their children's education before and after their participation in the program. Data collection included pretest and posttest survey data, observations and videotapes of the training sessions, in-depth interviews, and a review of artifacts. There were 198 graduates of the PIQE program (those who had attended at least four of the six content sessions). Data included surveys from 95 families and interviews with 11 families.

Chrispeels had developed her own conceptual framework of parent-community-school partnerships (in 1992 and 1994) encompassing five major types of interactive relationships involving (1) two-way communication, (2) support of the child, family, and the school—including meeting the child's basic needs, (3) learning about each other and how to work together, (4) sharing teaching responsibilities, and (5) collaborating in decision making and advocacy.

The work of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) and Reed, Jones, Walker, and Hoover-Dempsey (2000) provided a second framework that guided the study. They describe three factors that motivate parents to be involved that, they argue, explain why some families are more engaged with schools than others. These factors are how

1. parents define their role, responsibilities, and place in their child's life.

2. parents perceive the strength of their capabilities.
3. parents perceive the school invitations, demands, and opportunities for parent involvement.

## Findings

All families in the survey reported shifts in their parenting styles as a result of their participation. They attributed changes in their discipline methods, communication within the family and with teachers, and increased awareness of how to build the child's self-esteem to the information PIQE gave them. One of the most prevalent changes in this study was the increased number of literacy activities (such as reading more and going to the library more frequently) for both adults and children. A major discovery by parents was that they could initiate contact with the school and did not have to wait for the teacher to extend an invitation. The study suggests that parents will shift their parenting styles and their engagement with the school, especially with the teacher, when given information and an opportunity to explore how their attitudes and practices affect their children.

The study suggested a refinement of Chrispeels' model. The revised model indicates five variables that motivate parents to become involved with their children's education, shown as interlocking circles:

1. Actual and perceived school invitations and opportunities to be involved.
2. Parent's sense of place in their child's education.
3. Parent's knowledge and skills about how to be involved.
4. Parent's concept of parenting.
5. Parent's aspirations and love for their child.

## Conclusions

The authors state that the data from this study "indicate that the concepts about the parents' role, based on cultural traditions brought from Mexico and prior experiences, can limit the range of types and level of involvement and can affect how parents interpret a school's invitations and opportunities to participate. This study, however, demonstrates that these concepts are not fixed, but can be altered by information provided by a cultural-broker initiative, such as PIQE, and that parents will respond when given new ways to construct their roles" (p. 47).

**The study suggests that parents will shift their parenting styles and their engagement with the school, especially with the teacher, when given information and an opportunity to explore how their attitudes and practices affect their children.**

6

**Clark, Reginald M. (1993)**

Homework-Focused Parenting Practices That Positively Affect Student Achievement In Chavkin, Nancy Feyl (Ed.), *Families and Schools in a Pluralistic Society* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 85–105

**Summary:** This article reports on a study of 460 low- and high-achieving third graders in Los Angeles. It finds that high achievers tend to come from families in which parents set high standards for their children's educational activities and maintain a home environment that supports learning.

In recent years, Clark and other researchers have shifted their focus from such family background factors as income and educational level to such family attitudes and behaviors as high expectations for their children. Although poverty and low education seem to predict low achievement, these studies are finding that families of all backgrounds can promote high achievement among students. This study was designed to explore

- whether certain parenting practices related to homework and studying can promote high achievement, and
- whether those practices are associated with parents' education, family structure, and ethnic background.

Clark drew a sample of 1,141 third-grade students from 71 Los Angeles elementary schools with computerized student records. The sample was divided into two groups, high achievers (scoring at or above the 50th percentile on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills for two years) and low achievers (scoring at or below the 25th percentile for two years). The students were predominantly Hispanic, black, Asian, or other non-Anglos.

Clark sent a questionnaire to the parents of sample students, to learn about parents' perceptions of and practices concerning homework, how their children handle homework assignments, and family background. The response rate was 40 percent; 304 questionnaires were returned from parents of low achievers, 156 from parents of high achievers. Asian and black families were overrepresented, while white and Hispanic families were underrepresented. Clark introduced controls for family income, education level, and family structure.

**Findings**

Most parents talk to their children about homework, read to their children, and make sure they do their assignments. On many of the variables Clark measured, there was no significant difference between parents of high achievers and low achievers. However, the parents of high achievers were more involved in home learning activities and reported that their children spent more time on homework and were more likely to have a dictionary. On the other hand, parents of low achievers assisted their children with homework more and spoke English at home more often.

In terms of family background, low achievers tended to come from homes where the parents were younger, were not employed outside the home, had not been to college, were low-income and receiving public assistance, and had more than two children. Even though the higher-achieving students often had parents who were not home to monitor their children’s activities between three and five in the afternoon, their parents’ participation in the workforce was related to higher test scores.

Two clusters of variables—parent’s press for the child’s academic success and family circumstances and resources for achievement—were significantly related to higher achievement. Table 10 shows the percentage of the difference between high and low achievers that can be explained by these variables.

**Two clusters of variables—parent’s press for the child’s academic success and family circumstances and resources for achievement—were significantly related to higher achievement.**

**Table 10. Percentage of Difference between High and Low Achievers That Can Be Explained by Two Clusters of Variables**

| FACTOR   | CLUSTER OF VARIABLES  | VARIANCE (%) |
|--|---|--------------|
| Parent’s press for child’s academic success        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Parent perception of frequency of home-work assignments</li> <li>– Parent perception of child’s homework engagement</li> <li>– Child knowledge of how to use dictionary</li> <li>– Parent expectation for child’s education</li> </ul> | 47.2         |
| Family circumstances and resources for achievement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Parent knowledge of how to help</li> <li>– Mother’s unemployment status</li> <li>– Number of children living at home</li> </ul>  | 41.7         |

Despite the relationship between achievement and family resources, Clark found that high achievers came from a wide variety of family background. “Let us recall that 51.3 percent of the mothers of high achievers possessed no more than a high school education. Almost 40 percent . . . lived in single parent households. Almost 43 percent of the high achievers were Hispanic and 21.8 percent were Black” (p. 103).

**Conclusions**

Results of these analyses revealed that home process variables, parental personality variables, and family background circumstances worked together to shape student achievement patterns. The data showed that most parents of both high- and low-achieving students were enacting some of the positive behaviors that contribute to student achievement. . . . However, to be academically successful, students apparently needed their parents (or other adults) to expose them to an array of additional support behaviors. (p. 103)

7

**Clark, Reginald M. (2002)**

Ten hypotheses about What Predicts Student Achievement for African-American students and All Other Students: What the Research Shows  
 In Allen, Walter R., et al., (Eds.), *African American Education: Race, Community, Inequality and Achievement—A Tribute to Edgar G. Epps*  
 Oxford, UK: Elsevier Science, in press, 2002

**Summary:** This article reports on a study of low- and high-achieving students in nine data samples representing 1,058 youths and young adults. It finds that student achievement is highly related to how students, parents, and teachers use their time, and to the involvement of adult mentors in student activities.

In this chapter, Clark expands on his earlier research about the impact of family background, attitudes, and behaviors on student achievement (see Clark, 1993). What are the reasons for student achievement? Is it primarily the result of family background (ethnicity, income, and education level), school resources (facilities, per pupil expenditure), or factors within the control of students, families, teachers, coaches/mentors, tutors, and others in the community?

Students and the adults who supervise them make critical decisions about how to use their time and energy. These decisions can affect students' opportunity to learn the skills needed to perform well on standardized tests in reading and math. Clark considers two questions specifically related to family and community involvement.

- Does student engagement in out-of-school activities guided by adults have a positive effect on academic achievement?
- Does involvement in such “high-yield activities” such as reading, writing, and study guided by adults have a positive effect on student achievement?

Clark and his colleagues analyzed nine data samples on young people collected between 1984 and 1999. They were students in grades 1–12, college seniors, and young adults, located in Nashville, Tennessee; Bakersfield, Los Angeles, and Long Beach, California; and Kellogg's youth and teen after-school enrichment programs in 13 states. The samples were divided into two groups: high achievers (scoring at or above the 50th percentile on standardized tests for two years) and low achievers (scoring at or below the 25th percentile for two years). Clark analyzed these data samples using rigorous analytical procedures such as multiple regression correlations.

**Findings**

High-achieving students spend significantly more time (hours each week) than low achievers:

- attending school and doing structured learning activities.
- engaged in academic lessons in the classroom and in literacy-promoting activities out of school.

- taking part in such “high-yield activities” as reading, writing, and studying, and in such “enrichment activities” as hobbies, playing games, and talking.
- sleeping and taking care of their health.

These weekly differences in how high- and low-achieving students spend their time in and out of school accumulate. In elementary school, this can amount to a total of 80 more hours of learning in a year. By fifth grade, low achievers can be 9–12 months behind their higher-achieving classmates. The difference in how time is spent also grows wider as students get older. For example, the gap between high- and low-achieving students’ time in weekly learning activities is about two hours in elementary school, and seven hours in high school. Low-achieving students spend more time than higher-achieving students

- engaged in unstructured leisure activities, such as “hanging out,” talking on the phone, playing games, watching TV, and relaxing.
- doing chores, traveling to and from school (and other places), and working for pay.

The expectations of parents and other adults are positively related to student performance in school. Although all groups of parents Clark studied placed a high value on education and had high hopes for their students, the amount of time children spent with adults varied. High-achieving high school students spent more than nine hours a week in adult-guided activities, while low-achieving students spent more than three hours.

**High-achieving high school students spent more than nine hours a week in adult-guided activities, while low-achieving students spent more than three hours.**

## Conclusions

Clearly, African American students’ (test) scores are below the 25th percentile because of factors that have little or nothing to do with their ethnicity . . .

Rather, the racial achievement gap is due to the time-use habits of students, parents and teachers (in and out of school) and adult mentor involvement in student activities. (p. 22)

“The results indicate that the combined effect of the quality of students’ out of school learning activities, the amount of time exposed to powerful learning activities, and parents’ and teachers’ standards for their children accounted for most of the variance in student achievement.” These factors had a far greater effect “than (mother’s) educational level, parents’ age, and economics circumstances combined” (p. 20). Academic success (school test scores) is more likely to happen when

- students spend at least 15 hours per week with teachers doing high-quality learning activities.
- students spend 8–15 hours a week in out-of-school learning activities.
- out-of-school activities are guided by adults with high standards for achievement.
- students are focused and engaged when taking part in out-of-school learning activities.
- students know how to study, plan, and complete projects, and have access to libraries and reference materials.

Schools and youth-serving agencies (for example, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA) should offer programs that encourage reading, writing, and studying during the school day as well as during evenings, weekends, and summer. “Given the importance of high-impact learning programs, it seems prudent to empower the adults who guide and instruct students (their teachers, parents, and mentors) with knowledge and skills for helping the students to organize and manage their time effectively . . . Programs need to emphasize personal development of the adults as well as the youths” (p. 23).

8

**Downey, Douglas B. (2002)**

Parental and Family Involvement in Education

In Molnar, Alex (Ed.), et al., *School Reform Proposals: The Research Evidence*  
 Tempe, AZ: Education Policy Research Unit (EPRU), College of Education, Arizona  
 State University

**Summary:** This chapter in a report reviews literature on parent involvement in school and notes several factors related to school success. From an exploration of norms and social networks to parent-child interactions at home, Downey concludes by discussing the weaknesses in current research.

**How parents interact with children at home has a greater effect on school performance than how parents interact with school.**

Three chapters in this EPRU report describe factors based out of school that contribute to student achievement. Section 3, by Downey, summarizes research related to parent involvement. He discusses evidence that school performance is enhanced by parent-teacher relationships and brings findings from sociology and workplace studies to make these points:

1. Creating a standard of high parent involvement increases pressure on parents to participate. When many parents are involved and know each other, children more closely identify with school. Further, the network of parents that develops creates cohesion. He gives an example of a norm for homework: “If most parents strictly enforce homework rules, then it becomes more difficult for any single child to resist.” Downey mentions that these examples are not proven in research for all subject areas.
2. How parents interact with children at home has a greater effect on school performance than how parents interact with school. He presents research on three parenting styles and their relationships to school success: authoritative parenting, permissive parenting, and authoritarian parenting. These styles vary by whether they have these effective qualities: high expectations for students, responsiveness, and warmth.
  - Research finds that the authoritative style, with its high expectations and high responsiveness, has the greatest effect on student success.
  - These parenting styles overlap substantially with family income and education. Higher-income families are more likely to have an authoritative parenting style.
3. How effectively parents are able to help with homework may be related to their level of education, according to some researchers. We do not have definitive evidence on the effect of parents’ homework help on school success. Family income and education also seem to affect how and to what degree parents interact with teachers and school officials. In these and other examples, Downey presents reasons researchers need to control for family income and education levels in studying parent involvement.

## Conclusions

Downey recommends that programs developed to promote parent-teacher communication focus on improving relationships between parents and their children. He also recommends programs that meet the broad needs of parents, such as improving reading skills, ways to decrease financial stress, and health and nutrition.

In addition, Downey explains problems in the literature on parent involvement: “An important concern is that the observed associations between parenting practices and student performance represent mere correlations, not causal relationships” (Chapter 10, p. 6). And because we do not really understand what specific family characteristics and activities cause poor school performance, we are not close to understanding why poor performance occurs.

9

**Dryfoos, Joy G. (2000) ED450204***Evaluations of Community Schools: Findings to Date*

Hastings-on-Hudson, NY: Coalition for Community Schools

<http://www.communityschools.org/evaluation/evalprint.html>

**Summary:** This paper briefly reviews 49 evaluations of community-school initiatives, some large in scale with many local sites. It found that 36 programs reported academic gains for students they serve. The programs also reported improvements in student behavior and development, family well-being, and community life.

The purpose of this review was to document the impact of community schools on student achievement, family well-being, and community life. As defined by the Coalition for Community Schools, a community school is a program operating in a public school building with these qualities:

- Open to students, families, and the community before, during, and after school, seven days a week throughout the year.
- Operated through a partnership between the school system and one or more community agencies.
- Designed by families, youth, principals, teachers, and neighborhood residents.
- Promoting both educational achievement and positive youth development.

A typical program has before- and after-school learning programs and includes a family-support center. Staff can make referrals to such social services as medical care and housing assistance. The program attracts volunteers and local partners from the community.

For this review, Dryfoos obtained evaluation and other data on results from 49 different school-community programs. Some are huge district or statewide programs, such as the California Healthy Start initiative and LA's Best, an after-school program. The national Communities in Schools organization database includes information from state and local programs. Some studies, however, evaluate only one school. All the reports present findings on at least one outcome, and 46 of the 49 report positive changes. Very few of the studies reviewed here use sophisticated research design, such as random assignment to comparison groups. Instead, most studies relied on before- and after-tests of students served.

**Findings**

Outcomes from the programs were organized into four categories:

- Learning and achievement: 36 of the 49 programs, mostly elementary schools, reported academic gains, generally improvements in reading and math test scores over two to three years. In at least eight cases, the outcomes were limited to students who received special services such as case management, mental health, or extended-day sessions. Nineteen programs, including Communities in Schools,

**“It is time for community schools to be recognized as an important component of the education reform movement.”**

reported improvements in school attendance. Eleven programs reported a decline in suspensions.

- Improved social behavior and healthy youth development: Eleven programs, including California’s Healthy Start, reported reductions in substance abuse. Others also reported drops in teen pregnancy and disruptive behavior.
- Family well-being: Programs with a strong family focus, including Healthy Start, reported that families improved filling basic needs such as housing, food, finances, and jobs. At least 12 programs reported increases in parent involvement, as measured by volunteer hours.
- Enhanced community life: Programs reported that families and students had better access to such services as health care. Six programs reported lower violence and less street crime. One found a decline in student mobility.

For example, Stevenson-YMCA Community School Program in Long Beach, California, integrated academic standards into its extended-day activities. In one year, first-through third-grade students’ grades and test scores improved, so that students who scored below average on tests declined from 49 percent to 30 percent, and students with above-average grades went from 19 percent to 34 percent. There was no control group.

### Conclusions

Dryfoos compares these findings to data on the school reform movement, reported in *An Educators’ Guide to School Reform*, published by the America Institutes for Research. This review of research on 24 whole school approaches similar to the community schools concept finds that: “In general, evidence of positive effects on student achievement—arguably the most important feature of any reform approach—is extremely limited. Even though many of the approaches have been in schools for years, only three provide strong evidence of positive effects on student achievement. As a result educators often are considering school reform without vital information on which to make decisions. More rigorous evaluations are needed with broad dissemination of findings” (p. 6).

Although the research on community schools also has limitations, there is growing evidence that community schools have positive effects on students, families, and communities. Dryfoos concludes, “It is time for community schools to be recognized as an important component of the education reform movement. Most of these programs have goals not only to improve school performance, but also to change the lives of children and their families, and to reduce social barriers to learning. These initiatives recognize that forces for upgrading the quality of education must be joined with the provision of strong supports” (p. 6).

10

**Epstein, Joyce L., Clark, Laurel, Salinas, Karen Clark, and Sanders, Mavis (1997)**

*Scaling up School-Family-Community Connections in Baltimore: Effects on Student Achievement and Attendance*

Baltimore, MD: CRESPAR and the Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships, Johns Hopkins University

**Summary:** This is a short report on a family-school partnership initiative in 80 Baltimore elementary schools. In schools with stronger partnership programs, the authors found small but significant gains in attendance and in third-grade students' scores in writing and math. The authors point out that readily available test score and attendance data can provide important information about the impact of a family-school partnership program.

**“Schools with stronger programs of partnership have better student attendance, regardless of the area of the city or years in the program.”**

This paper reports on the feasibility of linking annual data on attendance and achievement with evaluations of a school's partnership program. If gains in attendance and achievement are found more often in schools with a highly rated partnership program, the program's impact on student outcomes can be more easily verified and monitored.

In Baltimore, 80 public schools are members of the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools, a program affiliated with CRESPAR (Center for Research on Students Placed at Risk) at Johns Hopkins University. To measure student outcomes at each of these Partnership schools, researchers obtained data from the state on student attendance and Maryland State Performance Assessment scores in writing, reading, and math.

These outcomes were correlated with the effectiveness of the schools' parent and community involvement programs. The programs were rated by facilitators who assist the schools. At the end of each year, the facilitators rated the schools' quality of partnership, from 1 = poor to 4 = excellent, in each of six types of involvement (see Catsambis, 1998, for a complete list). Each school's rating is an average of these six scores.

### **Findings**

As expected, the best predictors of school attendance were prior school attendance and student mobility. In other words, schools with a past record of low attendance and high mobility were the most likely still to have low attendance. Once these were accounted for, however, the quality of the schools' partnership program was significantly related to improved attendance. “Schools with stronger programs of partnership have better student attendance, regardless of the area of the city or years in the program” (p. 1).

The quality of the school's partnership program also contributed to a small but significant increase in the percentage of third graders who score at a satisfactory level or

better on the state achievement test. The effects are stronger for writing and reading than for math. The researchers suggest that if measures were made of effective practices of partnership that focus on writing, reading, or math, the effects would be much stronger.

### **Conclusions**

The researchers found “a potentially important pattern that suggests that a more comprehensive and well-implemented program of partnerships may help boost student skills in all subjects” (p. 2). They caution, however, that in districts like Baltimore, “fewer than 20 percent of students reach satisfactory scores on the state’s new assessments in writing, reading, or math. School, family, and community partnerships can boost attendance and increase achievement slightly, but excellent classroom teaching will be needed to dramatically improve students’ writing, reading, and math skills to meet the state standards . . .” (p. 4).

This study also confirms that the effects of partnership programs can be easily assessed using readily available annual school data such as attendance and student achievement test scores.

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**Epstein, Joyce L., and Sanders, Mavis G. (2000)**

Connecting Home, School, and Community: New Directions for Social Research  
 In Hallinan, Maureen T. (Ed.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Education*  
 New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 285–306

**Summary:** This review of research finds that it is now generally agreed that school, family, and community partnerships are necessary to improve children’s chances for success in school. It concludes, however, that better data and more exacting analysis are needed to clarify the results of different practices of partnership.

**Social capital may be invested in ways that help students learn, strengthen families, improve schools, and enrich communities.**

To understand the positive effects of family-school collaboration, Epstein developed a new perspective to show that families, schools, and communities have a common mission around children’s learning and development (Epstein, 1987). This view recognized that home, school, and community act as overlapping spheres of influence on children. Social capital (the benefits of interactions among people) increases when well-designed partnerships enable families, students, and others in the community to interact in productive ways. Social capital may be invested in ways that help students learn, strengthen families, improve schools, and enrich communities. Children grow up in multiple contexts that are connected by a web of networks.

**Findings**

This review confirms four general findings:

- Teachers, parents, and students have little understanding of each other’s interests in children and schools. Most teachers do not know the goals that parents have for their children, how parents help them learn, or how parents would like to be involved. Most parents do not know much about the educational programs in their children’s school or what teachers require of them.
- School and classroom practices influence family involvement. In general, better-educated families are more involved in schools. But families with less education and lower incomes do become just as involved if schools have effective programs to engage them.
- When teachers involve parents, they rate parents more positively and stereotype families less than other teachers do. Principals and parents, in turn, give higher ratings to teachers who involve families.
- Specific outcomes are linked to different types of involvement. For example, practices that encourage parents to read to children at home affect a student’s reading achievement.

