

The Benefits of Parent Involvement: What Research Has to Say

Researchers have evidence for the positive effects of parent involvement on children, families, and school when schools and parents continuously support and encourage the children's learning and development (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Illinois State Board of Education, 1993). According to Henderson and Berla (1994), "the most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status but the extent to which that student's family is able to:

1. Create a home environment that encourages learning
2. Express high (but not unrealistic) expectations for their children's achievement and future careers
3. Become involved in their children's education at school and in the community (p. 160)

Henderson and Berla (1994) reviewed and analyzed eighty-five studies that documented the comprehensive benefits of parent involvement in children's education. This and other studies show that parent involvement activities that are effectively planned and well implemented result in substantial benefits to children, parents, educators, and the school.

Benefits for the Children

- Children tend to achieve more, regardless of ethnic or racial background, socioeconomic status, or parents' education level.
- Children generally achieve better grades, test scores, and attendance.
- Children consistently complete their homework.
- Children have better self-esteem, are more self-disciplined, and show higher aspirations and motivation toward school.
- Children's positive attitude about school often results in improved behavior in school and less suspension for disciplinary reasons.
- Fewer children are being placed in special education and remedial classes.
- Children from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to do better when parents and professionals work together to bridge the gap between the culture at home and the culture in school.
- Junior high and high school students whose parents remain involved usually make better transitions and are less likely to drop out of school.

Benefits for the Parents

- Parents increase their interaction and discussion with their children and are more responsive and sensitive to their children's social, emotional, and intellectual developmental needs.
- Parents are more confident in their parenting and decision-making skills.
- As parents gain more knowledge of child development, there is more use of affection and positive reinforcement and less punishment on their children.
- Parents have a better understanding of the teacher's job and school curriculum.
- When parents are aware of what their children are learning, they are more likely to help when they are requested by teachers to become more involved in their children's learning activities at home.
- Parents' perceptions of the school are improved and there are stronger ties and commitment to the school.
- Parents are more aware of, and become more active regarding, policies that affect their children's education when parents are requested by school to be part of the decision-making team.

Benefits for the Educators

- When schools have a high percentage of involved parents in and out of schools, teachers and principals are more likely to experience higher morale.
- Teachers and principals often earn greater respect for their profession from the parents.
- Consistent parent involvement leads to improved communication and relations between parents, teachers, and administrators.
- Teachers and principals acquire a better understanding of families' cultures and diversity, and they form deeper respect for parents' abilities and time.
- Teachers and principals report an increase in job satisfaction.

Benefits for the School

- Schools that actively involve parents and the community tend to establish better reputations in the community.
- Schools also experience better community support.
- School programs that encourage and involve parents usually do better and have higher quality programs than programs that do not involve parents.