

Research on Parent Involvement

Parental involvement is a key factor in school improvement efforts. Collaboration with parents and community members helps not only to identify the challenges facing our schools, but also the development and implementation of creative and satisfying solutions.

In their study, *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, Anne Henderson and Karen Mapp review fifty one other studies and conclude that

"Taken as a whole, (these) studies found a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and benefits for students, including improved academic achievement. This relationship holds across families of all economic, racial/ethnic, and educational backgrounds and for students at all ages."

Henderson and Mapp's findings can help to inspire a direction for parental involvement efforts. Here is what they report.

- "Programs and interventions that engage families in supporting their children's learning at home are linked to improved student achievement" e.g., (Epstein, Simon & Salinas, 1997; Jordan, Snow and Porche, 2000; Starkey & Klein, 2000).
- "The more families support their children's learning and educational progress, both in quantity and over time, the more their children tend to do well in school and continue their education" e.g., (Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Sanders & Herting, 2000; Marcon, 1999)
- "Families of all cultural backgrounds, education, and income levels can, and often do, have a positive influence on their children's learning" e.g., (Ho Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Shaver & Walls, 1998; Clark, 1993).
- "Parent and community involvement that is linked to student learning has a greater effect on achievement than more general forms of involvement" e.g., (Invernizzi, Rosemary, Richards, & Richards, 1997; Dryfoos, 2000; Clark, 2000).

Henderson and Mapp also show that students, coming from families of all backgrounds and incomes, who have involved parents, are more likely to:

- earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs;
- be promoted, pass their classes, and earn academic credits;
- attend school regularly;
- have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school and
- graduate and go on to postsecondary education.

In their book, *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships* (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson and Davies, 2007), the authors outline the benefits of collaboration and parental involvement in these words:

- "Partnership and student academic achievement are closely linked."
- "Partnerships help build and sustain public support for the schools."
- "Families and the community can help schools overcome the challenges they face."
- "Teachers can benefit from parent and community partnerships."
- "The No Child Left Behind Act provides for partnership opportunities that can help schools meet the requirements of the law."

What does research tell us about why parents become involved in their children's education?

Research (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins and Closson, 2005) indicates that for parents there are three factors that influence their involvement.

- Motivational beliefs by a parent that he or she should be involved and also that his or her involvement will make a difference;
- Parent perceptions of invitations to involvement, including a general invitation from the school

e.g. a welcoming environment and specific invitations from the child and invitations from the teacher and

- Life context variables such as the parent believing that he or she has the knowledge and skills to help the child in school and the time and energy to do so.

One of the most important findings in the authors' review of literature is that schools definitely influence parent's decisions about involvement.

With this knowledge, educators and school administrators can develop quality intervention programs. They can encourage parents, with a welcoming and inclusive environment, and influence how they involve themselves in their children's lives and education. In return, applying their knowledge and skills, parents can support their child's learning in a manner that pays dividends for students and educators.

Parental Involvement Resource List

Clark, R. (1983). *Family life and school achievement: Why poor black children succeed or fail*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

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Dryfoos, J. G. (2000). *Evaluations of community schools: Findings to date*. Washington, DC: Coalition for Community Schools. ED450204.

Epstein, J. L., Simon, B. S., & Salinas, K. C. (1997). Involving parents in homework in the middle grades. *Research Bulletin* No. 18, 4 pages.

Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M.G., Simon, B. S., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N.C., & VanVoorhis, F.L. (2002). *School, family and community partnerships: Your handbook for action*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Henderson, A. & Mapp, K. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: the impact of school, family and community connections on student achievement*, Austin, Texas: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Henderson, A., Mapp, K.L., Johnson, V.R., & Davies, D. (2007). *Beyond the bake sale, the essential guide to family-school partnerships*, New York, NY: New Press

Hoover-Dempsey, K.V., Walker, J.M.T., Sandler, M., Whetsel, D., Green, G.L., Wilkins, A.S., Closson, K. (2005). Why do parents become involved? Research findings and implications, *Elementary School Journal*. 106(2), 105-131. University of Chicago.

Invernizzi, M., Rosemary, C., Richards, C. J., & Richards, H. C. (1997). At-risk readers and community volunteers: A 3-year perspective. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 1(3), 277-300.

Ho Sui-Chu, E., & Willms, J. D. (1996). Effects of parental involvement on eighth grade achievement. *Sociology of Education*, 69(2), 126-141. EJ533315.

Jordan, G. E., Snow, C. E., & Porche, M. V. (2000). Project EASE: The effect of a family literacy project on kindergarten students' early literacy skills. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 35(4), 524-546. EJ616175.

Marcon, R. 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. Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., and Center for Children

Miedel, W. T., & Reynolds, A. J. (1999). Parent involvement in early intervention for disadvantaged children: Does it matter? *Journal of School Psychology*, 37(4), 379-402. EJ607658.

Sanders, M. G., & Herting, J. R. (2000). Gender and the effects of school, family, and church support on the academic achievement of African-American urban adolescents. In M. G. Sanders (Ed.), *Schooling students placed at risk: Research, policy, and practice in the education of poor and minority adolescents* (pp. 141-161). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Shannon, G.S. & Bylsma, P. (2007). *The Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools: A research-based resource for schools and districts to assist with improving student learning*. (2nd Ed.). Olympia, WA: OSPI.

Shaver, A. V., & Walls, R. T. (1998). Effect of Title I parent involvement on student reading and mathematics achievement. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 31(2), 90-97. EJ561992.

Starkey, P., & Klein, A. (2000). Fostering parental support for children's mathematical development: An intervention with Head Start families. *Early Education and Development*, 11(5), 659-680. EJ618579.