**Conclusions**

As research continues, “researchers must continue to ask deeper questions, employ better samples, collect useful data, create more fully specified measurement models, and conduct more elegant analyses to more clearly identify the results of particular practices of partnership. An added challenge is to continue to conduct research that helps

improve educational policies and school practices of partnership. Studies are needed at all grade levels, in differently organized schools, in varied locations, and with students and families with diverse racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds” (p. 290).

Epstein and her colleagues recommend four new topics for research on partnerships: transitions, community connections, students’ roles in partnerships, and the results of school, family, and community connections.

12

**Epstein, Joyce L., Simon, Beth S., and Salinas, Karen Clark (1997)**

*Involving Parents in Homework in the Middle Grades*

Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University

Phi Delta Kappan Research Bulletin, No. 18, 4 pages

<http://www.pdkintl.org/edres/resbul18.htm>

**Summary:** This is a study of Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS), an interactive homework process developed by researchers at Johns Hopkins University and teachers in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. It found that 683 Baltimore middle-grade students' test scores and grades in writing and language arts tended to improve when their families participated in TIPS learning activities at home.

Many parents want to know how they can help their child do better in school. At the same time, many teachers with large classes feel overwhelmed by the prospect of letting parents know what students are learning and how to help. The TIPS process enables teachers to design homework that requires children to talk to someone at home about their assignment. Parents monitor, interact, and support their children, but they are not asked to teach the subject or direct the assignments.

This study explores whether TIPS interactive homework contributes to middle-grades students' writing scores and report-card grades. It looks at progress over one school year, beyond what the students' initial skills would predict. It also considers how students and families reacted to the TIPS process.

Researchers analyzed three TIPS writing samples for 683 students over the school year. Then they surveyed 413 students and 218 parents about their experiences with TIPS at the end of the year. They controlled for variation in school attendance, family background and income, prior report-card grades, and prior writing skills. They used multiple regression analyses to see if there were any independent effects of TIPS and family involvement. The students were sixth and eighth graders in two mostly African-American middle schools in Baltimore, Maryland. Both schools were among the lowest achieving in the city. There had been little family involvement in students' academic learning at home. On average the students in these schools had very low writing skills.

### **Findings**

The study found that with TIPS interactive homework, most families were informed about and involved in learning activities at home on a regular basis. Students' writing scores and language-arts report-card grades improved.

- Parent participation on TIPS added significantly to students' writing scores as the year progressed.
- Doing more TIPS homework positively affected language-arts report-card grades at the end of the school year.

- Students with lower grades were more positive about TIPS than were more successful students. This indicates that TIPS may help engage some of these students in homework even if they do not like school very much.
- Parents who monitored their children's grades and participated more often liked the TIPS process more than did other parents.

**Even after accounting for prior writing scores and grades, the TIPS process boosted student writing skills and success. TIPS also improved parent participation levels, students' homework completion, and teacher attitudes.**

## **Conclusions**

Even after accounting for prior writing scores and grades, the TIPS process boosted student writing skills and success. TIPS also improved parent participation levels, students' homework completion, and teacher attitudes.

The authors also concluded, however, that students, families, and schools need more than homework to help students meet their goals for learning and success. Students and their families need to be committed to school attendance, participation in class work, and completion of homework. The authors recommend that "classroom teaching must improve dramatically to meet high standards" (p. 6).

13

**Fan, Xitao, and Chen, Michael (1999) ED430048***Parental Involvement and Students' Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis*

Arlington, VA: National Science Foundation; Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics

**Summary:** This is a meta-analysis of 25 research studies conducted over the past 10 years. It suggests that parent involvement, especially parents' aspirations for their children, has a significant impact on student achievement. Some types of involvement, especially expressing expectations for achievement, have more effect than others.

Although the idea that parent involvement can improve student achievement is appealing, the research findings are not clear or consistent. In this study, Fan and Chen identified different facets of parent involvement and examined whether some have more impact than others on students' academic achievement. First, they identified about 2,000 relevant articles, papers, and reports. From this base, they identified studies that are based on data about both parent involvement and student achievement and that included regression or path analysis to determine their relationship. Only 25 studies met their criteria.

The studies varied in how they defined both involvement and achievement. The researchers grouped these definitions into broad categories. Across the studies, parent involvement was defined in these ways:

- Educational aspirations for children, such as expectations for their performance.
- Communication about school-related matters, such as homework and school programs.
- Parents' supervising children's activities, such as homework, TV watching, and after-school time.
- Parents' participation in school activities, such as volunteering and attending events.
- General parent involvement.

Student achievement was defined in these ways:

- Grade point average (GPA).
- Test scores in specific subjects (math, science, reading, social studies).
- Other (promotion, retention, teacher ratings).

The researchers used complex statistical techniques to group the studies' findings and draw conclusions across the whole body of research.

## Findings

Overall, the researchers found a “medium effect size” ( $r = .25$ ) of parent involvement on student achievement that was “noticeable and apparent.” It was greater for such general achievement measures as GPA ( $r = .33$ ) than for grades or test scores in specific subjects (science, math). Fan and Chen feel that GPA is probably a better indicator of overall achievement.

Fan and Chen also found that some forms of parent involvement have a more noticeable effect on achievement. Parents’ supervision of children at home has the weakest effect ( $r = .09$ ). Parents’ aspirations and expectations, on the other hand, have the strongest relationship with achievement ( $r = .40$ ). They do not suggest that supervision is unimportant but rather that parents may impose more controls when students are not doing well in school.

## Conclusions

“The overall relationship between parent involvement and students’ academic achievement is close to  $r = .30$ . Although an average correlation of  $.30$  may appear low to many people . . . this represents a medium effect size in social sciences . . . certainly a meaningful effect.” In practical terms, this means that students from families with above-median parent involvement showed success rates that were 30 percent higher than those from families with below-median parent involvement. “This is not trivial by any standard,” they conclude (p. 18).

Fan and Chen recommend that future studies define and measure parent involvement carefully, and measure the impact of different types separately. They also recommend that measures of student achievement be both global (GPA) and specific by subject (math scores) in the same study.

**“The overall relationship between parent involvement and students’ academic achievement is close to  $r = .30$ . Although an average correlation of  $.30$  may appear low to many people . . . this represents a medium effect size in social sciences . . . certainly a meaningful effect.”**

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**Gold, Eva, Simon, Elaine, and Brown, Chris (2002)***Successful Community Organizing for School Reform*

Chicago, IL: Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform

<http://www.crosscity.org>

**Summary:** This study was conducted by Research for Action, an education research organization in Philadelphia, in partnership with the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform. It is based on interviews with 19 community organizing groups working to improve education and in-depth case studies of five of these groups. The authors identified a set of eight indicators to assess the groups' impact. The indicators are based on goals toward which the groups are currently working, and on which they have had some success. The eight indicators are leadership development, community power, social capital, public accountability, equity, school-community connection, high-quality curriculum and instruction, and positive school climate.

Public schools in low-income urban areas face serious problems: overcrowding, crumbling facilities, low funding, high staff turnover, outdated materials, and low student achievement. Students attending these schools are shortchanged. They are shut out of high-quality programs, discouraged from going to college, and unprepared for work. Community organizing groups have begun to address these issues. This study looks beyond schools and school systems to examine work that creates a positive dynamic between communities and schools.

From a national sample, the researchers selected 19 community organizing groups for telephone interviews. These groups were a broad cross-section including urban and rural, neighborhood and district level, and affiliated or unaffiliated with national networks. The research team interviewed executive directors, lead organizers, or longtime leaders of the groups. Out of that sample, the researchers selected five groups for further study and spent two years documenting their work in detail: Alliance Organizing Project in Philadelphia; Austin Interfaith in Texas; Logan Square Neighborhood Association in Chicago; ACORN in New York City; and Oakland Community Organizations in California. The researchers visited each site twice for data collection and a third time to present findings and receive feedback.

Volume 1 presents an indicators framework of strategies and accomplishments of education organizing and a theory of change that leads from increased community capacity to improved student learning. Volume 2 offers detailed case studies of the five groups.

## Findings

Examples of the reported impact of community organizing, by eight indicators, are given in Table 11.

**Table 11. Examples of the Reported Impact of Community Organizing, by Indicator**

| INDICATOR                               | MEASURES OF IMPACT  |
|---|---|
| Leadership development                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Parents and/or community members hold leadership positions</li> <li>– Parents, youth, and school staff lead meetings, design agendas, speak in public</li> <li>– Public officials are aware of issues that concern parents, youth, and school staff and are responsive to them</li> </ul>              |
| Community power                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Political and district leaders acknowledge issues important to community groups</li> <li>– Groups of parents and community representatives monitor new programs and policies</li> </ul>  |
| Social capital                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Increase in parents’ sense of efficacy</li> <li>– Greater number of parent/community candidates for school councils</li> <li>– Increased participation in local organizations</li> </ul>   |
| Public accountability                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– District data on schools and student performance become public</li> <li>– Parent and community representation on review board, panels, and oversight committees</li> <li>– Increased sense of ownership of local schools</li> </ul>  |
| Equity                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Increased funding for underfunded schools</li> <li>– Increase in GED graduates</li> <li>– Equity in distribution of credentialed teachers</li> <li>– Equity in availability of advanced courses</li> <li>– Reduction and equity in class size, suspensions, and expulsions</li> </ul>                  |
| School-community connections            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Increase in variety and number of community-oriented programs based at school</li> <li>– Increase in participation in programs</li> </ul>  |
| Positive school climate                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Pride in school</li> <li>– Signage in other languages</li> <li>– Student perception that teachers care</li> </ul>  |
| High-quality instruction and curriculum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Improved test scores</li> <li>– Increased acceptance of students into magnet programs</li> <li>– Availability of challenging courses</li> <li>– Increase in teachers’ sense of efficacy</li> <li>– Increase in student perception that school is “relevant” and respectful of their culture</li> </ul> |

The unique role of community organizing in education reform is to build community capacity and link that to school improvement through public accountability. The indicators of leadership development, community power, and social capital, as well as public accountability, are “almost totally absent in the work of school reform as it is usually defined.” Community organizing groups add a locally rooted dimension that otherwise would be missing by

- sustaining the vision and momentum for change over time,
- persisting despite obstacles and setbacks,
- building political capital and creating political will that motivates officials to act, and
- producing authentic change in policy and programs that reflects community concerns

### **Conclusions**

In this study, we have shown that when ordinary people can enter into the education arena, their efforts can result in meaningful gains for students who have not been well served by the public schools. Ordinary people can indeed begin to transform the institution of public education to become more equitable and responsive. (Executive Summary, p. 7)

**The unique role of community organizing in education reform is to build community capacity and link that to school improvement through public accountability.**

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**Gutman, Leslie Morrison, and Midgley, Carol (2000)**

The Role of Protective Factors in Supporting the Academic Achievement of Poor African American Students during the Middle School Transition  
*Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 29(2), Plenum Publishing Corporation, 223–248

**Summary:** This is a study of African-American students from 62 families during the transition between grades 5 and 6. It found that the single most important factor in their achievement was a sense of academic “self-efficacy”—or confidence that they could do well in school. However, a combination of parent involvement at home and supports at school also had a significant positive effect on student grades.

For young people of color and from low-income families, the transition to middle school can be especially difficult. They are moving to a larger, more-complex school at a time when stable, supportive bonds with adults are especially important. As a result, they often feel unconnected to school and their teachers. It is not surprising that for these students, academic problems begin to mount during the middle grades.

This study looks at whether certain factors can protect students from negative outcomes. These factors are

1. academic “self-efficacy” (feeling confident that they can master the work in school);
2. parent involvement (talking to students about school, checking homework, attending events, and volunteering at school);
3. feeling supported by teachers (taking time to work with students, not criticizing them); and
4. feeling they “belong” at the school (feeling accepted, respected, and included at school).

Gutman and Midgley further examine the interaction of these factors. Will students who feel more academically confident and accepted at school, and who feel more support from their parents and teachers, earn higher GPAs than their classmates? What combination of factors is most or least powerful?

Students in this study are drawn from 62 low-income African-American families living in a high-poverty school district in southeastern Michigan. Their responses were drawn from surveys used in a large, long-term study conducted across the state. Families were visited by a trained interviewer.

At the end of the fifth and sixth grades, the researchers collected the students’ GPAs. First, they examined the effects of each factor on GPA, then looked at the effect of combinations of factors on GPA.

## Findings

As expected, all students on the average had higher GPAs in the fifth grade than in the sixth. In other words, their grades went down in middle school. Controlling for prior grades (how well the student had done academically), the researchers then looked at the contribution of each factor to student achievement. They found that students with higher academic self-efficacy (confidence) had higher GPAs than their classmates. Parent involvement, teacher support, and feelings of belonging did not appear to affect GPA.

When the researchers combined the factors, however, another picture emerged. Controlling for prior grades, student efficacy and other factors, students with both high parent involvement and a high sense of belonging at school had higher GPAs than students with low parent involvement and a low sense of belonging. A similar pattern appeared when parent involvement levels and teacher support were combined. Controlling for prior grades, students with both high parent involvement and high teacher support had higher GPAs than students with low parent involvement and low teacher support. The impact of academic efficacy on GPA did not vary with levels of parent involvement, a sense of belonging, or teacher support.

**Controlling for prior grades, student efficacy and other factors, students with both high parent involvement and a high sense of belonging at school had higher GPAs than students with low parent involvement and a low sense of belonging.**

**Table 12. Combined Effect of Teacher Support and High Parent Involvement on Grade Point Averages**

| GRADE POINT AVERAGES (ON A 0–4 SCALE) |                         |                        |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Teacher Support                       | High Parent Involvement | Low Parent Involvement |
| High                                  | 2.5                     | 0.5                    |
| Low                                   | 0.6                     | 0.7                    |

**Table 13. Combined Effect of Student Sense of Belonging and High Parent Involvement on Grade Point Averages**

| GRADE POINT AVERAGES (ON A 0–4 SCALE) |                         |                        |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Student Sense of Belonging            | High Parent Involvement | Low Parent Involvement |
| High                                  | 3.4                     | 1.0                    |
| Low                                   | 1.8                     | 0.8                    |

Another way to look at this is that parent involvement alone will not make a significant contribution to student achievement if their children don't feel connected to school. Students must also feel that their teachers support them and that they belong at school.

## Conclusions

Gutman and Midgley conclude that their finding about the combined effect of family and school factors is significant. “In our study, students with high levels of both family (parent involvement) and school (teacher support and feelings of belonging) factors experienced higher GPA across the transition than did their classmates who had high levels of either one or none of the factors.” This suggests that “the combination of school and family factors may be most effective in supporting the academic achievement of poor African American students during the transition to middle level schools” (p. 243).

The effectiveness of parent involvement in low-income communities may depend on support from teachers and schools. School staff can either encourage or deter parent involvement by their own beliefs and attitudes. When teachers recognize parents’ contributions and see them as valuable resources, they encourage parents’ sense of efficacy and help them feel like a valued partner. Schools can also offer parents more meaningful roles for involvement, increasing parents’ connection to the school. On the other hand, if parents feel they have little to contribute, they transmit these feeling to their children.

As our data suggest, middle-level schools that create a positive environment and encourage parent-teacher involvement may not only help engage parents of adolescents, but they also may help to make parent involvement more effective in supporting the academic achievement of poor African American students across the middle school transition. (p. 244)

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### **Ho Sui-Chu, Esther, and Willms, J. Douglas (1996) EJ533315**

Effects of Parental Involvement on Eighth-Grade Achievement  
*Sociology of Education*, 69(2), 126–141

**Summary:** This study is an analysis of middle school achievement, using a large, long-term national database (NELS:88). It found that involvement at home—discussing school with children and helping children plan their education programs—had a strong positive relationship to student achievement. The study did NOT find that higher-income parents and two-parent families were more involved with their children's education. The types of involvement vary somewhat, however, by the families' race and ethnicity.

Over the years, many studies have suggested that higher-income parents are more involved in their children's education than lower-income parents. This greater involvement fosters more positive attitudes toward school, improves homework habits, reduces absenteeism and dropping out, and enhances academic achievement. If this is so, then strategies to increase involvement of all parents may be a way to reduce gaps in achievement between students from low- and high-income families.

The purpose of this study was to

- clarify types of parent involvement and how they may vary within and among different schools.
- explore the relationship among parent involvement, family background, and student achievement.

The researchers identified four types of parent involvement, two based at home, and two based at school:

- Discussing school activities at home.
- Monitoring out-of-school activities.
- Having contacts with school staff.
- Volunteering and attending parent-teacher conferences and other school events.

Using data from NELS:88 (24,599 eighth-grade students and their parents and teachers), Ho Sui-Chu and Willms asked if each type of involvement varies among students in a school, depending on family background, and between different schools, depending on varying school practices. Next, they examined whether involvement varied depending on whether the school served higher- or lower-income families. They also looked at family ethnicity and structure, as well as student learning or behavior problems, to see if these factors affect involvement.

Finally, they looked at whether the four types of involvement are related to variations in student achievement, based on standardized test scores in reading and math. Using a

complex statistical model, they estimated each school's impact on achievement, beyond the effect of family background. Then they estimated if the effect is related to parents' efforts or to the average level of involvement at the school.

## Findings

**Although higher-income families were slightly more involved in some ways, the differences were small. On the whole, the study did NOT find that higher-income parents and two-parent families were more involved with their children's education.**

- **Among schools:** For involvement at home and parent-initiated contacts with school, there was little variation among the 1,000 schools in the NELS:88 sample. For volunteering and other activities at school, however, higher-SES schools tend to have more parent involvement. (A limitation of NELS:88 data is that it does not include much information about school practices and policies to engage families, making comparison difficult.)
- **At home:** Although higher-income families were slightly more involved in some ways, the differences were small. On the whole, the study did NOT find that higher-income parents and two-parent families were more involved with their children's education.
- **By race/ethnicity:** Asian, Hispanic, and African-American parents participated as much in their children's education as did white parents, but in slightly different ways. African-American parents had slightly higher involvement than whites in all types except school participation, where their involvement was about the same. Hispanics had slightly higher levels of home supervision than whites but were about the same in all other types. Asian parents tended to provide more supervision at home than white parents but spent less time discussing school, communicating with school staff, volunteering, and attending PTO meetings.
- **By gender and student problems:** On the average, parents talked more about school with girls than boys, but they had more contact with school staff about boys than girls. Parents whose children had learning or behavior problems tended to have more contact with school staff. They also were less active at school and talked less with their children.
- **On achievement:** Of the four types of involvement, discussing school with children at home and helping children plan their education programs had the greatest effect on student achievement. The average level of participation in a school had a small but significant effect on reading achievement. Parents' volunteering or attending PTO meetings had only a modest effect on reading and almost no effect on math achievement.

## Conclusions

The prevailing perception among educational researchers is that successful schools establish practices that foster greater communication with parents, encourage parents to assist children at home with their schoolwork and planning, and recruit parents to work as volunteers or participate in school governance. The argument is that these practices, in turn, lead to higher levels of schooling outcomes. This may be the case, but our findings suggest that such schools are uncommon. (p. 6)

There is little variation by school in the amount of time families discuss school with their children, even though such discussions have an important effect on student achievement. This suggests, the authors conclude, “that relatively few schools have strong influences on the learning climate in the home. We expect that big gains in achievement could be made through programs that give parents concrete information about parenting styles, teaching methods, and school curricula” (p. 7).

Although higher income does have an impact on achievement, the extent to which parents are involved with their children tends to have a positive effect regardless of income. In other words, families of all backgrounds and income levels can—and do—have a positive impact on their children’s learning. An interesting twist, however, is that children tend to score higher in both math and reading if they attend a higher-income school, no matter what their own family income level. This may be, in part, because high-SES schools seem to have an overall culture of greater involvement in children’s education.

We reject the culture of poverty thesis: the results do not support the notion that parents from working-class backgrounds place less emphasis on the importance of schooling or that they view education as the purview solely of the school. (p. 7)

**Families of all backgrounds and income levels can—and do—have a positive impact on their children’s learning.**

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### Hoover-Dempsey, Kathleen V., and Sandler, Howard M. (1997) EJ548327

Why Do Parents Become Involved in Their Children's Education?  
*Review of Educational Research*, 67(1), 3–42

Summary: This review of psychological theory and research suggests that parents develop beliefs and understandings about the requirements and the expectations of the parent role as a function of their membership and participation in varied groups (like family, school, and church). Parents who hold positive beliefs about their efficacy to influence their children's education seem more likely to be involved. A school climate that invites involvement can also influence parents' decisions about involvement in their children's education.

The authors found that parents' ideas about child development, child rearing, and appropriate roles in supporting children's education at home influence parents' decisions about how to be involved in their children's education.

#### Findings

In examining literature that focused on the processes and mechanisms most important to parents' thinking, the authors found that parents' ideas about child development, child rearing, and appropriate roles in supporting children's education at home influence parents' decisions about how to be involved in their children's education. Belief that their involvement can have a positive influence on their child's education can positively influence children's educational outcomes. Belief that their abilities to exercise and maintain some level of control over events that affect their lives can make a positive impact on children's education results. Parents who hold such positive efficacy beliefs seem more likely to assume that the time and effort they allocate to involvement are well spent because of the positive child outcomes they are likely to create.

