PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT:
EVIDENCE ON IMPACT

A review of the literature on parent engagement highlights three key variables that have been documented to impact the degree to which parents are engaged in their children’s education. These variables include:

- Self-efficacy in supporting their children’s development
- Expectations and aspirations for their children’s future
- Perception of school receptivity to their involvement

This document gives a brief overview of peer-reviewed research studies that provide support for the importance of each of these factors.

PARENTAL SELF-EFFICACY/PARENTAL ROLE


- Grolnick and colleagues surveyed or interviewed 209 mothers, their 3rd to 5th grade-age children, and 28 teachers about what influenced three different types of parent involvement—in school activities, in cognitive activities outside of school (e.g. talking about current events, going to the library, etc.), and in their child’s personal lives (e.g. knowing who their kids’ friends are.)

- Results revealed that mothers were more involved in child-reported and parent-reported cognitive activities they felt were efficacious and that they saw their roles as that of a teacher.


- Lee and Bowen examined the Elementary School Success Profile—questionnaires designed for use in the 3rd through 5th grades and surveying parents, students and teachers—of 415 students near a major urban center in the Southeast. Parent involvement was measured in five ways:
a. Involvement at home and school;
b. Parent-child educational discussion;
c. Homework help;
d. Time management; and
e. Educational expectations (i.e., “How far do you think your child will go in school?”)

• Findings revealed that parents who had at least a 2-year degree reported more frequent involvement at school, more frequent parent-child education discussions, and higher educational expectations.


• Involvement is thought to decrease as children move to middle and high school, partly because parents think they can’t help with challenging subjects or because their children are becoming more autonomous (Eccles & Harold, 1996).

• Hill and Taylor posit that when parents get involved it increases their skill set and knowledge base, which in turn makes them better equipped to help their kids.


• Building on the 5-stage model of parent involvement model developed by Hoover-Dempsey, the researchers discuss revisions to the first two stages—parent involvement decisions and parent involvement forms—drawing from new empirical and theoretical research.

• Drawing on psychological research, the model attempts to explain why parents become actively involved in their children’s academic lives, and what the consequences of that involvement are. The updated first level of the model describes the decision to get involved as a function of “parents’ motivational beliefs,” which include parents’ sense of self-efficacy and how they view their role. The model contends that the more parents believe they have a role to play, the more likely they are to get involved.

PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS/ASPIRATIONS


• Fan and Chen’s meta-analysis of 25 studies on parent engagement revealed that parental aspiration/expectation for their child’s academic achievement is the strongest moderator between parent involvement and academic achievement.

- Englund and colleagues studied 187 low-income children and their mothers from birth through 3rd grade. Parental expectations were measured with the survey question, “How far do you think your child will go in school?” Involvement was measured using interviews with teachers.

- Results revealed that parental expectations in 3rd grade had significant directly positive effects on parental involvement in 3rd grade.


- Fan and Williams used data from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS 2002) to examine how parental involvement predicted 10th grade students’ motivation in these areas: engagement, self-efficacy towards math and English, and intrinsic motivation towards math and English.

- Results revealed that parents’ educational aspiration for their children had strong positive effects on all five motivational outcomes.

PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL RECEPTIVITY


- Overstreet and colleagues surveyed 159 economically disadvantaged, African-American parents from an urban public housing project. School involvement was defined in terms of questions about parent activity within the school (classroom visits, event attendance, PTA membership, etc.). Receptivity was based on responses to items like “School listens to parents” and “School has activities for parents.”

- Results revealed that school receptivity was the strongest predictor of parental school involvement for parents of elementary school students and parents of middle/high school students.


- Anderson and Minke surveyed 351 parents from an urban district in the Southwest about four different involvement constructs (role construction, sense of efficacy, resources, and perceptions of teacher invitations) and parent involvement in school and at-home academic activities.

- Results revealed that specific teacher invitations to get involved had the strongest relationship
with parent involvement behaviors like helping their kids with homework or attending a one-time school event (e.g., Back to School night.) In addition, parent perceptions about being invited to participate determined whether their beliefs about their role translated into involvement behaviors.


• Epstein and Sheldon collected survey and attendance data from 18 schools (approximately 5,000 students). The surveys included questions on schools’ goals for attendance as well as community involvement practices related to school attendance.

• Results revealed that a few practices had strong associations with positive changes in student attendance. Among them were “connecting parents with school contact persons,” “communicating effectively with diverse families,” and “conducting workshops for families focused on school attendance.”


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• Fan and Williams used data from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS 2002) to examine how parental involvement predicted 10th grade students’ motivation (engagement, self-efficacy towards math and English, intrinsic motivation towards math and English).

• Results revealed that school-initiated contact with parents on “benign” school issues (e.g. course selection, homework help, plans after high school, etc.) had strong positive effects on all measured motivational outcomes.
ABOUT TASC

The mission of TASC is to expand the school day to give disadvantaged students more opportunities to discover and develop their talents; more support to overcome the challenges of poverty; and more time to achieve at the high levels essential for success in the global workplace. Since our founding in 1998 we have helped more than 621,000 kids, supported more than 564 public schools, partnered with more than 400 community and cultural organizations and colleges and trained 23,000 community members to work in schools.

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