This review of the literature also found that even well-designed school programs inviting involvement will meet with limited success if they do not address the issues of parent role beliefs and parents' sense of efficacy for helping children succeed in school. If schools and communities wish to benefit from parent involvement they must work specifically to enhance parents' standing in both areas.

#### Conclusions

This article provides procedural knowledge for educators, researchers, and policymakers who want to improve parent involvement. First, the authors assert that school staff make an explicit effort to include parents in the school's mission. Another recommendation is that parents and school staff work together to define the parent's role. The authors propose that the teacher/parent time together be spent mutually agreeing on expectations for the parents' role and devising specific ways for parents to offer academically useful help to children. Further recommendations include encouraging community employers to offer parents time away from work to be involved in school and encouraging teachers to make regular communications to parents about learning goals, activities, and focused suggestions for parental help. Finally, the authors suggest that the parent's perspective be included in the process.

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**Invernizzi, Marcia, Rosemary, Catherine, Richards, Connie Juel, and Richards, Herbert C. (1997)**

At-Risk Readers and Community Volunteers: A Three-Year Perspective  
In Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 1(3), 277–300

**Summary:** This is a study of Book Buddies, a low-cost volunteer program in Charlottesville, Virginia, to tutor children in reading. The authors found a positive impact on first and second graders' reading scores. Students who attended more sessions made greater gains than those attending fewer sessions. This suggests that a well-designed community volunteer program can be both effective and affordable.

Children who do not learn to read well in first grade often continue to do poorly in school. Most school-based programs for children at risk involve highly trained professionals at a high cost. This study was designed to determine if a comprehensive literacy tutoring program could be carried out by nonprofessional volunteers and could meet the needs of children in the program. The researchers studied

1. the effectiveness of a tutorial delivered by community volunteers,
2. results on reading achievement over time, and
3. the cost-effectiveness of a large-scale community intervention program.

The curriculum and program are based on the Reading Recovery program of literacy intervention (reading text, word study, writing for sounds, and reading a new book). Three cohorts of students (N = 358) in six elementary schools participated over three years. Each tutorial included a child, a volunteer tutor, and a graduate student reading coordinator. The students were mostly first graders referred by teachers as having scored poorly on a screening test. Seventy percent were low-income.

Volunteers from many walks of life were recruited as tutors. Graduate students in reading education coordinated and implemented the program at each school. The students' reading achievement was assessed using the Early Reading Screening Inventory, the Wide Range Achievement Test, and reading out loud from a text. The study includes student test data from both before and after beginning the program.

For comparison, students were divided into two groups—one group took part in a lower number (less than 40) of tutorial sessions and the other group in a higher number (over 40) of sessions. The two groups differed only in attendance, not by student risk factors (gender, poverty, special services). Invernizzi and her colleagues then compared scores in various reading skills, by group.

## Findings

First, the student group that attended a higher number of sessions gained significantly more than the group with fewer sessions, across three of four skill categories.

**Table 14. Effect of Tutorials by Community Volunteers on Reading Skills**

| MEAN SKILL SCORES  | PRETEST   |            | POSTTEST  |            |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                    | Low Group | High Group | Low Group | High Group |
| Alphabet knowledge | 57.1      | 61.9       | 74.8      | 77.0       |
| Concept of word    | 7.2       | 7.2        | 11.9      | 11.9       |
| Phoneme knowledge  | 18.5      | 19.1       | 0         | 50.5       |
| Word recognition   | 3.7       | 1.6        | 24.6      | 33.5       |

**The student group that attended a higher number of sessions gained significantly more than the group with fewer sessions, across three of four skill categories.**

Second, by comparing the three cohorts, the researchers also found that the program improved over time, with increasing numbers of students showing higher levels of skills. Changes made were to begin tutoring earlier in the year, improve volunteer training, and fine-tune the lesson plans. Overall the third year was more successful than the second year, and the second year more successful than the first.

Third, the cost per child was approximately \$600 (total cost of the program divided by the number of children served). This is about one-sixth of the cost of Reading Recovery. Also, the authors claim that average student gains are higher than in other tutorials using volunteers, and are comparable to several tutorials using professionally trained teachers.

## Conclusions

This three-year analysis demonstrated that the community-based program's lesson plans matched the needs of the children, that volunteers can effectively tutor children, that the program got better over time, and that it is cost-effective. Furthermore, the program accepts all children who need help, including those with learning disabilities, non-native speakers of English, and children in special education. Book Buddies is now a self-sustaining volunteer program fully funded by the city of Charlottesville.

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**Izzo, Charles V., Weissberg, Roger P., Kasprow, Wesley J., and Fendrich, Michael (1999)**

A Longitudinal Assessment of Teacher Perceptions of Parent Involvement in Children's Education and School Performance

*American Journal of Community Psychology*, 27(6), 817–839

**Summary:** This long-term study of 1,200 urban New England children from kindergarten through third grade looked at the effects of parent involvement on students' performance in school over time. When teachers rated their interactions with parents as good, and said that parents participated at home and school, students tended to perform better. The form of involvement that related most strongly to improved performance was parents' engaging in activities at home with their children.

Over a period of three years, the researchers studied 1,205 urban elementary school children from a small, ethnically diverse New England city. They explored relationships among four measures of parent involvement and five measures of students' school performance. The three years covered kindergarten through third grade.

The researchers randomly selected students from 341 classrooms in 27 schools. Then they looked at school-district data on the students' background: gender, grade level, family income and education, and ethnicity. Most students were low-income and African American. Student achievement data from the district included attendance and test scores in math and reading. Using the 38-item Teacher-Child Rating Scale, teachers also assessed how well the children had adapted to school. The researchers consolidated these ratings into two factors:

- School engagement (learning problems, acting out, work habits).
- Social and emotional adjustment (anxiety, social skills, confidence).

Each year, teachers rated the parents' involvement, using these measures:

- The frequency of parent-teacher contacts each year.
- The quality of interactions with parents (constructive working relationships).
- Parent participation in activities at school (yes/no).
- Parents' educational activities at home (yes/no).

### Findings

Parent involvement tended to decline over time. In the first year, it was "moderately high." In the second year, parents had fewer contacts with teachers and took part in fewer school activities. There was no change between years 2 and 3. The quality of parent-teacher interactions also declined between the first and third year. Engaging in educational activities at home, however, did not decline over time.

When teachers rated their interactions with parents as good, and said that parents participated at home and school, students tended to perform better. Teachers reported

slightly more contacts, but poorer interaction and less home participation, for boys' parents than for girls' parents.

Three of the four types of parent involvement were positively related to student performance. Comparing forms of parent involvement, the researchers found that engaging in home activities was the strongest positive predictor for math and reading achievement. Taking part in activities at school was positively related to students' school engagement, and the quality of parent-teacher interactions was positively related to students' social and emotional adjustment. On the other hand, the number of parent-teacher contacts negatively predicted both school engagement and adjustment. In other words, frequent contacts between parents and teachers may mean that children are not performing well in school.

**Three of the four types of parent involvement were positively related to student performance. Comparing forms of parent involvement, the researchers found that engaging in home activities was the strongest positive predictor for math and reading achievement.**

### Conclusions

The authors conclude that although parent involvement did not always predict improvements in school performance, engaging in educational activities at home had the strongest effect on student achievement. Home activities were related to the widest range of gains, and related more strongly to academic achievement, than the other forms of parent involvement.

Taken together, these results suggest that activities requiring parents to come to the school . . . are more difficult to maintain than other kinds of activities, and that schools need to engage in more proactive outreach . . . to foster parent participation and constructive parent-teacher interactions as children get older. (pp. 833–834)

This research supports the notion that schools can improve children's performance by increasing parents' ability to support learning at home . . . These findings suggest that it will be worthwhile for schools to put effort into fostering more constructive interactions between parents and teachers, instead of focusing solely on increasing the number of parent contacts. (p. 835)

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**Jacobs, Lauren, and Hirota, Janice (in press)***Constituency Building for Public School Reform*

New York, NY, and Chicago, IL: Academy for Educational Development and Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago

**Summary:** This study, commissioned by the Ford Foundation, looks at constituency-building work to improve education in 14 sites across the country. Many of these community-based initiatives produced positive changes, some resulting in improved student outcomes. These include passage of a \$75 million bond issue, a \$5 million rehabilitation of a high school, and scheduling and curriculum changes that resulted in improved student grades and English literacy.

This report provides an overview of constituency building across the country. In addition to the researchers, the study team consisted of one person from each of seven national, state, or regional grantees of the Ford Foundation's Constituency-Building for Public School Reform Initiative. These included the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, Interfaith Education Fund (Texas), National Coalition of Advocates for Students, Parents for Public Schools, the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, the Public Education Network, and the 21st Century Fund. The grantees then selected one person to represent each of 14 local efforts. The sites ranged from rural states like Kentucky to large cities like Houston and Chicago. The researchers convened the practitioners to discuss and reflect on their work, its challenges, and issues. Then they derived principles and lessons.

The researchers found that all participants, although working in diverse settings, aim to achieve three objectives. These are

- building understanding, common frameworks, and a sense of commonality;
- creating political will and establishing accountability; and
- shifting relationships and power dynamics.

Study participants, and the parents and community members they work with, employ many strategies. These strategies are aimed at shifting power relations, including

- building relationships so that those holding power become willing to share it.
- working with local school leaders to build their willingness and skills for shared decision making.
- broadening family and community members' power base, including working in coalitions.
- using the rights of free speech, assembly, due process, and access to the courts.
- changing governance policies so that parents and community members gain a seat at the table and a vote on key issues.

**“Families, community-based organizations, businesses, and faith-based organizations are demonstrating that non-educators can be powerful forces for education reform.”**

**Example:** In Chicago, ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now), a community organizing group, used health care as an issue to engage families. ACORN members, primarily parents, approached administrators at a Chicago elementary school with a proposal. ACORN members would work with teachers to enroll all eligible children in KidCare, free public health insurance. As a result, 80 percent of the students are enrolled, the highest percentage of any school.

Parents at other schools adopted similar strategies. At Harper High School, parents found they could not recruit a science teacher because the school had no science labs. More than 400 parents and residents met with the system leaders to demand improvements. In part because of this pressure, the school district approved a \$5 million rehabilitation program that included new science labs.

### **Conclusions**

Families, community-based organizations, businesses, and faith-based organizations are demonstrating that non-educators can be powerful forces for education reform. They are using their rights of free speech and free assembly and their votes to hold the system accountable. They are collaborating with educators to develop standards, to recruit qualified teachers to poorly performing schools, and to develop new policies and programs. (in press)

Educators, too, are demonstrating that they can take on powerful new roles. Teachers are leading school-wide reforms, principals are partnering with community organizations to support parent participation in decision making, and superintendents are collaborating with community members to develop new visions for their school systems. (in press)

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**Jordan, Gail E., Snow, Catherine E., and Porche, Michelle V. (2000) EJ616175**

Project EASE: The Effect of a Family Literacy Project on Kindergarten Students' Early Literacy Skills

*Reading Research Quarterly*, 35(4), 524–546

**Summary:** This is a study of a yearlong literacy project, Early Access to Success in Education (EASE), which offers home and school activities for kindergartners and their families in Minnesota. The study was conducted in four schools in one mostly middle-income school district. It found significantly greater gains in reading for children in the program than for children in a comparison group.

Developed in Minnesota, Project EASE is designed to help parents develop their young children's literacy skills. It offers parent education sessions, parent-child activities at school, and book-centered activities at home. This study evaluates the effectiveness of the parent training and assesses the effects of the project on children's language and literacy abilities over a one-year period.

In White Bear Lake school district, 248 kindergarten students and their families from four schools took part in the study. These were divided into two groups: 177 in eight classes participated in project EASE, and 71 in three classes formed a control group. The district is a middle-income, mostly European-American suburb. The schools in the study, however, have the highest percentages of low-income families in the district (about 20 percent).

Project EASE is based on research that shows the powerful contributions of families to children's literacy development. Parent training is organized into five one-month units, each with a different theme. In each unit, a trained parent educator leads a coaching session. For the next three weeks, teachers send home a set of structured activities for parents do with their children. These are designed to engage their children in discussions around a book. Training is held at school during the day, so that parents can visit their children's classroom, or in the evening. Activities are highly focused on specific literacy skills; for example, children label, define, describe, and relate words.

Measures of home literacy support were collected from parents, and a battery of language and literacy tests were administered to EASE and control-group children at the start of the program and at the end of the study. First, the researchers analyzed the children's performance on the pretests and posttests, finding greater gains in the EASE group. Then they examined progress in three skill areas and found that EASE students made the greatest gains in language skills. Next, they controlled for variation in literacy skills at the start of the project and examined the influence of the at-home activities on student gains. Finally, the study used regression analysis to examine impact of attendance and at-home book activities on results for the EASE group.

## Findings

- Children whose families engaged in both at-school and at-home activities of Project EASE made significantly greater gains in language scores (vocabulary, story comprehension, and sequencing in storytelling) than comparison-group children.
- The more activities a family completed, the higher their students' gains. The average attendance at school activities was 85 percent, and 80 percent of EASE families completed all home activities.
- The group that gained the most was made up of low-achieving students who started out with low language skills and strong home literacy support.

## Conclusions

The size of the effect is striking because the families involved were fairly literate and their children were attending schools with generally good achievement results. “In other words, even in this moderate- to low-risk sample of English-speaking . . . families with median family incomes above the poverty level and access to good schools . . . there is room for parent involvement to improve children’s school performance” (p. 538).

The authors add some cautions. Serious investment in training is needed to ensure a positive impact from programs staffed by volunteers. The enthusiastic reception of Project EASE in this suburban district does not ensure its feasibility or success with higher risk families (severe poverty, low literacy). Although studies are underway in centers of high urban poverty, the results are not yet complete.

**Children whose families engaged in both at-school and at-home activities of Project EASE made significantly greater gains in language scores (vocabulary, story comprehension, and sequencing in storytelling) than comparison-group children.**

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### **Kagitcibasi, Cigdem, Sunar, Diane, and Bekman, Sevda (2001)**

Long-Term Effects of Early Intervention: Turkish Low-Income Mothers and Children  
*Applied Developmental Psychology, 22, 333–361*

**Summary:** This study examined the long-term effects on 280 children of four different preschool settings in Istanbul, Turkey. The most effective was a home-based program that provided education and support to mothers. Compared with children randomly placed in other preschool settings, the home-based program had longer-lasting and greater effects on achievement seven years later.

**Both educational preschool and mother training programs had a positive effect on cognitive outcomes.**

The researchers examined preschool programs in Istanbul, Turkey, to compare the long-term effects on children of four different settings:

- A childcare program with no education offered.
- An educational nursery school.
- Home care where mothers received training and support.
- Home care provided by mothers without support.

For the home-based program that offers support to mothers, Kagitcibasi and her colleagues adapted the HIPPY Program (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters). This program provides information on children’s development and training in learning activities. These are aided by group discussions and other parent supports to strengthen parent-child communication skills.

In all, 280 children from lower-income families took part in the 10-year study. After collecting the first year’s data to use for comparison, the researchers assigned the children randomly to the four groups. After children left the program, the researchers followed them through primary school, assessing their cognitive skills and grades at the end of each year. Then they analyzed data to look for differences that were most likely to be related to the preschool program.

### **Findings**

Home-based training of mothers and the educational preschool both had positive effects on children’s cognitive development and grades in language and mathematics. Training mothers also had a significant effect on children’s general ability scores. In addition, there were positive changes in mothers’ expectations of children and in their interaction in the home.

After seven years, the children of the “trained mothers” gained an edge over the children who attended educational preschools. The children whose mothers received the training and support held their gains for staying in school, achievement in language and math, academic orientation, and social development.

## **Conclusions**

Both educational preschool and mother training programs had a positive effect on cognitive outcomes. In homes where the mothers took part in the training program there were additional gains. This effect perhaps resulted from positive changes in the mother, herself, which then affected her relationship with the child and family.

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**Keith, Timothy Z., and Keith, Patricia B. (1993) EJ486048**

Does Parental Involvement Affect Eighth-Grade Student Achievement? Structural Analysis of National Data

*School Psychology Review*, 22(3), 474–496

**Summary:** This study used a large, long-term national database (NELS:88) to address the effects of parent involvement on student achievement in the middle grades. It found that parent involvement has a strong effect on eighth graders' achievement, slightly greater in math and social studies than in other subjects. A substantial portion of this effect was through encouraging homework and other academic activities.

Despite the appeal of parent involvement as a remedy for problems in American education, there are many questions about its impact on student learning. In particular, does parent involvement affect student achievement in the middle grades? Do different types of involvement have different effects? Do these effects vary for different measures of learning?

At first, the authors defined parent involvement as:

- Educational aspirations—parents' hopes and expectations for their children's education, from less than high school to higher schooling after college.
- Parent-child communication—how often children report talking to their parents about planning their high school program, school activities, and what they're studying.
- Amount of home structure—family rules about keeping up grades, doing homework, and watching TV.
- Participation in school activities—whether parents take part in PTO and visit school, and how often they contact school about volunteering.

Information about these four forms of involvement was drawn from parent surveys and cross-checked with student surveys. For example, the parent survey asks if they maintain family rules, and the student survey asks if parents check their homework and limit TV viewing. The responses are given equal weight.

Student achievement is measured by students' scores on tests in reading, math, science, and social studies. Because the NELS data is non-experimental (not designed to test a theory), the authors used a form of path analysis to create a model that would test the influence of parent involvement on eighth-grade academic achievement. In this model, parent involvement is the cause and academic achievement is the effect. Also included were any variables that may affect both the cause and effect, such as ethnicity, family income and occupation, and the students' previous achievement (past grades).

When they tested the model, Keith and Keith made an interesting observation. The four types of involvement did not seem to “fit the data.” For example, parents with high aspirations don't necessarily impose a lot of structure at home or take part in

school activities. In other words, the four forms are not consistent and don't combine well. For this reason, they dropped home structure and school participation from their model.

### Findings

First, as expected, the strongest influence on students' achievement was their previous grades. Students who have been doing well in school continue to do well. The second-largest effect was parent involvement, as defined by aspirations and communication. The effect size is larger than previous studies had shown and can be characterized as "a strong influence." (Each standard deviation change in parent involvement leads to a .287 standard deviation change in eighth-grade test scores.)

Second, parents become more involved as their children do well in school. Parents with higher income appear to be more involved than those with lower income. However, families from ethnic groups often labeled "at risk" (African American, Hispanic, and Native American) report more involvement than those from advantaged ethnic groups.

Third, the authors checked to see if parent involvement had as strong an effect on grades as on test scores. They found that the effect is even stronger on grades, particularly in math and social studies. In fact, the effect of parent involvement on grades was larger than the effect of previous grades.

Next, to check why parent involvement might have such a strong effect, Keith and Keith added time spent on homework to their path model. They found that children of involved parents spend considerably more time doing homework and reading. Involved parents influence their children to spend more time on academic activities they suggest, which in turn increases achievement.

### Conclusions

Our research suggests that parent involvement has a powerful effect on eighth graders' achievement . . . slightly stronger . . . in math and social studies, but a powerful influence on all academic areas. A substantial portion of the effect . . . was through homework . . . Surprisingly, time spent in weekday TV viewing had no [negative] effect on achievement. (p. 490)

One intriguing finding concerning parent involvement is that it correlated more highly with, and is more predictive of, student learning than is families' SES . . . The common interpretation of this finding is that parent involvement will reduce the achievement gap between students from high and low SES. The present research suggests a less simplistic interpretation . . . (p. 491)

Although parent involvement has a stronger effect on student achievement than family background, it may not reduce inequalities in achievement between lower- and higher-income students. When they add the indirect effects of family background, including prior grades, the total effect on achievement is greater than that of just parent involvement. High-income parents are more involved, and this leads to higher achievement.

**First, as expected, the strongest influence on students' achievement was their previous grades. Students who have been doing well in school continue to do well. The second-largest effect was parent involvement, as defined by aspirations and communication.**

Keith and Keith reflect that efforts to decrease the achievement gap related to family background by engaging parents will succeed only if

1. increases in parent involvement are greater for low-income than for high-income parents,
2. parent involvement has diminishing returns for achievement outcomes, or
3. parent involvement has greater effects on the achievement of low-income than high-income students.

Keith and Keith recommend that the last two possibilities be the subject of future research.

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### Lareau, Annette, and Horvat, Erin McNamara (1999) EJ590423

Moments of Social Inclusion and Exclusion: Race, Class, and Cultural Capital in Family-School Relationships  
*Sociology of Education*, 72(1), 37–53

Summary: This case study of African-American and white parents in a midwestern elementary school looked at their involvement with their third-grade children and their relationship to the school. White families' social and cultural background gave them skills and assets that enabled them to work more easily with the school than black families. The authors argue that such social capital, and how schools value it, perpetuates inequality in society.

The researchers found a big difference between how educators saw their efforts to engage parents and how those efforts were seen by black and white parents.

Why and how do schools preserve social inequality? This case study explores the effects of race and culture to address this question, using the concept of social capital. (In general, capital is defined as “a stock of resources.”) Lareau and Horvat contend that students with more valued social and cultural capital fare better in school than their otherwise similar friends.

Social capital includes social networks with others in the community, giving access to information about teachers and the school. Examples of cultural capital are large vocabularies, a sense of being entitled to treat teachers as equals, free time, and easily available transportation and childcare. Being white and middle class almost automatically gives parents this kind of capital. In contrast, many blacks do not have these resources available to them.

This article highlights three aspects of this process:

- The value that schools attach to social and cultural capital.
- The ways that parents activate their capital.
- The legitimacy that schools grant to displays of capital.

This case study was conducted in a midwestern town of about 25,000 people. The schools were about 52 percent white, 44 percent black, and 4 percent Hispanic and Asian. The authors chose a sample of 24 third graders, 12 white and 12 black. Most white families were middle class; most black families were lower income. They conducted in-depth interviews with these students' parents (40 in all) and with nine educators (including teachers, administrators, and school board members). In addition, they interviewed 26 adult community members to gather information about the broader racial context.

### Findings

The researchers found a big difference between how educators saw their efforts to engage parents and how those efforts were seen by black and white parents. The educators thought that they fully welcomed parent involvement. They also believed

that their requests for parent involvement were neutral, effective, and designed to promote higher achievement. In reality, they selected a narrow band of acceptable behaviors. They wanted parents not only to be positive and supportive but to trust their judgments and assessments. They liked parents who deferred to them and accepted their opinions about their children.

This standard was hard for some black families to meet. Black parents had a keen sense of race relations and how they pervaded the school. Their attempts to criticize teachers were rebuffed as “unacceptable” and “destructive.” “None of the white parents exhibited the wholesale suspicion, distrust, and hostility toward schools that we found among some of the black parents. Thus, the white parents were privileged in the sense that they began to construct their relationships with the school with more comfort and trust than did the black parents” (p. 44).

While many black parents approached the schools with distrust, “there were important social-class differences in how the black parents managed their concerns. Middle-class black parents were much more likely than the poor black parents to ‘maneuver’ and ‘customize’ their children’s school experiences” (p. 44).

White working-class parents also had some conflict with the school. They were more likely, however, to focus on their own children’s experience and to discuss the problems in terms of one teacher, rather than as a problem with “the school.”

## **Conclusions**

Based on the interviews, the authors suggest that three issues are critical to this discussion. First, the value of capital depends heavily on the setting (for example, a school that values deference rather than criticism). Second, there is an important difference between having capital and using it. For a strategy to be successful, school officials must accept it (for example, applying for a gifted program). Third, differences in capital don’t always determine how children will do.

Lareau and Horvat suggest that a useful conceptual framework is that of “moments of inclusion and moments of exclusion.” Moments of inclusion are the coming together of various forces to give an advantage to a child in his or her passage through life. These moments are often the result of parents’ having and using social or cultural capital in ways that are valued. Examples are placing a child in a gifted program or a high track, encouraging a child to apply for college, and using networks to get a job. Moments of exclusion happen when those forces come together to provide a disadvantage. Examples are placement in a low reading group, being held back a grade, and failing to complete college preparation requirements.

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**López, Gerardo R. (2001)**

*On Whose Terms?: Understanding Involvement through the Eyes of Migrant Parents*  
Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Seattle, WA

Summary: This study examined the ways in which four immigrant/migrant families in Texas were involved in their children's education. The study found that these parents, whose children were highly successful in school, were actively engaged in supporting their children's educational development, but in ways not commonly recognized by educators and policymakers. The study explored "alternative conceptualizations of involvement activity" and examined how the concept of "parent involvement," as it is traditionally defined, limits the recognition of alternate involvement forms.

**Parent involvement in these migrant households was not defined by traditionally recognized practices such as volunteering in school and helping children with homework but by teaching their children the value of education through the lessons of migrant work.**

This study captured the stories told by four immigrant/migrant families' residing in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas about how they are involved in their children's educational development. The parents interviewed for the study were immigrants whose principal means of employment was migrant labor. López contends that our current definition of "parental involvement" signals a specific set of practices that have been sanctioned by the education community. As such, parents and caretakers whose involvement activities fall outside the realm of these socially specific ways get labeled as "uninvolved," "unconcerned," and "uncaring." The purpose of the study was to highlight how these families of high-performing students are already involved in school-related matters and to document and describe those practices.

A purposeful sample of four immigrant/migrant families was selected for the study on the basis of recommendations by personnel in four separate school districts. The families were identified by school personnel as those whose children were highly successful in school as defined by academic and non-academic accomplishments, achievements, and successes. All of the children in these families graduated in the top 10 percent of their graduating class. López conducted a series of observations and in-depth interviews with both immediate and extended family members in each household. Forty observations and 32 interviews were conducted over a period of six months.

**Findings**

López found that the parents perceived themselves as being highly involved in the educational lives of their children. In three of the four families, parents did not regularly attend such school functions as back-to-school nights, nor were they involved in PTA or in home-tutor programs. For each of the families, "involvement" was defined as teaching their children the "value of education through the medium of hard work." All of the families in the study reported taking their children at an early age to work with them in the fields and giving their children *consejos* (advice) as to the limited opportunities available if they dropped out of school. The families believed that if the children learned to work hard in the fields they would be equipped with the skills necessary to

be successful both at work and at school. These parents perceived their involvement as transmitting this work ethic to their children.

Parent involvement in these migrant households was not defined by traditionally recognized practices such as volunteering in school and helping children with homework but by teaching their children the value of education through the lessons of migrant work. Parents in this study placed an emphasis on the skills their children learned as migrants. Rather than view migrant labor as something negative, these parents celebrated their “cultural capital,” viewing it as a powerful tool to teach their children specific lessons.

### **Conclusions**

López concludes that if these parents were to be seen through a “traditional” involvement lens, “they would appear to be largely uninvolved in their children’s education—since there was little formal interaction between the parents and the school, and since they rarely (if ever) reinforced particular school lessons in the home” (p. 15). López states that educators and policymakers must develop parent involvement programs that are “more organic and sensitive to an expanded, as opposed to a limited, definition of involvement” (p. 16) and that capitalize on the ways that parents are already involved in the educational lives of their children.

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**Mapp, Karen L. (2002)***Having Their Say: Parents Describe How and Why They Are Involved in Their Children's Education*

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA

Summary: This descriptive case study, conducted at the Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School in Boston, Massachusetts, sought to find out how and why parents—particularly parents from low-income communities—were involved in their children's education. The goal of the study was to develop a deeper understanding of parents' perceptions about their involvement and to explore the factors that influenced parents' participation in their children's education. The study identifies social and school factors that, according to the O'Hearn parents, play a major role in influencing how and why they are involved.

**The findings from this study support prior research showing that a majority of parents—regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status—want their children to do well in school and have a strong desire to help their children succeed.**

This study explored how and why parents, specifically those from economically distressed circumstances, are involved in their children's education. The study also examined the factors that influence parents' involvement. The study took place at the Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School, an urban school serving a racially and socioeconomically diverse population of approximately 220 students. According to survey data collected by the school about parents' participation in at-home or at-school involvement activities, 90 percent of the parents reported being involved in one or more of the school's parent programs. Between 1989 and 1995, the O'Hearn School's average median percentile scores on the Massachusetts Achievement Test for students in grades one through five rose 18 percentage points in English (from 44 to 62) and 31 points in math (from 48 to 79).

The study methodology included observations at the school site, an analysis of relevant data, and interviews with the school staff. The centerpiece of the data-collection process took the form of one-on-one interviews with 18 parents from the O'Hearn School whose children, based on family income level, qualified for free and/or reduced-priced lunch.

**Findings**

The findings from this study support prior research showing that a majority of parents—regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status—want their children to do well in school and have a strong desire to help their children succeed. The findings also indicate that O'Hearn parents understood clearly that their involvement helped their children's educational development.

The study also found that many of the 18 parents were involved in their children's education in ways that go beyond traditionally recognized forms of engagement, such as volunteering or participation on school governance committees. The involvement of

parents in this study included a wide range of activities taking place at home, at school, and in the community.

The most significant findings from the study indicate that, according to the 18 parents, social and school factors influence how and why they are involved in their children's education. Social factors emanating from the parents' own experiences and history influence their participation. These factors include "parents' own educational experiences in school, their own parents' involvement when they were students, their beliefs about family involvement as shaped by cultural norms and values, and the burden of their additional responsibilities and time commitments" (p. 8).

School factors that influence parents' involvement center on school practices that are relational in nature. When school staff engage in caring and trustful relationships with parents that recognize parents as partners in the educational development of children, these relationships enhance parents' desire to be involved and influence how they participate in their children's educational development. Parents described a process by which these relationships were formed. This process, referred to by the author as "the joining process" has been placed in operation by the O'Hearn School: the school community *welcomes* parents into the school, *honors* their participation, and *connects* with parents through a focus on the children and their learning.

## Conclusions

The limits of this study—its focus on parents from one school site and the sample size of 18 parents and seven school staff—make it impossible to generalize the findings beyond the research setting. However, these findings provide greater insight into family participation in urban schools. The study suggests that school staff must support a culture of family at their sites where all members of the school community are respected and honored. The findings indicate that "respectful relationships where power is shared between school staff and family members provide the glue that holds the community together and influences parents' involvement" (p. 15).

**The study suggests that school staff must support a culture of family at their sites where all members of the school community are respected and honored.**

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**Marcon, Rebecca A. (1999)**

Positive Relationships between Parent School Involvement and Public School Inner-City Preschoolers' Development and Academic Performance  
*School Psychology Review*, 28(3), 395–412

**Summary:** In this article about a three-year study of 708 preschoolers in Washington, D.C., teacher reports of parent involvement were compared with levels of student achievement. It found that when parents were highly involved, their children, especially boys, performed significantly better. It also found that single parents and low-income parents were just as involved as two-parent and more affluent families.

Because parent involvement can be altered—unlike family income, gender, and ability—its potential value to young children should be carefully studied. The purpose of this study was to learn more about what types of involvement are related to positive outcomes for students. The growth of preschool programs calls for an approach that recognizes the importance of family involvement, yet also takes into account the many constraints, including limited time, on low-income families.

The author limited her definition of parent involvement to teachers' relationships with parents that teachers could readily observe. These were teacher ratings of

- parent-teacher conferences,
- home visits,
- volunteering at school, and
- extended class visits and helping with a class activity.

The researchers collected data for three groups of mostly low-income, African-American preschoolers enrolled in full-day, public prekindergarten or Head Start programs in Washington, D.C., over three years. The sample, a total of 708 preschoolers, was randomly selected in proportion to four-year-old student enrollment in subdistricts within the District of Columbia public school system. All students in the study were within the normal range of weight and height for their age.

Sixty-two teachers from 49 public schools provided data about students and their families over the three years of the study. The teachers were mostly African American. Teachers rated involvement on all four types (yes, no). Students then were grouped into three categories, depending on how many ways their parents were involved: low (0–1 type), median (2 types), and high (3–4 types).

Teachers also rated the students using the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales to measure preschoolers' development in communication, daily living skills, social skills, and motor skills. In addition, teachers rated all students using district report cards on mastery of math, verbal, social, and physical skills.

## Findings

Single parents and low-income parents were just as involved as two-parent and more-affluent families. Most parents were at least somewhat involved in their child's school.

- Teachers reported low contact with 37 percent of parents; median-level contact with 27 percent; and high contact with 36 percent. Teachers had no contact with only 10 percent of parents (included in low category).
- Parents of boys were as likely as parents of girls to be involved.
- Head Start parents were significantly more involved than parents of children in prekindergarten.
- Classes with a more child-centered approach attracted more parent involvement than classes that were primarily academic and teacher-directed.

When parents were highly involved, their children performed significantly better:

1. On the Vineland scales, students' scores were higher if their parents were highly involved. There was not a significant difference for children with either low or median parent involvement.
2. On the report cards, children with high parent involvement had higher ratings than children with low or median involvement.
3. Although girls had higher overall ratings, the relationship between high parent involvement and academic performance was more positive for boys than for girls.

Children tended to earn higher ratings when their parents were more actively involved. The researchers classified the four types of involvement as either active (volunteering and visiting the class) or passive (receiving information from the teacher in conferences or home visits). Active involvement was related to higher scores on both the Vineland scales (communication, daily living skills, and socialization, but not on motor skills) and report cards.

## Conclusions

For preschoolers in this study, increased parent involvement and more active types of involvement were related to positive development and greater mastery of skills in all subjects. Increased involvement, whether passive or active, was especially positive for boys.

These findings suggest that higher levels of contact between home and school may represent a positive . . . influence for children at increased risk for school difficulties due to socioeconomic factors . . . For example, among preschoolers whose parents were low in involvement, there was a clear benefit associated with parent visits to the classroom and volunteering to help with a class activity. (p. 7)

Further research is needed to determine how much involvement is needed to have a positive effect. Is it possible to find a minimum level of involvement that does the job? Is there a point where the benefits begin to decline? If there is such a level, these data suggest it is more likely to be found in active types of involvement.

**For preschoolers in this study, increased parent involvement and more active types of involvement were related to positive development and greater mastery of skills in all subjects.**

The author makes an important caution about this study. While the data show a significant relationship between parent involvement in school and their child's outcomes, the reasons are unclear. It may be that working with parents changed how teachers perceived children, rather than changed how children actually performed. Or parents with better-performing children may have been more motivated to be involved. Still, she concludes that "parents, faculty, and support staff can all be encouraged by the positive benefits for young children associated with readily observable parent school involvement" (p. 410).

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### **Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., and Center for Children and Families at Teachers College, Columbia University (2001)**

*Building Their Futures: How Early Head Start Programs Are Enhancing the Lives of Infants and Toddlers in Low-Income Families*

Washington, DC: Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Department of Health and Human Services

[http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/core/ongoing\\_research/ehs/ehs\\_reports.html](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/core/ongoing_research/ehs/ehs_reports.html)

**Summary:** This report describes initial results of an experimental study of Early Head Start, a federal program serving low-income families with infants and toddlers. The research team looked at programs in 17 sites, studying about 3,000 children and their families. At two years of age, children in the program scored higher on cognitive development scales and used more words and spoke in more complex sentences than control-group children. Their home environments were also more likely to support their development and literacy skills than those of control-group children.

**The home environments of Early Head Start children were more likely to support cognitive development, language, and literacy, based on researchers' observations, than control homes.**

This study examines the impact on children and families of the new Early Head Start program. Head Start was designed to prepare low-income preschoolers for school. Early Head Start is an attempt to lay a positive foundation even earlier. The program is designed to stimulate children's mental, physical, and emotional development by working with new mothers and children up to age three to support their children at home. The program includes early education, parenting education, comprehensive health and mental health services (including services to pregnant women), nutrition education, and family support services.

Between July 1996 and September 1998, the research team collected data from about 3,000 families in 17 sites. The sites covered all regions of the country, both urban and rural locations, and all program approaches. The families selected were a representative sample of the diverse families in the program.

At each program site, families were assigned randomly to the program or to a control group. Parent services follow-up interviews were conducted 6, 15, and 26 months after enrollment. Parent interviews, direct child assessments, and videotaped parent-child interactions were completed when children were 14, 24, and 36 months old. This study covers the first two interview cycles (up to 15 months after enrollment and 24 months of age), a point about two-thirds of the way through a child's time in the program. Very few differences between the program and control groups appeared at the baseline data collection. The response rate (about 75 percent) was similar in both groups.

The research team assessed children's cognitive and language development, social-emotional behavior, and health. They used measures with a history of use in research with low-income families. These included the Bayley scales of infant development and behavior, the MacArthur communicative development inventories, Achenbach's child behavior checklist, and HOME (home observation for measuring the environment).

## Findings

By the time they were two years old, Early Head Start (EHS) children made modest but greater gains than the control-group children in a range of outcomes:

**Table 15. Measures Used for Early Head Start Study**

| OUTCOME                       | EHS-GROUP MEAN | CONTROL-GROUP MEAN |
|-------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Bayley development index      | 90.1           | 88.1               |
| DCI vocabulary score          | 56.3           | 53.9               |
| CDI sentence complexity score | 8.6            | 7.7                |
| Aggressive behavior problems  | 9.9            | 10.5               |

EHS children were also less likely to score in the at-risk range of development than control children (33.6 percent compared with 40.2 percent).

On the other hand, Early Head Start did not seem to affect children’s ability to control their emotions or engage in task-oriented behavior. EHS children also did not appear to be different from control children in engagement, negativity, or attention span. The research team made these findings by scoring videotaped interactions between mothers and children.

The home environments of Early Head Start children were more likely to support cognitive development, language, and literacy, based on researchers’ observations, than control homes. Early Head Start mothers were more likely than control mothers to create more structure, be more responsive, and stimulate language development.

**Table 16. Impact of Three Parental Actions on Early Head Start Children**

| OUTCOME                           | EHS GROUP % | CONTROL GROUP % |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Parents reading to children daily | 57.9        | 52.3            |
| Parents reading at bedtime        | 29.4        | 22.6            |
| Parents setting regular bedtime   | 61.6        | 55.8            |

Early Head Start also offers programs for families to become healthier and more economically self-sufficient. The results so far were mixed. Early Head Start parents were more likely than control parents to take part in an education or job-training program. The study did not, however, find differences in parents’ employment or income, or in children’s health status.

The study also found that Early Head Start programs were successful in increasing the extent of services that families received. Although many control-group families also

received some services, Early Head Start programs served nearly all families enrolled. They received more intensive services focused on child development and parenting than control-group families. The impacts were greatest in programs that were able to implement the program early (by 1997, or within one year).

### **Conclusions**

These initial findings show that Early Head Start children made greater gains in development than control-group children by the time they were two years old. The areas of gain, in cognitive and language development, have been identified by earlier research as important for literacy and school readiness. If they continue, these gains could lead to greater readiness for school among Early Head Start children.

The initial impacts emerging from the evaluation of the new Early Head Start programs are promising. The pattern of modest but significant impacts across a wide range of child and parent outcomes at a point about two-thirds of the way through children's EHS program experience suggests that the programs are reducing the risk that children will experience poor outcomes later on. (p. 12)

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**Mediratta, Kavitha, and Fruchter, Norm (2001)**

*Mapping the Field of Organizing for School Improvement: A Report on Education Organizing in Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, the Mississippi Delta, New York City, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington, DC,*  
and

**Mediratta, Kavitha, Fruchter, Norm, and Lewis, Anne C. (2002)**

*Organizing for School Reform: How Communities Are Finding Their Voice and Reclaiming Their Public Schools* (summary version)

New York, NY: The Institute for Education and Social Policy, New York University  
<http://www.nyu.edu/iesp>

Summary: This study is based on surveys and interviews with 66 community groups organizing to improve schools in seven urban areas and rural Mississippi. It found that these groups played a significant role in creating the political context in which change can happen. These groups prompted schools to focus on critical issues and identified and built support for key interventions. Their activities also established a stronger sense of accountability between schools and communities.

**Largely conducted by local, community-based organizations, this work is focused on public school parents and low-income families, as well as young people in high school. The organizations clearly intended to build the political power of low-income families and challenge public school systems that are serving their children poorly.**

Funded by a consortium of foundations, this study examines the work of community groups organizing to improve public education in low-performing schools and districts. Largely conducted by local, community-based organizations, this work is focused on public school parents and low-income families, as well as young people in high school. The organizations clearly intended to build the political power of low-income families and challenge public school systems that are serving their children poorly.

The Institute for Education and Social Policy conducted this study with three research partners, California Tomorrow, Designs for Change (Chicago), and Southern Echo (Mississippi). They were also guided by a national advisory panel. Among them, the partners surveyed, interviewed, and studied the work of 66 groups in eight sites. The respondents were the organizations' directors or lead organizers. The sites studied were Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, the Mississippi Delta, New York City, Philadelphia, the San Francisco Bay Area, and Washington, D.C. The data were collected from July to December 2000. There is a national report, as well as eight site reports.

The researchers developed five criteria that define groups doing community organizing:

1. Building a base of parents, young people, and/or residents who engage in collective action to address poor performance and create excellent public schools for all children.
2. Focusing on winning concrete changes in schools and practicing strategies such as mobilization (bringing together large numbers of people), direct action (picketing and demonstrations), negotiation, training, and working with other groups.

3. Supporting democratic decision making by members in all aspects of the organization.
4. Developing leaders from within an ever-growing membership.
5. Building a strong, lasting organization to alter the power relations that lead to failing schools.

Using these standards, the researchers used a snowballing method to identify groups organizing for school reform in the eight sites. The organizations studied include independent community groups, local affiliates of national networks, youth groups, advocacy groups, community development corporations, and social service organizations.

## Findings

The field of community organizing for school reform is expanding rapidly. New groups are emerging and older groups that have organized in other areas, such as housing or public safety, are taking on education issues. In addition, national organizing networks, such as the Industrial Areas Foundation and ACORN (American Communities Organizing for Reform Now), are moving into new sites. In New York City, for example, the number of groups has expanded in the last decade from three to more than a dozen.

A key focus of all the groups is improving student achievement, and they are using research and data to make their case. Challenging the schools' argument that students fail because their families are poor and uneducated, community-based organizations are using test scores and other data to show system-wide problems. A majority are working in coalitions with other groups pressing for broad reform of public education.

Many of the groups have had "significant success." New leaders, both young people and adults, are emerging with the skills and knowledge needed to demand accountability and engage others. Some of their accomplishments are

- upgraded school facilities.
- improved school leadership and staffing.
- higher-quality learning programs for students, such as whole school reform programs.
- new resources and programs to improve teaching and curriculum.
- new funding for after-school programs and family supports.

Some of the groups have also challenged unfair discipline policies and pressed for changed tracking practices. Although the study was not intended to evaluate impact, the researchers note that student grades and test scores improved in some sites as a result of these changes.

In these schools, parents and youth are not asking for advisory participation and involvement. They are demanding the power to prod—and help—their schools toward higher levels of performance. Such demands are increasingly based on research and data. As the standards movement takes hold . . . community groups

**Challenging the schools' argument that students fail because their families are poor and uneducated, community-based organizations are using test scores and other data to show system-wide problems.**

are adapting those standards as baselines in their organizing, and learning how to use them to leverage change. (p. 5)

For example, in District 8 in New York City, Mothers on the Move (MOM) grew out of a family literacy program. After the parents visited schools and classrooms to learn more about the schools, they formed an independent organization and organized door to door about the problems they saw. Their research of district funding practices found “massive inequities” between resources for schools in affluent Throg’s Neck and the overcrowded schools in poor immigrant communities in Hunt’s Point. In part as a result of their work, the district has a new superintendent. Under the new administration, facilities have been improved and new staff assigned to schools. Reading scores are up in over one-third of district schools.

### **Conclusions**

The report makes a number of recommendations to funders. These include the need to develop greater administrative and other capacity in the organizing groups and to support organizations that provide technical help such as data analysis. It is also important to develop better ways to measure the impact of organizing and build more understanding and support for the work among foundations.

The explosive growth of organizing to improve public education, particularly in low-performing schools and districts, makes it imperative to look intensively at this burgeoning field. Understanding the methods, strategies, and achievement of organizing groups can help build broader support for education organizing, and give new groups a road map and an arsenal of field-tested tactics for improving their schools. (p. 6)

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**Miedel, Wendy T., and Reynolds, Arthur J. (1999)  
EJ607658**

Parent Involvement in Early Intervention for Disadvantaged Children: Does It Matter?  
*Journal of School Psychology, 37*(4), 379–402

**Summary:** The authors interviewed 704 low-income parents of eighth graders about their involvement when the children were in preschool and kindergarten. All the students were part of the long-term Chicago Longitudinal Study (CLS). This article found that the more activities parents reported taking part in, the better their children did in reading, the more likely they were to be promoted to the next grade, and the less likely they were to need special education services. The parents' reports were confirmed by separate teacher ratings of parent involvement.

This study looks at whether parent involvement in early childhood programs affects their children's achievement later in school. How often do parents need to be involved to have a positive effect, and do some activities have more impact than others? The researchers interviewed 704 parents of eighth graders about their involvement when their children were in preschool and kindergarten. All the students have been part of a long-term study of children in Chicago schools. Of the students, 97 percent were African American and 87 percent low-income.

The parents reported on

- the number of activities in which they took part (six or more, to none), and
- how often they took part in those activities (weekly to less than once a month).

The parent interview asked about their child's education, their involvement, their expectations for the future, current problems, and general background. The response rate was 67 percent. Of these, 76 percent had taken part in the Chicago Parent Centers, based in Title I schools. The parent centers offer a variety of information, programs, and activities for parents from kindergarten to third grade. The parent activities listed were attending the parent resource room, school meetings, and assemblies; going on class trips; working in the classroom; receiving home visits; going to parent-teacher conferences, and transporting children to and from school.

Family background questions covered race/ethnicity, gender, income (free or reduced-price lunch), and education level. To confirm parents' reports, teachers were asked to rate parents' participation in school activities on a five-point scale (1 = poor; 5 = excellent). These teacher ratings closely matched the parents' own ratings of their involvement.

The researchers then gathered the students’ achievement data to see if the number of activities and/or the frequency of parent participation affected

1. kindergarten and eighth-grade reading achievement (Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores).
2. rates of grade retention (not passing a grade).
3. placement in special education by eighth grade.

**When teachers rated their parents’ involvement more highly, students had higher eighth-grade reading scores, had lower rates of grade retention, and spent less time in special education.**

**Findings**

- **Frequency:** How often parents were involved had a positive effect on reading achievement in kindergarten, but not eighth grade. It also had a positive impact on grade retention. Between first and eighth grades, students whose parents were frequently involved were 38 percent less likely to be held back. Frequency did not affect time spent in special education programs. These findings held across all family backgrounds.
- **Number:** The number of activities in which parents took part had a longer-lasting effect than frequency of participation. More activities were associated with higher scores on reading tests in both kindergarten and eighth grade, less time in special education, and lower rates of grade retention. Specifically, participation in five parent activities was related to a three-month increase in kindergarten reading achievement and a seven-month increase in eighth-grade reading achievement. Students with parents involved in many activities were also 39 percent less likely to be held back. These findings held across all family backgrounds.
- **Only one activity had more long-term, positive effects than the others.** Attendance at assemblies had a small impact on kindergarten reading and a larger impact on eighth-grade reading achievement.
- **Teacher ratings of parent involvement confirmed these findings.** When teachers rated their parents’ involvement more highly, students had higher eighth-grade reading scores, had lower rates of grade retention, and spent less time in special education.

This finding held across all family backgrounds:

**Table 17. Impact of Parent Involvement on Reading and Retention**

| READING & RETENTION     | NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES | FREQUENCY OF ACTIVITIES |
|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Kindergarten reading    | Positive             | Positive                |
| Eighth-grade reading    | Positive             | No effect               |
| Grade retention (K–8)   | Positive             | Positive                |
| Special education (K–8) | Positive             | No effect               |

## Conclusions

This study gives evidence of a long-term relationship between parent involvement and student achievement. For example, participation in five parent activities was associated with a three-month increase in kindergarten reading achievement and a seven-month increase in eighth-grade reading achievement. “As the trend in the present study indicates, parent involvement in the early years may continue to promote school success into high school, regardless of (family) background” (p. 397).

In response to critics (White et al., 1992) who claim that there is little evidence that parent involvement in early childhood programs has long-term benefits for children, Miedel and Reynolds say: “Involved parents may not be able to increase children’s IQ scores per se, but they can monitor their children’s educational progress and intervene when their child gets into trouble at school. This can prevent grade retention, placement in special education, or both. Parents may be able to stop the cycle of school failure by stepping in when their child begins to falter.” Support from the parent centers “may have provided parents with the skills and the desire to remain involved in their children’s education and to monitor their school accomplishments” (p. 396).

Miedel and Reynolds point out three implications of their work:

1. Parent involvement is an important component of successful early intervention and should be emphasized in both new and established programs.
2. Implementing early parent involvement programs can promote future family-school relations and a successful transition to first grade.
3. Parent-involvement programs can be a protective factor in overcoming risk conditions such as poverty, which lead to low achievement.

**“Involved parents may not be able to increase children’s IQ scores per se, but they can monitor their children’s educational progress and intervene when their child gets into trouble at school. This can prevent grade retention, placement in special education, or both. Parents may be able to stop the cycle of school failure by stepping in when their child begins to falter.”**

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**Moore, Donald R. (1998)**

*What Makes These Schools Stand Out: Chicago Elementary Schools with a Seven-Year Trend of Improved Reading Achievement.*

Chicago, IL: Designs for Change

<http://www.designsforchange.org>

**Summary:** This report examines Chicago elementary schools with a seven-year trend of substantially improved reading achievement. Using data from the Consortium on Chicago School Research, it found that these schools were significantly more likely to have effective local school councils (LSCs) than schools with modest or no gains. In Chicago, LSCs must have a majority of parent members, elected by parents and community residents.

In 1988, the Illinois legislature passed the Chicago School Reform Act. A key feature of the legislation required local school councils (LSCs) at each public school. As a result, Chicago is the most decentralized large city school system in the country. Each LSC must have 11–12 members:

- Six parents, elected by parents and local residents.
- Two community members, elected by parents and local residents.
- Two teachers, elected by the school staff.
- The school principal.
- A student elected by students (in high schools).

Local school councils have strong powers: They select and evaluate the principal. They develop an annual school-improvement plan focus on achieving student learning standards. And they develop and approve a school budget, including about \$500,000 a year in flexible funds.

The Consortium on Chicago School Research is based at the University of Chicago and staffed by a team of experienced researchers. Designs for Change is a member of its steering committee. In its report, *LSCs—Local Leadership at Work* (1997), based on survey responses from LSC members, the Consortium found that LSCs are “viable governance organizations that responsibly carry out their mandated duties . . .”  
More-effective LSCs

- have a thorough process for selecting and evaluating a principal.
- actively develop and monitor the school-improvement plan.
- are involved in approving and monitoring the school budget.
- press for improved academic programs.
- increase parent involvement and collaborations with community agencies.

Using teacher survey data collected by the Consortium, Designs for Change studied whether schools with more-effective school councils were also more likely to have

improved student achievement. First, the study identified two groups of schools. “No Trend Schools” were low-achieving in both 1990 and 1997 (20 percent of students reading at or above the national average). “Substantially Up Schools” were low-achieving in 1990 but improved by 1997 (37 percent of students reading at or above the national average). Then the researchers explored whether the Substantially Up schools used “distinctively different practices” from the No Trend schools.

## Findings

This study found that “elementary schools that improved reading achievement substantially from 1990 to 1997 were significantly more likely to have effective local school councils, as rated by the school’s teachers” (Executive Summary, p. 9).

Using 27 indicators of school practices developed by the Consortium, the author found five areas where Substantially Up schools scored higher than No Trend schools. These areas were statistically significant after controlling for student background:

- **LSC contribution.** Teachers rated their school’s LSC more highly in “having contributed to improving various aspects of the school’s educational program and environment.”
- **Principal as instructional leader.** The principal was rated more highly for setting a vision, involving people in decision making, and insisting on high standards for staff.
- **Principal supervision.** Principals were more likely to supervise the process of change.
- **Teacher influence on decision making.**

Less strong, but also significant, was the practice of higher teacher outreach to parents. The study found, however, that even the Substantially Up schools were not fully using a range of strategies to engage parents. The author suggests that the impact could be higher if the practice were stronger.

## Conclusions

These findings contradict the view that school leadership is a “win-lose process,” where the principal can be a strong leader only if the LSC and teachers are weak. In fact, the study found that “cooperative adult effort” among all the adults involved in the school was “a powerful force for improving student achievement.”

Chicago’s local school councils and the social networks among parents, neighbors, and school staff that have developed as a result of LSC initiative are a unique, nationally significant model of the kind of civic engagement that Putnam and other social scientists have identified as being key to improving the quality of a community . . . LSCs and school-level decision making deserve attention and support as a proven mechanism for building social capital in Chicago, at a time when other indicators reflect a major decline in civic involvement across the city. (p. 103)

**The study found, however, that even the Substantially Up schools were not fully using a range of strategies to engage parents. The author suggests that the impact could be higher if the practice were stronger.**

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**Newman, Lynn (1995) ED385950***School-Agency-Community Partnerships: What Is the Early Impact on Student School Performance?*

Menlo Park, CA: SRI International

Summary: This is a preliminary evaluation report on 40 Healthy Start Programs in California. These programs offer health, education, and social services to needy families. It found that even after a short time in the program, about one semester, students showed gains in behavior (as rated by teachers) and grades. Students who were struggling make the greatest gains.

**When results were broken down by program type, only students served by the family service coordination teams showed significant increases in grades. These team-based programs involved school staff and teachers more heavily than the other programs. They were also more focused on students.**

The California Healthy Start program is an attempt to reform a fragmented system of education, health, and social services for families. It aims to create a new delivery system of agencies and community organizations that work together to develop a wide range of high-quality services that support and strengthen families.

This paper reports on an evaluation of 40 Healthy Start grantees in California. The population studied was a core group of students served by the programs. The authors identified four different Healthy Start program models:

1. School-site family resource centers, where families can come for a variety of services.
2. Satellite family service centers, serving more than one school and not based at a school.
3. Family service coordination teams, working directly with families.
4. Youth service programs, based mostly at schools, but aimed at teenagers.

The author then examined which model had the most impact on student outcomes. Out of a sample of 675 students, about 270 had complete records showing outcomes before and after Healthy Start services began. The before-Healthy Start time period was about one year. The after-Healthy Start period was short, just under one semester. Measures of student achievement were: grades, attendance, and teacher ratings of behavior (including conduct and study skills). The authors also examined student characteristics (income, language) to determine if the impacts varied for different groups of students.

**Findings**

Students in Healthy Start made some modest but significant gains:

- Overall, students' behavior ratings improved only slightly. Students with the poorest behavior before Healthy Start made significant improvements, however.
- Grades showed marginal but significant improvement. The strongest gains were made by students with the lowest grades before Healthy Start.

- Elementary students showed more improvement in grades than older students. Boys made larger gains than girls. No significant differences were found between different ethnic groups.
- No significant differences in school attendance were found for the short period measured.

When results were broken down by program type, only students served by the family service coordination teams showed significant increases in grades. These team-based programs involved school staff and teachers more heavily than the other programs. They were also more focused on students.

Students in programs with a stated goal of improving educational outcomes had greater gains than those that didn't have such a focus.

### **Conclusions**

“The pattern of data suggests that educationally oriented services may contribute to small gains in school performance even after relatively short participation in those services” (p. 22). Because students from families with the greatest need were less likely to experience gains before Healthy Start, this program can also help eliminate barriers to learning. The evaluation will continue for two more years.

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**Peña, Delores C. (2000) EJ615791**

Parent Involvement: Influencing Factors and Implications  
*The Journal of Educational Research*, 94(1), 42–54

**Summary:** This study looked at how parents in one urban elementary school in Texas, with a population that was 95.5 percent Mexican American, were or were not involved and what factors influenced their involvement. The researcher identified several factors that influenced parent involvement. Parents also offered suggestions for how the school might build better collaborative relationships with parents and increase their involvement.

The study addresses the dearth of research about the involvement of Mexican-American families in their children's schooling. The school that was studied was a year-round campus with multi-age classes and a dual-language program that provided all students with the opportunity to become biliterate and bilingual in Spanish. The researcher cooperated with four teachers, two at the prekindergarten/kindergarten level and two at the third-/fourth-grade level. At each level, one class had students whose parents primarily spoke English and the other had primarily Spanish-speaking parents.

For this qualitative case study, the researcher collected data over the course of one school year (1997–1998). She conducted interviews with parents of children in two prekindergarten/kindergarten and two third-/fourth-grade classes, their teachers, and principals. She also made observations of a range of meetings and activities and examined school documents regarding parent involvement. The four participating teachers distributed letters of information/consent to a total of 75 parents. Interviews with 28 parents who agreed to participate, as well as the four teachers and the principals, were held at the convenience of the participants. Data were also gathered from home visits, parent meetings, informal discussions, observations of parent-teacher conferences, and documents such as minutes from meetings of the advisory council and parent teacher organization. The focus of the study was involvement and communication.

**Findings**

The study found that cultural attitudes about the role of parents, language barriers, parent cliques, parents' educational level, attitudes of school staff, and family issues, such as childcare, influenced the involvement of parents in the activities organized by the school. Although the school implemented a federally funded dual-language program, English was the preferred language at parent meetings and since no translation was provided, many monolingual Spanish-speaking parents felt their attendance was unnecessary. Some parents, even those fluent in Spanish, preferred to conduct meetings in English, which resulted in a language problem for those parents who did not speak English. Parent cliques, divided along language lines, determined who "made the most decisions for all the parents." Since most of the staff were bilingual, school assemblies, parent-teacher conferences, and workshops for parents were conducted in both languages.

Parents' literacy level was another factor that influenced their participation in the school. Staff made assumptions that parents knew what to do for back-to-school night or how to make ABC books. Most communication was print based only. No accommodations were made for those parents who did not understand, leaving them feeling intimidated and confused.

Attitudes of school staff (including the principal) made some parents feel "patronized." They felt judged negatively because of their need for assistance and that they were not welcomed. The study also found that cultural differences between U.S.-born parents and those born in Mexico influenced parents' expectations of the school and how they should be involved. Family issues, such as transportation, childcare, work schedules, and simply finding time to participate affected their participation in school activities. The school did attempt to help with transportation by providing buses for back-to-school night and by providing childcare for some of the workshops.

Parents gave recommendations for improving parent involvement in their school. These included changing the attitudes of school staff to "make the parent feel more welcome"; taking parents' interests into consideration when planning activities; recognizing that even if parents cannot be present at school, helping their children at home is also a valuable contribution; and providing parents with knowledge about how to be involved in a range of involvement opportunities.

## Conclusions

"First, schools need to create a hierarchy of involvement opportunities for parents, ranging from working with their children at home to participation in school decision making. Second, schools should provide parents with the knowledge in order to participate in any of these activities" (p. 53). The factors that are related to involving culturally diverse families in schools described in this study corroborate what has been found in much previous research. While the study does not discuss the influence of parent involvement on student achievement at the school that was studied, it does provide a very descriptive case example that raises awareness about some of the common barriers to parent involvement and how they might be addressed.

**Parents gave recommendations for improving parent involvement in their school. These included changing the attitudes of school staff to "make the parent feel more welcome"; taking parents' interests into consideration when planning activities; recognizing that even if parents cannot be present at school, helping their children at home is also a valuable contribution; and providing parents with knowledge about how to be involved in a range of involvement opportunities.**

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**Rubenstein, Michael C., and Wodatch, Jessica K. (2000)  
ED446191**

*Stepping Up to the Challenge: Case Studies of Educational Improvement and Title I in Secondary Schools*

Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates, Inc. (Prepared for U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary)

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/PES/esed/steppingup.pdf>

Summary: This policy report was prepared by an outside evaluator for the U.S. Department of Education and policymakers. The study looked at 18 high-performing Title I secondary schools (serving disadvantaged students) to determine the practices and issues that were related to improvement in those schools. Parent involvement is discussed in the chapter that looks at “non-instructional services that support student achievement.” Although the study does not examine the impact of parent involvement on student achievement and provides few examples of how Title I supports parent involvement, it does give brief descriptions of activities and practices that could be useful evidence of secondary school efforts to involve parents.

**The study highlighted communication practices that helped parents stay informed about school activities and their children’s progress, including holding parent-teacher conferences in community centers closer to where parents live rather than at the school.**

The overall purposes of the study were to (1) describe practices in 18 improving and high-performing secondary schools that serve disadvantaged students, (2) determine how Title I functioned in these schools, and (3) identify issues related to improvement in secondary school with concentrations of disadvantaged students. The schools selected for the case studies were chosen because they were engaged in comprehensive research-based school-improvement efforts to raise student achievement, enrolled a significant proportion of low-income students, and had student achievement that was either consistently high or steadily improving.

The selected schools used a variety of approaches to school improvement and reflected the racial and ethnic diversity of their varied geographic regions. Data were collected during three-day site visits through interviews, school documents, and observations of classroom instruction and daily student life. Case studies were written by the researchers who visited the sites. The findings summarize the experiences of the 18 schools and may or may not be found in similar schools that are not engaged in comprehensive reform or do not have consistently high or improving levels of student achievement.

### **Findings**

While the study did not focus on parent involvement, it was found to be one of the non-instructional services that all of the schools saw as important, albeit difficult to achieve and maintain. In the report, brief descriptions are given of what schools do to involve parents. The study highlighted communication practices that helped parents stay informed about school activities and their children’s progress, including holding parent-teacher conferences in community centers closer to where parents live rather than at the school. Some schools established parent or community liaisons that helped

keep parents in touch with the school or parent resource centers that provided workshops, field trips, and information about social services. Although parent involvement in school decision making was mandated by policies in a few schools or districts, the study claimed that most schools took parent perspectives into consideration. One example was a high school that surveyed parents about which programs and objectives they would be willing to sacrifice because of budget cuts. Activities were described in which parents participated as volunteers, observed their children's performances, or learned how to help their children at home.

### **Conclusions**

This case study provides limited descriptions of the activities and practices that schools established to involve families. Although the study does not make a very good case for how Title I helped support the parent-involvement practices described in the schools, the authors note that "schools have used non-instructional services to foster an environment in which students can focus on learning" (p. 34). Since all of the schools in the study were improving or high-achieving, the study implies that the parent-involvement activities they describe supported student achievement.

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### **Sanders, Mavis G., Epstein, Joyce L., and Connors-Tadros, Lori (1999)**

*Family Partnerships with High Schools: The Parents' Perspective*

Baltimore, MD: CRESPAR (Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk), Johns Hopkins University, Report No. 32

<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/Reports/report32entire.htm>

**Summary:** The authors explored whether particular types of parent-involvement activities influenced parents' attitudes and involvement at the high school level. The data are part of a larger study that measured perceptions of family involvement in high school from surveys of ninth-grade teachers, parents, and students in six high schools in Maryland. While most parents thought it important to be involved at the high school level, the study also indicated that 80 percent of the 423 parents surveyed needed more information about how to help their children at home, suggesting a large untapped potential within the population of parents of high school students.

**Although over 90 percent of the parents surveyed agreed that parent involvement is needed at the high school level, 75 percent reported that the school had not contacted them about being involved in such school activities as volunteering, fund-raising, or committee participation.**

The authors reported on surveys of 423 parents, using multiple regression analysis. Dependent variables were parent attitudes about the high school, parent involvement at home, and parent involvement at school. Independent variables were gauged by scales that measured parent reports of school activities in parenting, communication, learning at home, and decision making; frequency of requests for volunteering; and school support for parent involvement.

### **Findings**

Although over 90 percent of the parents surveyed agreed that parent involvement is needed at the high school level, 75 percent reported that the school had not contacted them about being involved in such school activities as volunteering, fund-raising, or committee participation. This finding suggests a large untapped potential within the population of parents of high school students. The study also indicated that 80 percent of the parents needed more information about how to help their children at home. The schools that reached out to parents were more likely to be rated more positively than schools that did not make that effort. Parents who were involved in any types of activities and those whose students who were doing well in school tended to have positive attitudes toward the school. Parent education and student academic performance were significant predictors of family involvement in school and at home. Background variables—such as race, part-time or full-time work, single-parent status, number of children at home—did not make any significant differences, except that better-educated parents tended to be more involved both at home and at school.

**Conclusions**

The authors conclude that developing a strong overall partnership program that includes practices for different types of involvement is likely to improve parents' attitudes toward the high school. They posit that as parents' attitudes improve, more families—including those with lower educational backgrounds—will become involved in their teens' education, both at home and at school. However, the evidence they present does not help in understanding whether parents are more involved when their children do well in school or that children do well because their parents are involved.

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**Sanders, Mavis. G., and Harvey, Adia (2000)***Developing Comprehensive Programs of School, Family, and Community Partnerships: The Community Perspective*

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA

**Summary:** This case study describes how one urban elementary school was able to develop strong connections with community organizations. The school consistently outperformed other schools in the district on the state standards-based exam.

Factors that were found to contribute to successful community partnerships included the school's commitment to learning, the principal's support and vision, and the school's willingness to engage with potential partners.

The case-study school, its district, and the state are all members of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). The NNPS provides “theory-driven and research-based assistance, support, and training to school, districts, and states that are committed to building permanent school, family, and community partnership programs” (p. 7). NNPS schools convene an Action Team for Partnership (ATP) and use Epstein's framework of six types of involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community) to develop partnership programs to promote student success.

Although the school has, since 1995, consistently achieved higher composite scores on the state's standards-based exam than other schools in the district, only 50 percent of its students meet the state's satisfactory standard of 70 percent. Changes in student achievement were not measured.

Semistructured interviews were conducted with

- Ten of the school's community partners. The partners represented businesses, senior citizen organizations, churches, educational institutions, private foundations, and health care institutions.
- The school principal, assistant principal, and the co-chairs of the schools Action Team for Partnership (ATP): a kindergarten teacher and a third-grade teacher.
- Three randomly selected parents, one each with a child in the third, fourth, and fifth grades.

Focus group interviews were conducted with nine randomly selected students, three each from the third, fourth, and fifth grades. Data were also collected from field observations. Researchers conducted a qualitative data analysis to identify key themes and processes.

## Findings

The study identified four types of partnership activities that were student centered, family centered, school centered, and community centered. Partnership activities were primarily student and school focused, although the school hoped to expand both its partners and the kinds of programs and activities they supported.

Researchers found four factors that contributed to successful partnerships: (1) the school's commitment to learning, (2) the principal's support and vision for community involvement, (3) the school's receptivity and openness to community involvement, and (4) the school's willingness to engage in two-way communication with potential partners about their level and kind of involvement. In addition, the principal was aided in prioritizing partnership development by the district's support of the school's partnership efforts, through its provision of ongoing professional development and evaluation of principals on how well they reach out to parents and the larger community.

The school under study had maintained multiple community connections over the course of three years. During the period of the study, the case school had 10 documented community partners that increased resources for the school and its students. For example, community partners sponsored such events as family fun and learning nights and quarterly awards breakfasts for student academic recognition, provided volunteers, donated books and computers, and provided classroom libraries and incentives as part of a reading program.

**Community partners sponsored such events as family fun and learning nights and quarterly awards breakfasts for student academic recognition, provided volunteers, donated books and computers, and provided classroom libraries and incentives as part of a reading program.**

## Conclusions

The importance of dialogue (“two-way communication”) and respect (“receptivity and openness”) in creating partnership were emphasized in this school, as well as the leadership of both the principal (“support and vision”) and the district in prioritizing support for community involvement. The school also participates in a national partnership network. However, the model that is described is predominantly service oriented and school centered. It does not encompass public-engagement principles or models of community engagement with schools. Nevertheless, the study identifies the factors that support several types of school-community partnerships in one urban elementary school.

**Sanders, Mavis G., and Herting, Jerald R. (2000)**

Gender and the Effects of School, Family, and Church Support on the Academic Achievement of African-American Urban Adolescents

In Mavis G. Sanders (Ed.), *Schooling Students Placed at Risk: Research, Policy, and Practice in the Education of Poor and Minority Adolescents* (2000)

Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 141–161

**Summary:** This study of 800 African-American students in eighth grade examines why girls so often do better in school than boys. It found that the positive effects of family, church, and teacher supports on students' attitudes and behavior in school lead to higher achievement, for both boys and girls. However, African-American girls are much more likely to report strong support from parents and teachers and more involvement in church.

**African-American girls reported greater parent and teacher support, more involvement in church, better behavior in school, more self-confidence in school, and higher grades. In short, the girls have higher levels of positive factors and lower levels of disruptive factors than African-American boys.**

Research often shows that African-American girls do better in school than boys of the same background. This study seeks to explain this gap by exploring the differences between how boys and girls relate to their families, the school, and institutions in the community. In an earlier study, Sanders (1998) found that when students receive support from all three areas, the positive effects on self-confidence and behavior in school are magnified.

Sanders and Herting surveyed about 800 African-American eighth graders (slightly more females than males) attending school in an urban district. The questions asked students to rate (on a 1–5 scale)

- teacher support (e.g., feeling comfortable asking the teacher for help);
- parent support (e.g., parents praise for doing well in school);
- church involvement (e.g., belonging to a church group);
- attitudes toward school (e.g., working hard in school);
- academic self-confidence (e.g., believing you can do good work in school); and
- behavior in school (e.g., behaving well in school).

The survey also asked students about their background—poverty level, family structure, gender, and age. The majority of students were poor; almost half lived with both parents. In addition, a sample of 40 students was interviewed in depth. They talked about their attitudes toward school, plans for the future, relationships with family, teachers and friends, and activities in and out of school.

Next, the researchers examined the effect of these different factors on each other, and on students' grades, for the whole group of students, and then by gender. Grades were reported by students, not obtained from their schools.

## Findings

African-American girls reported greater parent and teacher support, more involvement in church, better behavior in school, more self-confidence in school, and higher grades. In short, the girls have higher levels of positive factors and lower levels of disruptive factors than African-American boys. In general, they bring to school qualities and supports that favor higher achievement. The effects (+ for a positive effect, ++ for a strong positive effect) of the three supports on student outcomes, by gender, are indicated here:

**Table 18. Effects of Three Supports That Favor High Achievement on Student Outcomes, by Gender**

|                     | PARENT SUPPORT   | TEACHER SUPPORT   | CHURCH INVOLVEMENT |
|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Self-confidence     | boys + / girls + | —                 | boys + / girls +   |
| School behavior     | boys + / girls + | boys ++ / girls + | boys + / girls +   |
| Attitudes on school | boys + / girls + | boys + / girls +  | —                  |
| Grades              | —                | boys + / girls +  | boys + / girls +   |

Risk factors in family background were negatively related to student outcomes.

**Table 19. Effects of Family Background Risk Factors That Favor High Achievement on Student Outcomes, by Gender**

|                     | POVERTY | OVER AGE IN GRADE | SINGLE PARENT    |
|---------------------|---------|-------------------|------------------|
| Self-confidence     | —       | boys -            | girls -          |
| School behavior     | girls - | boys - / girls -  | —                |
| Attitudes on school | —       | —                 | boys - / girls - |
| Grades              | —       | boys -            | boys -           |

The researchers further analyzed how all these factors affect each other. For both boys and girls, the results suggest that supports from church, family, and teachers are important because they influence behaviors and attitudes that go along with achievement. In other words, the influence of family, church, and teachers on students' attitudes and behavior in school are related to higher achievement, across all backgrounds.

The interviews shed further light. Although parent support is important to success in school both for boys and girls, African-American girls spend more time with family members, while boys spend more time with friends. Girls also reported more family supervision (chores, curfew) and higher expectations. Boys reported less teacher support, although support from teachers has more impact on boys' achievement than on girls' achievement.

Major limitations are that this study does not control for prior achievement, and it relies solely on data reported by students.

### **Conclusions**

Female adolescents in this study perceive more family and teacher support, and are more active in the church than are male adolescents. It is not surprising that African-American females also report more positive academic self-concepts and (attitudes), less disruptive school behavior, and higher achievement than the male students surveyed. (p. 159)

This study also emphasizes the importance of teacher support for male and female students' school behavior. Although male students report less teacher support than do their female counterparts, the effect of teacher support on male adolescents' behavior was stronger than on female . . . behavior. (p. 157 )

This study thus suggests that the present and future teacher force be made more aware of the varying norms, attitudes and expectations of their students . . . This can effectively be achieved, in part, through greater communication with adults in students' families and communities. (pp. 157–158)

Given this study's findings, it is important that schools, families, and community agencies and organizations use their combined resources and skills to ensure that both females and males have the opportunity to benefit from positive contact with caring, supportive adults. (p. 159)

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### **Scribner, Jay D., Young, Michelle D., and Pedroza, Anna (1999)**

Building Collaborative Relationships with Parents

In Reyes, P., J. D. Scribner, & A. Paredes-Scribner (Eds.), *Lessons from High-Performing Hispanic Schools: Creating Learning Communities*, New York: Teachers College Press, 36–60

**Summary:** In this chapter, part of a larger qualitative study, the authors report their findings about parent involvement in high-performing Hispanic schools along the Texas-Mexico border. They use data based on case studies of three elementary, three middle, and two high schools, which they describe as “communities of learners.” The authors discuss the formal and informal activities that parents participate in, the collaborative relationships that parents and school staff create, and how the school staff established a “people-oriented, professional atmosphere.”

**School staff used a combination of strategies to build collaborative relationships with parents that included learning about and building on Hispanic cultural values, stressing personal contact with parents through telephone calls and home visits, fostering communication, and creating a warm and welcoming environment.**

The study looks at eight schools along the Texas-Mexico border in which Hispanic students achieve beyond state averages. Although the book’s title leads the reader to expect lessons that can be applied to other schools (in the hope of improving students’ performance), the authors explicitly advise caution in using the “best practices” they describe. Because each school is unique, they explain, the strategies that are discussed in the chapter are meant to be guidelines only.

Demographically, 95 percent of the students in the schools are Hispanic, 70 percent are from low economic backgrounds, 10 percent are recent immigrants, and 20 percent are migrants. All the students are either bilingual or “limited English proficient.”

### **Findings**

The majority of school staff agreed that both the school and children were well served by parent involvement, which they viewed mainly as participation in activities and events at the school. Parents were less focused on being available as volunteers and fund-raisers for the school. Their primary concern was to assist their children to be successful academically and socially and to strengthen the home-school relationship. In this study, school staff and parents collaborated in ways that focused on the children’s total well-being and development and benefited the adults in both the home and school domains.

School staff used a combination of strategies to build collaborative relationships with parents that included learning about and building on Hispanic cultural values, stressing personal contact with parents through telephone calls and home visits, fostering communication, and creating a warm and welcoming environment. In addition, structures such as parent centers, teams of teachers who were responsible for a defined group of students, and parent advisory committees made it easier for parents to be involved. The skills and connections that workshops, adult education classes, and other parent programs provided were beneficial to parents in both their personal growth and their

ability to communicate with school people. At the elementary level, the emphasis was on building trust between parents and teachers. In the secondary schools, parents were involved less directly but helped create a supportive environment for their adolescents through working with parent specialists and nonteaching staff, networking with other parents, and attending their children's performances, athletic games, and awards ceremonies.

**In these “collaborative” schools, parents and school staff “join together to serve the needs of all children, unencumbered by role differentiation. These are places that are neither top-down nor bottom-up; they are places where power is shared.”**

### **Conclusions**

In these “collaborative” schools, parents and school staff “join together to serve the needs of all children, unencumbered by role differentiation. These are places that are neither top-down nor bottom-up; they are places where power is shared” (pp. 40–41). Parents and school staff value different aspects of collaboration, yet the differences are largely complementary. The study suggests that when schools build collaborative relationships, the best practices create an environment and structures in the school that are inviting to parents and that foster communication in ways that are personal and show cultural understanding. Since such practices were common in the high-performing Hispanic schools in the study, we can only assume that they were not as present in schools that were less effective.

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**Shaver, Ann V., and Walls, Richard T. (1998) EJ561992**

Effect of Title I Parent Involvement on Student Reading and Mathematics Achievement

*Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 31(2), 90–97

**Summary:** This is a study of the effect of parent involvement on 335 Title I students, in second through eighth grade, in a West Virginia district. It found that students whose parents regularly attended school-based parent workshops made greater gains in reading and math than students with less-involved parents.

**These “results help to dispel the myth that poorer parents are less willing (and unable) to involve themselves in their child’s education.”**

This study examined the effects of parent involvement on reading and math achievement.

- Does parent involvement increase reading and/or math scores for low-achieving students?
- Does this effect hold true in middle school, as well as elementary school?

The authors looked at achievement data and family information for 335 Title I (federal program for low-income children) students receiving help in reading and math. The students were enrolled in grades 2-8 in nine schools in Marion County, West Virginia. Most of the students were white.

The school district developed a series of workshops for parents that involved information, training, and discussion. Each Title I teacher scheduled at least four of these three-hour sessions (called “parent group meetings”) a year. These meetings promoted five types of involvement:

1. Parenting.
2. Teacher-parent communication.
3. Parent involvement at school.
4. Parent involvement at home.
5. Program decision making.

At each meeting, parents received updates on their children’s progress and took part in training designed for their interests. Topics included “Supporting Children through Crisis,” “Discipline Strategies,” and “Increasing Your Child’s Vocabulary.” Parents also got learning packets in reading and math, as well as training in how to use them. Because children attended the sessions, there were opportunities for parents and children to practice together.

Information about student achievement data was drawn from the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS/4) results for reading and math. Students were pretested in August 1994 and tested again in May 1995. Their gains were measured against a national average (did they make as much progress during this time as the national

average would predict?). Parent involvement in the workshops and activities was graded as high or low, depending on how many activities the families attended (more or less than half).

First, the researchers looked at the effect of grade level and parent involvement on reading and math scores. Then they looked at the impact of family income—are families with higher income and education levels more likely to participate, and do their children tend to have higher scores?

**Findings**

- Students whose parents were more highly involved were more likely to make gains in both reading and math than children of less-involved parents. This was true for children from all income and education levels.
- Younger students (grades 2–4) made greater gains in both subjects than older students (grades 5–8).
- Parents are more likely to be involved when their children are in elementary school (grades 2–4) than in middle or junior high school.
- Title I students in the upper grades (5–8) are more likely to be from low-income families.
- Students from lower-income families made fewer gains in both reading and math than students from higher-income families, no matter how involved their families were. However, low-income students made greater gains if their parents were regularly involved.
- A family’s income level did not affect their level of involvement. Low-income families were as likely to attend the workshops regularly as higher-income families.

**Table 20. Effects of Title I Parent Involvement on Math and Reading Comprehension**

| NORMAL CURVE EQUIVALENT GAINS IN SKILL AREA | HIGH-PARENT INVOLVEMENT CHILDREN | LOW-PARENT INVOLVEMENT CHILDREN |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Total math                                  | 18.3                             | 10.6                            |
| Math application                            | 12.9                             | 9.3                             |
| Total reading                               | 13.3                             | 4.4                             |
| Reading comprehension                       | 10.9                             | 4.7                             |

**Conclusions**

These results suggest that parent involvement, no matter what the family background, is a dynamic force influencing students’ academic success. “It is imperative for Title I programs to place a special effort in involving low income parents and parents of older . . . children in school. Title I programs that employ social workers and support

**Instead, the authors suggest that Title I programs can increase the potential for student achievement by developing well-designed parent-teacher group experiences.**

personnel to assist in addressing special needs of these children and families (as in the case of this school district) are likely to promote parent involvement from this particular group” (p. 95).

These “results help to dispel the myth that poorer parents are less willing (and unable) to involve themselves in their child’s education” (p. 95). Instead, the authors suggest that Title I programs can increase the potential for student achievement by developing well-designed parent-teacher group experiences.

Long-term learning problems result in failed adult dreams and expectations, a loss of true potential. Title I remedial education programs cannot change the fact of poverty and family breakdown in America. As indicated by this research, however, school districts can improve the likelihood for success in our children by recognizing and nurturing a crucial resource for improved academic achievement—the parent-school connection. (p. 95)

**Shirley, Dennis (1997) ED421605***Community Organizing for Urban School Reform*

Austin, TX: University of Texas Press

Summary: This book documents the strategies, activities, and accomplishments of the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), lead by activist and organizer Ernesto Cortes. It contains background on the IAF and four case studies of IAF work in Texas schools. It also considers IAF-driven systemic change, in San Antonio and across the state, and assessment of its success. Schools in the IAF Alliance have made fairly steady, but modest, improvements in their scores on the Texas state test. They remain well below the state average, however.

**Their detailed analysis of school finance in the state gave credibility to a package of reforms the IAF advocated before the state legislature: more funding for poor school districts, smaller class size, increased salaries for teachers.**

The premise of the book is that “the Texas IAF actualized a distinct new kind of parent engagement, which encompasses and goes beyond other types of involvement by recovering and enlivening the concept of citizenship, which has so agitated and enriched the western political tradition” (p. 76).

After successful actions in several Texas cities to secure better public services for low-income, Mexican-American neighborhoods, the Texas IAF gradually became involved in school reform during the 1980s. Their detailed analysis of school finance in the state gave credibility to a package of reforms the IAF advocated before the state legislature: more funding for poor school districts, smaller class size, increased salaries for teachers. Massive rallies organized by the IAF helped to ensure the passage of the Texas education reform package in 1984.

Since then, the IAF has created a network of Alliance schools in poor urban areas (Dallas, Houston, El Paso, Laredo, Brownsville) across the state. This is a formal relationship between IAF and the Texas Education Agency, which has brought special funding and waivers of cumbersome state regulations in return for school improvement.

**Findings**

**Organizing Methods.** Texas IAF organizing differs from traditional parent and community involvement in three ways:

1. Traditional involvement avoids issues of power and gives parents a passive role. This is a model of parent engagement, about citizens becoming leaders and agents of change in schools and neighborhoods.
2. The work is based in neighborhood churches. Instead of holding that churches do not have a role in public education, the IAF contends that churches are an untapped resource for community development.
3. The work is about building social capital, through such grassroots strategies as house meetings, Walks for Success, and Parents' Assemblies.

When a school is identified as a focus for organizing, local IAF leaders typically go through a series of steps:

- “One-on-one meetings,” where leaders and organizers meet in the homes of active residents. In these meetings, they surface the key issues in the neighborhood and school.
- “House meetings,” where residents meet to discuss their pressing concerns. Each parent talks about the problems they feel are a threat, then the group talks about how to solve them. Out of these, leaders emerge and support groups form.
- Training sessions, where parents and residents learn how the system works, the larger context for their issues, and how to use their power.
- A “Walk for Success” or demonstration of support for the local school. On a given day, core leaders (parents, teachers, clergy, students, school alumni, church members) visit every student’s home. They ask for ideas and answer questions about the school. Participants write down all the concerns that surface.
- A public action, such as a Parents’ Assembly, inviting public officials to meet with the community. Parents and teachers prepare statements and questions, and develop an agenda to advance. The goal is to obtain support for the agenda (repairs, increased funding, after-school programs) and show the strength of the community.

**Results in Alliance Schools.** Data on student performance on the Texas Assessment of Academic Standards (TAAS) show mixed results in the 22 schools in the Alliance network between 1993 and 1996. Ten schools made gains above the state average, some well above, but half were below.

- The gains are greatest in fourth grade, although Alliance schools did not make significantly greater gains than the state as a whole. Texas fourth graders’ scores rose an average of 20 percentage points, while Alliance-school fourth graders gained 23 points over the four-year period.
- Middle school (eighth grade) results are lower and more uneven. Alliance schools gains (7.6 percentage points) on the average were below those in the state as a whole (13 points), and lower than the average (16 points) for disadvantaged students (eligible for free/reduced-price lunch).
- Alliance high school results are more encouraging. The state average gained nine points, while Alliance schools gained 20 points. Disadvantaged students gained 11 points.

Even though the Alliance Schools have made headway in many areas, they have not provided a ‘magic bullet’ solution to the myriad problems of school reform in low-income communities . . . Yet on the other hand, as the case studies demonstrate, a host of teachers, parents, administrators, and community leaders credit the Alliance School network with revitalizing their schools and neighborhoods, and test scores hardly provide a comprehensive measure for assessing cognitive development or community improvement. (p. 220)

## Conclusions

Shirley argues that schools that have joined the IAF Alliance Schools network are becoming “laboratories of democracy.” “Although the Alliance Schools are still at an early stage of development, they represent one source for educational and civic renewal that should attract widespread attention in the national quest for prosperous cities with safe, diverse, and thriving schools and neighborhoods” (p. 295).

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**Shumow, Lee, and Lomax, Richard (2001)**

*Parental Efficacy: Predictor of Parenting Behavior and Adolescent Outcomes*  
Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of American Educational Research Association, Seattle, WA

**Summary:** This study, using a national sample of 929 families with children aged 10–17, examined the impact of parents' feelings of efficacy on student achievement. It found that families with higher feelings of efficacy were more involved in school and with their children at home. Their children also did better in school and reported feeling happier, safer, and more stable.

According to social theory, people who believe they can accomplish something are more likely to act in ways that lead to success. This study examined how parents feel about their ability to guide their teenagers. Then it looked at how they act as parents and at whether those actions affect their children's achievement.

The data for the study came from the Survey of Parents and Children, done by the National Commission on Children in 1994. Telephone interviews were conducted with a national random sample of parents living with their children aged 10 and over. This study uses a subsample of 929 children aged 10–17 and their parents.

Shumow and Lomax defined “efficacy” as parents' believing that they were successful in

1. having a positive influence on teenagers' academic, social, and emotional development (helping them do well in school, be happy, and be safe).
2. overcoming negative influences from their children's friends and associates (keeping them away from troublemakers, using drugs or drinking).
3. having a positive impact on schools and other community agencies for youth (improving the quality of the school, making the neighborhood a better place).

Next they looked at whether parent involvement was related to feelings of efficacy. Parents and students responded to three sets of questions about how parents are involved with their children:

- Involvement in school: attending events, talking to teachers, attending a parent meeting, helping at school, working with a youth group (parent reports).
- Monitoring children's activities: knowing who their children are with when they're not home, making sure their children know how to contact them (parent and student reports).
- Communicating with their children: talking with children about drugs, dating, problems with friends or family, and values (parent reports).

Finally the researchers related these findings to how well the students were doing. Performance at school was measured from parents' reports on students' grades, academic level (advanced, regular, or remedial), and behavior at school. Social and emotional well-being was measured from students' reports of emotional well-being (feeling nervous, sad, or pressured), optimism (looking forward to the future), and worries (feeling unsafe or threatened).

## Findings

Shumow and Lomax found that the data supported their theory. Family background, income, and neighborhood will affect feelings of efficacy. Efficacy in turn will affect how parents are involved in their children's education and upbringing. And this involvement will in turn affect children's achievement and feeling of well-being. In other words, families with higher feelings of efficacy were more involved in school and with their children at home and reported that their children did better in school and felt happier, safer, and more stable.

- Families who live in safe, higher-income neighborhoods with good programs for young people had higher efficacy than families living in lower-quality areas.
- Family income alone did not predict feelings of efficacy. In other words, higher-income families did not always have higher feelings of efficacy, nor did low-income families always report lower feelings of efficacy.

There was a positive association between parents' feelings of higher efficacy and how closely they monitored their children and were involved in school. Parent efficacy also went along with talking to their teenagers, but the level varied by race and ethnicity.

Several racial and ethnic differences appeared:

- Family income and education level was not as connected to feelings of efficacy in Hispanic families as it was in white and African-American families.
- Quality of the neighborhood was not as connected to feelings of efficacy in African-American families as it was in white and Hispanic families.

A major limitation of this study is that it relies solely on parent and student reports of achievement and other outcomes.

## Conclusions

“Given the link between parental efficacy, developmentally appropriate parenting behaviors, and adolescent outcomes, one important goal of programs for parents of adolescents might be to bolster their sense of efficacy” (p. 7).

Shumow and Lomax caution that there is little research on how to change parents' feelings of efficacy. There are, however, studies that show it is possible to bolster the efficacy of people in areas other than parenting. Because of difficulties that often surface when children reach adolescence, the authors suggest that programs should be targeted to parents when their children are younger, then continued through high school.

**Families who live in safe, higher-income neighborhoods with good programs for young people had higher efficacy than families living in lower-quality areas.**

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**Shumow, Lee, and Miller, Joe D. (2001) EJ628426**

Parents' At-Home and At-School Academic Involvement with Young Adolescents  
*Journal of Early Adolescence*, 21(1), 68–91

Summary: Using data from a national study of adolescents, this study looked at a subsample of 60 families to examine the impact of parent involvement during the middle grades. It found that involvement at home contributed to positive attitudes toward school, while involvement at school contributed to higher grades.

**Parents of struggling and average students provided more help at home than parents of successful students. Parents of successful students were more involved at school.**

In this study, Shumow and Miller compare the impact of home-based and school-based parent involvement on student achievement. Then they examine the possible difference that context and personal characteristics make in the level, type, and effect of parent involvement.

Parent involvement at home and school was based on parent reports about

- whether and how often they helped their children with homework.
- the number of visits made to the school to discuss academic progress.
- the level of involvement in the school's parent organization.
- the level of attention they paid to local school issues.

Student academic outcomes were measured by GPA in seventh grade, eighth-grade math and science test scores, and student reports on their attitudes toward school.

The information used in this study came from a section of the Longitudinal Study of American Youth (LSAY) that included extensive interviews with parents of 60 students. These students were selected randomly from 50 participating middle schools in urban, suburban, and rural areas across the United States. First, the researchers looked at the relationship between each type of involvement and personal characteristics. These were parent and student gender, parents' income and education level, and students' prior success in school (struggling, average, or successful). Then they examined the relationships among these characteristics. Finally, they compared the relationship of parents' reported at-home and at-school involvement to students' academic outcomes.

### Findings

Taken together, parent involvement in both settings had a significant effect on all student outcomes. When analyzed separately, however, each type of involvement was related to different outcomes.

- At-home involvement was related to positive student attitudes about school. However, it was negatively associated with grades and test scores. This may be because parents tend to help more with homework when students are struggling in school.
- In contrast, at-school involvement strongly contributed to higher grades but was not related to test scores or student attitudes toward school. Parents might obtain

information when at school that allows them to help their children earn higher grades. Or perhaps teachers have more favorable attitudes toward students whose parents are involved at school.

When checking for the relationship between personal characteristics and type of involvement, Shumow and Miller found that

- As parents' education level increased, they reported being more involved with their children's education.
- Fathers and mothers reported being equally involved at home, but mothers were more involved at school than fathers. The higher their education level, the more mothers were involved at school. Fathers of all education levels reported being less involved at school than mothers.
- Student gender did not appear to make a difference in the level or type of parent involvement.
- Parents of struggling and average students provided more help at home than parents of successful students. Parents of successful students were more involved at school.
- The more parents were involved at home, the more students felt it was important to perform well in school.

This study had a small sample, only 60 families. It also relied solely on data reported by students and parents.

## Conclusions

Shumow and Miller concluded that parent involvement in education at home and at school was positively related to young adolescents' academic outcomes. "The relation found between the young adolescents' past school adjustment (success in school) and school orientation (attitudes toward school) indicates that successful children might have been socialized to the importance of education by families that have made a consistent long-term commitment to education" (p. 86). Given that at-home and at-school involvement may have different effects on students, the researchers underscore the importance of specifying the form of parent involvement being studied or targeted in program development.

The findings related to personal characteristics also have interesting implications. Because fathers' involvement in school activities is low, their investment in their children's schoolwork might be less visible to teachers and administrators. Even though this study showed that fathers report helping their young adolescents at home as much as mothers, schools might overlook them in designing parent-involvement programs that could benefit student achievement. Although parent education programs improve the quality of help parents provide their children at home, the more challenging content of middle and junior high studies could pose problems.

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**Simon, Beth Shara (2000)***Predictors of High School and Family Partnerships and the Influence of Partnerships on Student Success*

Baltimore, MD: Doctoral dissertation, Johns Hopkins University

**Summary:** This study used a large, long-term national database (NELS:88) to explore how high schools, families, and communities connect to support student achievement. It found that these connections have a positive influence on student success. It also found that schools' practices to engage families increase parent involvement.

How do schools, families, and the community connect to support adolescents? Although researchers have looked at partnerships in elementary and middle schools, much less is known about high schools. This study examines family and community connections with high schools, the effects on students' success, and the influence of high school outreach on family involvement.

This study used NELS:88 data for about 11,000 students, those with complete data through the follow-ups in 1990 and 1992. Family involvement was measured by family, school administrator, and student responses to questions about

- **parenting:** parents monitoring students' time and activities, making decisions about rules, discussing school and college plans, spending fun time together, attending college planning workshops.
- **communicating:** school contacting parents about program, courses, and information to help student; parents contacting school about student's program and courses.
- **volunteering:** parents helping at school, taking part in the parent organization.
- **learning at home:** parents reporting knowing how and what teen is doing in school; students reporting talking with parents about courses, activities, and grades; both report talking about school.
- **decision making:** parents reporting having enough/wanting more influence on school policies; administrators reporting on parent influence on school policies (like tracking, hiring, discipline, budget).
- **collaborating with community:** parents participating in community service programs, establishing partnerships with business and community groups.

Student achievement measures include test scores and grades in English and math, number of course credits, absences, school behavior, and school preparedness. Simon used regression analysis to test the influence of race, ethnicity, family structure, gender, prior student achievement, and family income and background.

School outreach to families was measured by reports on whether the school contacted parents about

- teens' academic program, plans after high school, and course selection.
- teens' attendance and behavior.

- parents' taking part in school fund-raising or volunteer work.
- schools' providing parents with information on how to help teen at home with skills or homework.

Through a series of regression analyses, Simon tested how parents' reports on their high schools' outreach activities predicted involvement in parenting, volunteering, and learning at home activities. She then tested how administrator reports of schools' outreach predict their ratings of families' involvement in parenting, volunteering, and decision-making practices.

## Findings

Simon found that families and communities do participate in a range of partnership activities to support students through high school. Parent involvement increases with support from the school. For example, when school staff members contact parents about these opportunities, parents are more likely to

- attend planning workshops and talk to their teenagers about college and employment.
- volunteer as audience members at school activities.
- work more often with their teenagers on homework.
- talk with teenagers more often about school.

Her analysis also found positive effects of partnerships on students' success. Involvement in parenting, volunteering, learning at home, and decision-making activities was related to

- higher grades in English and math.
- more completed course credits in English and math.
- better attendance and behavior.
- increased preparedness for class.

Simon found stronger relationships between partnership practices and student outcomes that were logically linked. For example, parents' attending college-planning workshops and talking to students about college were linked more to better grades and courses completed than to behavior and attendance.

## Conclusions

Contrary to popular belief, many teens do spend time with their families, and families matter for teens' school success. Simon's findings suggest that schools can increase family partnerships by reaching out to parents. She cautions, however, that NELS:88 data are limited because NELS:88 does not address the quality of families' or schools' involvement practices. Ideally, research should be able to contrast schools with strong and weak partnerships to test the influence of these varying practices on student outcomes and family involvement.

**This study found stronger relationships between partnership practices and student outcomes that were logically linked. For example, parents' attending college-planning workshops and talking to students about college were linked more to better grades and courses completed than to behavior and attendance.**

This study concludes that while families already support student learning in various ways during high school, schools may influence the directions in which families guide teenagers' success in school. Students and their families deserve research-based partnership programs to ensure student success in high school and later in life. Simon calls for research to “shed new light on the complex relationships among schools, families and communities to help all students succeed” (p. 239).

Comprehensive partnership programs send consistent messages to all families that their involvement is wanted and needed to best support teens as learners. Unless high schools meet challenges to communicate with and invite all families to partner with the school, some families may miss out on important opportunities to support their teens' education. (p. 131)

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**Smrekar, Claire, Guthrie, James W., Owens, Debra E., and Sims, Pearl G. (2001) ED459218**

*March Towards Excellence: School Success and Minority Student Achievement in Department of Defense Schools*

Peabody Center for Education Policy, Peabody College Vanderbilt University  
<http://www.negp.gov/reports/DoDFinal921.pdf>

**Summary:** In this report presented to the National Education Goals Panel, the authors state that in schools operated by the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) the performance of African-American and Hispanic students on standardized tests is among the highest in the nation. This descriptive exploratory study analyzes the factors believed to play a role in narrowing the performance gap between “majority and affluent students and minority and disadvantaged students” in DoDEA schools. The researchers suggest that the high levels of achievement of minority students is due in part to community contributions and the community’s role in setting an expectation of parent involvement. Based on their findings, the authors recommend policy for state and local public education decision makers.

In examining settings that are effective in raising achievement of African-American and Hispanic students, the researchers sought to illuminate strategies and tactics that could guide others working to meet the challenge of improving the performance levels of similar students. Stimulated by the “impressively high” performance of eighth-grade students in reading and writing on the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the study looked at 15 representative middle schools operated by the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) in five domestic and five overseas military districts.

The schools varied in size and composition, but African-American and Hispanic students made up 40 percent of the average enrollment of DoDEA schools (similar to the proportion of minority students in the state of New York) and half of all DoDEA students qualified for free and reduced-price lunch (the common measurement used to determine low-income households). The number of students enrolled in both domestic and overseas DoDEA schools is 112,000, comparable to the enrollment in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg (NC) district.

The researchers carried out interviews of 130 educators, parent leaders, and counselors in middle schools in both domestic and overseas military districts. They collected samples including curriculum guides and staff development plans from each site, and those samples combined with classroom observations contributed to the information. This description of findings focuses on the expectations and educational values of parents and patterns of involvement and on out-of-school influences on achievement.

## Findings

Based on interview data, the superiority of achievement levels in DoDEA schools was explained by a complex “achievement equation” composed of many variables. Several contributing factors were examined and contrasted with urban public schools in the United States to illustrate the supports for achievement, including teacher quality, high academic expectations, and policy structures. For example, DoDEA school parents tended to have more stable income and housing than civilian families, though mobility and transience were more like urban schools. A high value was placed on education and training within the military community. There was a culture of order and discipline that created seemingly ideal conditions. In addition, a “corporate commitment” to education by the U.S. military resulted in personnel having a clear duty to attend parent conferences and volunteer in schools.

In response to the high priority given to school-home partnerships by the DoDEA, schools enhanced communication to families through electronic mail and voice mail “info lines” easily accessed by parents. Also, parents were encouraged to serve on school advisory panels and participate in policies and programs. While 94 percent of military parents hold at least a high school diploma, 60 percent of the families earn below-average salaries. However, noncash benefits provide “an array of social and material resources . . . organized around a network of support for families” (p. 37). These programs include childcare, health care, housing (though not ideal), and a safe community. Unlike most urban communities, the base regulations on family conduct enforce “community standards.” The schools are also smaller than most public schools, and recent research suggests lower-income and minority students benefit most from smaller middle and high schools. Also in place is a “chain of concern” within the system to attend to children’s needs and anxiety when separated from parents who are deployed, described as “a social organization within the school.”

Schools embrace social capital across racial groups because of the explicit affiliation among members. Shared values, norms, and attitudes promote trust, facilitate open communication, and produce purposeful and meaningful activities that benefit students and adults. The authors suggest that two of the salient characteristics of the military community—continuity of care for children and corporate commitment to public education—are applicable to the civilian sector.

## Conclusions

Although the “village” culture of support associated with life on a military base allows for a strong sense of stability, community, and familiarity that is not typical of contemporary urban life, the authors delineate a number of suggestions from that culture that might improve education for students in the civilian sector. Recommendations for public school policy include

- academic focus and high expectations for all;
- continuity of care for children;
- corporate commitment to public education;

**The schools are also smaller than most public schools, and recent research suggests lower-income and minority students benefit most from smaller middle and high schools. Also in place is a “chain of concern” within the system to attend to children’s needs and anxiety when separated from parents who are deployed, described as “a social organization within the school.”**

- centralized direction setting balanced with local decision making;
- policy coherence and efficient flow of data, regarding instructional goals, parent-teacher relationship, assessments, accountability, and professional development;
- sufficient financial resources;
- staff development that is job-embedded, intensive, sustained over time, relevant to school-improvement goals, and linked to student performance; and
- small school size, conducive to trust, communication, and sense of community.

**Starkey, Prentice, and Klein, Alice (2000) EJ618579**

Fostering Parental Support for Children's Mathematical Development:  
An Intervention with Head Start Families  
*Early Education and Development*, 11(5), 659–680

**Summary:** This article describes two experimental studies of a four-month program that engaged about 30 families to develop math skills in Head Start (preK) children. Another 30 families were assigned to two control groups. At two sites in the San Francisco area, one serving African-American families and the other Latino families, staff gave classes for mothers and children and loaned math activity kits for use at home. In both sites, the researchers found that parents were willing and able to work with their children on math when given training and materials. The children in the program developed greater math knowledge and skills than the control-group children.

Research suggests that the achievement gap between low- and middle-income students in mathematics may stem from differences in young children's development of informal math knowledge and skills. Both the home and preschool settings for poor children offer limited opportunities to learn about math.

This study examines the contribution that low-income parents can make to their children's math readiness when provided with training and activities to work with their children. The researchers studied two interventions at Head Start programs in the San Francisco area, one serving mostly African-American families, the other serving Latino families. Each one included a family math course to help parents support their children's math development, plus a library of activities and materials to use at home. The children were between four and five years old.

**Findings****Study 1: Intervention with African-American Families**

Head Start staff identified a pool of families who met three criteria:

1. The child did not have special needs.
2. At least one parent did not have a mental health or substance abuse problem.
3. The family was low-income according to federal guidelines.

Families meeting these criteria were invited to take part in the study. The families that agreed were assigned randomly to an intervention or a control group. All the families but one in each group were African American. The number of boys and girls in each group was the same. In all, there were 28 mother-child pairs. Intervention and control families were assessed in the fall (pretest) and in the following spring (posttest).

The program had two components:

1. Eight family math classes, offered every other Saturday morning for four months. Lunch was served. Most mothers and children attended between six and eight classes.

2. Access to a library of math kits to use at home. At the end of each class, families could borrow up to three kits. The average family borrowed 11 kits over the four months.

Two experienced African-American teachers taught the classes. First, they demonstrated an activity for the group, playing the parts of mother and child. Then they handed out materials to each family, offering advice from table to table. Teachers helped parents assess children's progress and steer children to easier or harder next steps depending on how they were doing. At the end of each class, teachers opened the math library. They kept records of the number of kits that families borrowed and how they used them. Average attendance was between six and seven classes; each family borrowed an average of 11 kits over the eight weeks. Control-group families did not attend classes or have access to the library.

The assessments covered numbering skills, numerical reasoning, spatial reference, and emergent literacy. At the pretest, the control and intervention group children's mathematical knowledge was about the same. Most children needed help and their answers were no more accurate than could be predicted by chance. Over the prekindergarten year, the intervention children's informal math knowledge made "extensive developmental change," but the comparison children's did not. The researchers controlled for prior test scores and other factors. The program supported math knowledge, not literacy.

**At the end of each class, teachers opened the math library. They kept records of the number of kits that families borrowed and how they used them. Average attendance was between six and seven classes; each family borrowed an average of 11 kits over the eight weeks. Control-group families did not attend classes or have access to the library.**

**Table 21. Proportions of Correct Answers in Math and Literacy Tests in Study 1**

| TASK              | INTERVENTION GROUP |          | CONTROL GROUP |          |
|-------------------|--------------------|----------|---------------|----------|
|                   | Pretest            | Posttest | Pretest       | Posttest |
| Emergent literacy | .35                | .33      | .27           | .27      |
| Math composite    | .60                | .75      | .61           | .64      |
| Number composite  | .51                | .70      | .55           | .58      |

### Study 2: Intervention with Latino families

Thirty-one mother-child pairs were selected in the same way as for Study 1. The two experienced teachers were Latino. In addition, a bilingual experimenter assessed children whose home language was Spanish. Attendance in this study was about the same as for Study 1. The other change in study design was that the children were assessed in geometric reasoning rather than spatial reference.

In this study, both the control and comparison groups had higher scores at the end of the year. The intervention group, however, developed more extensive math knowledge, controlling for pretest scores, than the control group.

Table 22. Proportions of Correct Answers in Math and Literacy Tests in Study 2

| TASK              | INTERVENTION GROUP |          | CONTROL GROUP |          |
|-------------------|--------------------|----------|---------------|----------|
|                   | Pretest            | Posttest | Pretest       | Posttest |
| Emergent literacy | .16                | .31      | .16           | .30      |
| Math composite    | .38                | .65      | .43           | .57      |
| Number composite  | .33                | .66      | .34           | .55      |

**The effects of the intervention were specific to the children's math skills. It was not designed to improve literacy, and it didn't. The researchers contend that curricular supports must be tailored to specific areas of learning.**

### Conclusions

The program was effective in increasing children's informal mathematical knowledge development. At the end of the program, fewer children in the intervention performed in the lower-end range and more in the upper-end range. The children in the control group did not make comparable gains. No difference was found due to ethnicity or gender. The effects of the intervention were specific to the children's math skills. It was not designed to improve literacy, and it didn't. The researchers contend that curricular supports must be tailored to specific areas of learning.

Two key factors in the program's success, the authors believe, were the work of parent liaisons and the provision of math kits to use at home. In each study, a teacher from the local Head Start program served as a liaison with families. The liaisons contact each mother before each family math class to find out if there were barriers to their attending. The barriers that arose most often were childcare, transportation, and scheduling conflicts. These were overcome by providing childcare during the class, arranging car-pools, and encouraging mothers to send a substitute to class when needed.

"Our study demonstrates that an important step toward achieving . . . readiness for school is to provide parents with the tools they need to support their children's informal mathematics development. Across the two intervention studies, we found low-income parents willing and able to support this important area of their children's development once they were provided with the training to do so" (p. 676). Parents' attendance was high and they checked out materials and used them at home.

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**Trusty, Jerry (1999) EJ598231**

Effects of Eighth-Grade Parental Involvement on Late Adolescents' Educational Experiences

*Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 32(4), 224–233

**Summary:** This analysis of NELS:88 and 1994 follow-up data found that parent involvement in eighth grade is related to students' postsecondary education plans six years later. Two years after high school, students' reports of parent communication and support at home seem to pay off in plans to complete a bachelor's degree or more.

**For students, families are a continuing presence, while schools are shorter-term resources. This challenges schools to focus beyond their boundaries and recognize the importance of what happens at home.**

Although steadily increasing numbers of students expect to earn college degrees, we know little about the effects of parent involvement beyond high school. Trusty set out to investigate the ways home- and school-based parent involvement—as measured at grade 8—relate to students' educational expectations two years after high school. Using NELS:88 parent and student reports, he analyzed effects of the following parent-involvement factors:

- School-based involvement: taking part in PTO, attending school meetings and events, visiting classes, talking to school staff, and acting as a volunteer.
- Home-based involvement: talking about school programs and activities, discussing plans for high school and postsecondary education.

Trusty analyzed data from nearly 10,000 participants in NELS:88 and the third follow-up in 1994. He also controlled for the influence of family income, occupation, and education on students' plans. In the 1994 follow-up (two years after high school for most students), students were asked about the highest level of education they expected to attain. The author then examined the influence of parent involvement at eighth grade in the follow-up data.

**Findings**

If students felt that their parents communicated with them and supported their learning when they were in eighth grade, they were more likely to have plans to continue their higher education two years out of high school. Family income and education also had a strong influence on whether students expected to earn at least a bachelor's degree. At higher-income levels, the effects of parent involvement were stronger. As many other studies also report, low-income parents' communication with teachers and counselors tended to be in response to their students' behavior or academic problems.

Regardless of family income and background, three forms of parent involvement had significant effects on students' expectations. They are listed in order of strength:

- Students' reports of parents' home-based involvement.
- Parents' reports of their involvement in parent organizations at school.
- Parents' reports of their home-based involvement.

An increase of one standard deviation in parent-reported involvement in the school's parent organization during eighth grade was related to a 22 percent increase in the odds of their students' having high educational expectations six years later. But a one standard deviation increase in student-reported home-based parent involvement in the eighth grade was related to a 58 percent increase in the odds of the students' having high expectations six years later.

Students' reports of their parents' involvement showed the strongest effects. In other words, the author suggests, what parents do has a greater effect if it gets through to their children. The more students perceive their families' involvement and support, the farther they expect to go in school.

### **Conclusions**

For students, families are a continuing presence, while schools are shorter-term resources. This challenges schools to focus beyond their boundaries and recognize the importance of what happens at home. Trusty suggests, for example, that school staff should focus on supporting families to communicate with their children and support their work in school.

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**Van Voorhis, Frances L. (2001)**

Interactive Science Homework: An Experiment in Home and School Connection  
*National Association of Secondary School Principals' Bulletin*, 85(627), 20–32

**Summary:** This article describes the results of a study on involving families in 253 middle school students' homework. Using Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS), an interactive homework process developed by researchers at Johns Hopkins University, sixth- and eighth-grade teachers sent weekly assignments home with information about how students could engage their families. TIPS students earned significantly higher grades than students who did non-interactive homework.

**Research suggests that teachers need better information about the purpose of homework and how to design assignments that promote useful interactions between parents and students.**

Although homework is assigned every day, little thought has gone in to making it a more-effective learning tool. There is little agreement on how much should be assigned, what it should accomplish, or how it should be designed. Research suggests that teachers need better information about the purpose of homework and how to design assignments that promote useful interactions between parents and students.

Joyce Epstein and her colleagues at the Center for School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University have developed an interactive homework program. Called TIPS, Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork, it includes sample assignments in different subjects. Each one has clear learning goals and instructions for students about how to involve family members. Parents do not need to have much knowledge of the subject. There is also a section on home-school connections so that parents and students can give feedback to the teacher.

The study compares the effects of TIPS homework with homework that has the same content, but is not interactive. Three classes from two sixth-grade teachers, and two classes from two eighth-grade teachers took part in the study, for a total of four teachers and 253 students. The students were a cross-section of those in the school (53 percent white; 36 percent African American; 11 percent multiracial, Asian, Hispanic, and Russian). In sixth grade, they were in low, average, and honors classes; in eighth grade they were in average and honors classes. The teachers assigned TIPS homework to six classes, and non-interactive homework to four classes. The study covered 18 weeks, or two marking periods.

Each family received a letter at the start of the year, describing the homework their children would be assigned. Only the families in the TIPS classes were told about how students would involve them in their work. Each teacher assigned an activity each week and included homework-related questions on student tests. At the end of the study, students, and parents filled out surveys about their experience and reactions.

Van Voorhis also collected information about the students' backgrounds. This included mother's education level, student's prior achievement and ability level, race, gender, and grade. This data was used to control for their possible effects on the results.

## Findings

1. Students completing TIPS homework reported higher levels of family involvement than students doing non-interactive homework. Over 80 percent of TIPS students said their families were “sometimes, frequently, or always involved” in their science homework. In contrast, over 80 percent of students with non-interactive science homework said their families were “never, rarely, or sometimes involved.” Although 75 percent of the TIPS students said their mothers or fathers helped them, 25 percent said they got help from siblings, relatives, and friends.
2. TIPS students also reported that their families were not involved in other types of homework. In other words, family involvement levels did not differ for math or language arts, subjects not using the TIPS program.
3. Both TIPS and non-interactive homework students did their homework about equally well. All the assignments were well-designed, linked to their teachers’ science units. About 75 percent in both groups turned in their homework. Students who liked the assignment and had families that were involved were more likely to do the homework and do it well.
4. Students who had been doing well in science, and who turned in their homework, were more likely to earn higher grades. But after controlling for prior grades, family background, and amount of homework turned in, TIPS students earned significantly higher grades than the non-interactive homework students.
5. Students and parents liked the assignments and suggested that TIPS be used the next year in school. Teachers also liked a regular schedule of science homework, linking the content to science unit tests and guiding students to share their work in science with their families.

## Conclusions

Results of this study show that well-designed, teacher-generated homework assignments in science can help students practice skills, prepare for the next class, participate in learning activities, develop personal responsibility for homework promote parent-child relations, [and] develop parent-teacher communication . . . . (p. 12)

Much of homework today is monotonous, pointless, discouraging to students, and disruptive of family time. Professional development time should be allocated to help teachers learn about the importance of well-designed homework, to share ideas about science, and to develop meaningful homework assignments that match the creativity found in many teachers’ classrooms. TIPS interactive homework is one approach that helps teachers develop their skills in designing better assignments that increase students’ skills and inform parents of what is going on in the classroom. (p. 13)

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**Wang, Margaret C., Oates, Jane, and Weishew, Nancy L. (1997)**

Effective School Responses to Student Diversity in Inner-City Schools: A Coordinated Approach

In Haertel, G. D., & M. C. Wang (Eds.), *Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration*, Philadelphia, PA: The Mid-Atlantic Regional Educational Laboratory at Temple University, 175–197

**Summary:** In this chapter, the authors report on “case scenarios” of three schools to illustrate the potential of the Community for Learning Program (CFL) to improve student learning in urban schools. The authors describe a variety of practices that are specific to each site, but note that no single component or practice can account for improvements in learning. Rather it is “an integrated system of delivery that considers the needs of the students” that is crucial to fostering student improvements.

“At the core of the program’s design is over 20 years of research and school-based implementation experience of two widely implemented programs, the Adaptive Learning Environments Model and [Comer’s] School Development Program, and CEIC’s program of research on fostering educational resilience through building connections among school, family, and community” (p. 176). Specifically, CFL includes three major components: school development, the family-community for learning model, and the Adaptive Learning Environments Model (ALEM). The program seeks to improve student achievement, particularly for “those at the margins of the achievement distribution” (for example, bilingual, Chapter I, and special education students). Other areas that CFL hopes to improve include positive student perceptions about their school and “patterns of active learning and teaching” that are consistent with research on effective teaching practices.

The reported findings are based on Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) of student surveys and district standardized test scores in reading and math. Case scenarios of two elementary schools (in Philadelphia and Houston) and one middle school (in Philadelphia) indicate that, although they differ in terms of specific demographics, school organization, size, and implementation of the CFL program, these schools share “significant positive patterns of intended program outcomes.” The findings are attributed to the “site specific and strategic” combination of successful practices in an “integrated system of delivery.”

### **Findings**

In the domain of parent involvement, CFL supports a “shared partnership approach” and encourages schools to actively involve families through “communication and cooperation between home and school.” How the schools implement the CFL features depends on the strengths and constraints of the school. The door is open in various ways in these schools for parents. They may assist in classrooms, tutor students, take leadership in planning events, act as decision makers, and participate in workshops

and classes. They might work with staff and neighborhood agencies to plan activities that strengthen bonds between parents and children around learning. In one school, family members participate on leadership teams that help guide the implementation of CFL.

**“Educational reforms . . . that aim to address the deepening problems faced by children and families in a variety of at-risk circumstances in this nation’s inner cities must provide a broad-based coherent approach including family, school, and other community resources.”**

The achievement data over two years show that in schools and classrooms that implemented the CFL program, fewer students than expected were in the bottom 20 percent of reading and math and more than expected scored in the top 20 percent (with one exception). Attendance increased in the middle school. Student perceptions about the learning environment in their classroom and school were generally higher than those of students in comparison schools and classrooms.

### **Conclusions**

In the schools presented as cases, the CFL program appears to have had an early positive impact on student achievement and on students’ perceptions about their classrooms and schools. The program’s approach—linking comprehensive school change to “rooted connections with family and community” and encouraging a variety of strategies to involve parents—would seem to contribute to the positive trends reported. However, there are two other components of CFL: the School Development aspect, which includes a planning and management team and a mental health team; and the ALEM “instructional delivery system.” This report emphasizes that it is the integration of the three successful practices that accounts for the improvements in the case-study schools. “Educational reforms . . . that aim to address the deepening problems faced by children and families in a variety of at-risk circumstances in this nation’s inner cities must provide a broad-based coherent approach including family, school, and other community resources” (p. 186).

### Westat and Policy Studies Associates (2001)

*The Longitudinal Evaluation of School Change and Performance in Title I Schools, Volume I: Executive Summary*

Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Deputy Secretary, Planning and Evaluation Service

[http://www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/PES/esed/lescpl\\_highlights.html](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/PES/esed/lescpl_highlights.html)

**Summary:** This is a long-term study of the impact of standards-based reform practices on student achievement in 71 Title I schools. It found that teacher outreach to parents of low-performing students was consistently related to improved student achievement in both reading and math. Of the eight other practices studied, only professional development that was highly rated by teachers was as consistently linked to student gains in both subjects.

Title I, the largest federal program in elementary and secondary education, has directed federal funds to schools in low-income areas since 1965. Although many evaluations of Title I have looked for school practices that improve student achievement, this study is the first to examine the impact of standards-based reform. From 1996 to 1999, researchers followed the progress of students in 71 high-poverty schools as they moved from third to fifth grade. Their aim was to test the effects of changes in teaching practice called for by advocates of higher standards.

The 71 schools in 18 school districts were in seven states where standards-based reforms were underway. Although all were affected by reform policies (standards, assessments, and accountability), the extent of implementation varied. While not a representative sample, these schools provide a good picture of how standards-based reforms are being carried out. In over 85 percent of the schools, more than half the students were from low-income families.

Data sources included standardized reading and math test scores (SAT-9), teacher surveys, interviews with administrators and principals, classroom observations, focus groups of school staff and parents, and school district policies. The study used an advanced statistical method (hierarchical linear modeling) to analyze the relationships between different practices and student outcomes.

The study examined these practices: visibility of standards and assessments, basic or advanced teaching techniques, teacher preparation, teachers' skills in math instruction, high or low ratings of professional development, focus on assessment and accountability, district standards policies, and outreach to parents.

Outreach to parents measured the extent to which teachers communicated with parents of low-achieving students through

- meeting face to face.
- sending materials on ways to help their child at home.
- telephoning both routinely and when their child was having problems.

## Findings

Poverty had a clear negative relationship to student achievement. On the average, the students in this sample scored below the national average, and below students in urban districts, in all years and grades tested. Students in the highest poverty schools had the lowest scores.

The study found that reading achievement improved faster when two factors were present:

- Teachers gave high ratings to their professional development in reading. The growth in student test scores between grades three and five was about 20 percent greater when teachers rated their professional development high than when they gave it a low rating.
- Third-grade teachers were especially active in outreach to parents of low-achieving students. Growth in test scores between grades 3 and 5 was 50 percent higher for those students whose teachers and schools reported high levels of parent outreach early. This was compared with students whose teachers and schools reported low levels of parent outreach activities in the third grade.

The study found that math achievement improved faster when three factors were present:

- Teachers highly rated their professional development in math. Growth in test scores between third and fifth grades was 50 percent higher for those students whose teachers and schools rated their professional development high than when they gave it a low rating.
- Teachers reported high levels of outreach to parents of students who initially showed low achievement. Test scores in math between third and fifth grade grew at a 40 percent higher rate for low-achieving students in schools whose teachers reported high levels of parent outreach compared with students in schools whose teachers reported low levels of parent outreach.
- Instructional practices involved students in more exploration in the upper grades. Growth in test scores between third and fifth grades was about 17 percent greater for students whose fifth-grade teachers reported very high usage of exploration in instruction compared with students whose teachers reported low usage.

## Conclusions

The study's findings lend some support to the policy position that a framework, including standards, assessments, and professional development, can improve student achievement when teachers are engaged with that framework . . . Outreach to parents of low-achieving students was of long-term benefit to reading achievement for all students and to mathematics achievement for low-achieving students . . . All these conditions could combine to help mitigate the serious negative effects of poverty, at both the student and the school levels, on achievement.” (Executive Summary, p. 18)

**Test scores in math between third and fifth grade grew at a 40 percent higher rate for low-achieving students in schools whose teachers reported high levels of parent outreach compared with students in schools whose teachers reported low levels of parent outreach.**

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**Williams, Deborah Bugg (1998) ED420401***Parent Involvement Gender Effects on Preadolescent Student Performance*

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA

**Summary:** Using a large, long-term national database (NELS: 88), this study examines the effect of parent involvement on the achievement of about 14,000 middle-grade students. It found that parents' educational expectations and out-of-school activities are positively linked to all measures of their children's achievement. These effects occur in all pairings of parents with sons and daughters.

**In their first 18 years, children spend 87 percent of their waking time outside school in their parents' charge. How parents direct this time can have major effects on student achievement.**

In their first 18 years, children spend 87 percent of their waking time outside school in their parents' charge. How parents direct this time can have major effects on student achievement. Because of major changes in society, the roles of mothers and fathers have changed. For example, more mothers work during the day and more fathers have closer relationships with their children. This study assesses the effect of parents' gender on both boys' and girls' performance in school. It also considers how parents' roles change as their children enter the preteen years.

Williams modified Herbert Walberg's model of educational productivity to develop three factors:

- **Parent effort:** contacts with school, expectations of student, and discussions with student.
- **Instruction:** how much time student spends learning outside school.
- **Environment:** support for learning at home, quality of school (parent rating), knowing student's friends, and out-of-school activities.

Measures of achievement include male and female students' math and reading test scores, GPA, and motivation (reported being willing to work hard at learning). Williams related information about parents' and students' gender to student achievement. She used multiple regression analyses to control for factors such as family income, education and background, type of school district, and family structure.

**Findings**

This study, like much previous research, finds that parents' educational expectations and out-of-school activities are positively linked to all measures of their children's achievement. These effects occur in all gender pairs (father-son, father-daughter, mother-son, and mother-daughter). Mothers and fathers have varying effects, however, on their sons' and daughters' academic performance. For example, mothers' involvement is more strongly related to math and reading achievement for both sons and daughters. Fathers' involvement also has an effect, but it is not as significant.

Parent involvement at school also has an effect, but it appears to be a marker for other more important factors. In other words, when parents are involved in their children's schools, they tend to share other activities with their children as well. Fathers' involvement in their child's school is as important for achievement as is mothers' involvement.

### **Conclusions**

Williams concludes that parent involvement programs should be designed to increase the ways that fathers and mothers interact with their sons and daughters about academic achievement. "Parents are an untapped resource and their parent-child interactions can be altered to enhance in-school performance" (p. 10).

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**Wilson, Bruce, and Corbett, H. Dickson (2000)**

*"I Didn't Know I Could Do That": Parents Learning to Be Leaders through the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership*

Lexington, KY: Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership

<http://www.cip.org/pubs.html>

and

**Kroll, Janet, Sexton, Robert F., Raimondo, Beverly N., Corbett, H. Dickson, and Wilson, Bruce (2001)**

*Setting the Stage for Success: Bringing Parents into Education Reform as Advocates for Higher Student Achievement* (summary version)

Philadelphia, PA: Pew Charitable Trusts

[http://www.Pewtrusts.com/pdf/edu\\_prichard.pdf](http://www.Pewtrusts.com/pdf/edu_prichard.pdf)

Summary: Wilson and Corbett's evaluation and the Kroll et al. summary report look at a statewide parent-training program sponsored by the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence in Kentucky. They found that parents can be agents for change, not just in the education of their own children but of all children. Institute participants became both sophisticated learners about school reform in Kentucky and resourceful leaders in making sure that positive changes for students occurred.

The purpose of this study was to provide the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Prichard Committee with information about the impact of the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (CIPL). CIPL is a parent leadership training program offered across the state of Kentucky. The institute is designed to help parents understand how the state's education reform law works and how to use the law to press for better results in their schools. The six-day curriculum covers advocacy, action planning, engaging other parents, effective communications with teachers and school staff, and how to conduct meetings.

The researchers conducted surveys and interviews in three waves. First they sent surveys to all CIPL fellows in the classes of 1998 and 1999. Then they interviewed a sample of fellows from three regions (urban, suburban, and rural). Questions covered their motivation to become involved, activities they carried out, what helped and hindered their work, and the support they received from the institute. Third, the researchers interviewed principals to learn about the communities where these fellows work, the kinds of activities they carried out, and the schools' reactions.

**Findings**

CIPL-trained parent leaders developed projects to do things like

- making schools more welcoming to parents.
- easing students' transitions between schools.
- promoting literacy skills of both adults and children.
- boosting schools' technology resources.

- encouraging schools to examine achievement and attendance data for clues about pressing needs.
- bringing teachers and parents together to discuss mutual hopes for their schools.

Data from the evaluation activities found that the Commonwealth Institute proved itself to be an effective vehicle for

- arming parents with valuable information about how schools should and do operate.
- instilling confidence in themselves as credible educational stakeholders.
- giving them a willingness to act on the behalf of all students, not just their own.

Out of 800 participants, more than 350 are members of school-based decision-making councils or other school committees and 18 have been elected to local school boards. Over 50 percent have completed projects in their schools. In addition, a high proportion of CIPL fellows surveyed are using key skills to improve student achievement in their schools.

**Table 23. Proportion of Fellows Carrying Out Skills Either “Often” or “Very Often” (n = 159)**

| SKILL   | % OF FELLOW |
|---|-------------|
| Reading materials related to improving student achievement            | 62          |
| Seeking advice from other parents about school-improvement activities | 51          |
| Working with the principal on school-improvement activities           | 45          |
| Working in parent groups on improving student achievement             | 43          |
| Moving forward on a school-improvement project                        | 43          |
| Working with teachers on activities to improve student achievement    | 35          |
| Designing improvement programs for the school                         | 33          |
| Making public presentations about school-improvement activities       | 20          |

Half the survey respondents had served on PTA boards, 40 percent on school councils, and 5 percent on school boards. Wilson and Corbett caution that their research does not show if any of this service was influenced by CIPL involvement. They state that they would not make any casual argument, though there was some anecdotal evidence to suggest that they were now more comfortable in leadership roles.

**Conclusions**

Knowledge, confidence, and willingness were the primary indicators of the program’s success. In truth, these fell short of the Institute’s original intention, which was to have the parents directly and measurably affect student achievement. In practice, it became apparent that it was most reasonable to expect parents to take actions that had a logical, rather than a causal connection to student achievement, mostly because it is statistically impossible to tease out the relative effects of a single initiative on student learning. (Executive Summary, p. 12)

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