

Value placed on education and parental involvement

The family exerts a pivotal influence on a child's development. Parental attitudes and behaviours such as encouraging children in their studies, congratulating them on their achievements, expressing affection, providing proper supervision, having high expectations and a positive attitude toward education, school, and school work, acting as a role-model by reading themselves, and involvement in children's school activities all have positive impacts on their success. On the contrary, when parents fail to provide emotional support, do not stay abreast of their children's progress at school, have a negative view of their children's ability to succeed, do not value education or have low expectations of their children's education, it can negatively affect school perseverance, especially in terms of career aspirations, motivation, and academic performance.¹

What the research says

According to a large-scale survey of 28,000 US high school students conducted in 1986, parental involvement has an indirect but nevertheless significant effect on students' success at school.² This is due to the influence of parents on the time and effort that students dedicate to their studies. A meta-analysis published in July 2012 clearly demonstrated the positive effect on school success of actions or initiatives aimed at increasing parental engagement from pre-school through the end of high schools.³

Most of these actions are based on the principle that all parents, regardless of socioeconomic status, want their children to succeed. However, many parents need help learning how to supervise their children at home, put in place conditions conducive to their success, or facilitate their progress through school. So who the parents are is not so important as what they do with their children. In this way, it is possible to guide parents toward providing better support and supervision of their children at home.



According to Desforges,⁴ being a "good parent at home" is of primary importance by providing:

- a secure and stable environment
- intellectual stimulation
- parent-child discussions
- constructive role models
- a view of education as something of value
- high expectations

Numerous studies suggest that potential dropouts come most often either from families in which parents lack a high school diploma or from disadvantaged communities. However, one recent survey of 1,445 families conducted by Colletterte and Pelletier⁵ identified one category of parents (22%) who are not from disadvantaged communities but whose attitudes toward school contribute to the high dropout rates observed in certain regions. These are middle-class and wealthy parents who believe in the value of education and the importance of a diploma. However, beyond this positive discourse about education, their attitude toward the school and the people who work there is rather negative. They may even go so far as to openly discredit the school, thereby harming their children's commitment to education and ultimately their success.

Parental involvement in their children's education occurs at two levels: at home and at school. However, for many researchers (Desforges,⁶ Deslandes and Bertrand⁷), parental involvement in the home is the most important factor in improving academic performance.

For more information

Nouvelles tendances à l'égard de la petite enfance

http://www.acelf.ca/c/revue/pdf/ACELF_volXXXIII-2_vf.pdf

[1] The introductory paragraph to the fact sheet for each determinant is excerpted from *Les déterminants de la persévérance scolaire retenus par R²*, written by CRÉPAS in 2011 (Frédéric Tremblay).

[2] T. Z. Keith, T. M. Reimers, P.G. Fehrmann, S. M. Pottebaum, and L. W. Aubey (1986), Parental Involvement, Homework, and TV Time: Direct and Indirect Effects on High School Achievement, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 78, 373–380.

[3] W. Jaynes (2012), A Meta-analysis of the Efficacy of Different Types of Parental Involvement Programs on Urban Students, *Urban Education* 47(4) 706–742. Downloaded at: <http://ue.sagepub.com/content/47/4/706.full.pdf>

[4] C. Desforges (2003), *The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievements and Adjustment: A Literature Review*, Research Report RR433, London: DfES. Downloaded at: http://bgfl.org/bgfl/custom/files_uploaded/uploaded_resources/18617/Desforges.pdf

[5] P. Colletterte and D. Pelletier (2013), *Étude comparative des dispositions des parents de neuf commissions scolaires à l'endroit de la scolarisation et de la persévérance scolaire*, financed in part by the Consortium Outaouais de recherche sur la persévérance et la réussite scolaires (Coreper) and by the school boards of Rivière-du-Nord and Seigneurie-des-Mille-Îles.

[6] Ibid. Desforges (2003).

[7] R. Deslandes and R. Bertrand (2004), Motivation des parents à participer au suivi scolaire de leur enfant au primaire, *Revue des sciences de l'éducation*, 30(2), 411–434.

Taking effective action

Actions should prioritize methods that guide parents toward being more supportive of their children at home. This is especially true of more disadvantaged communities, where it is important to make services and activities available that will assist parents in this way.

To improve parental involvement, it is also very useful to focus on the quality of parent-school interactions. Many parents who themselves had negative experiences at school may be uneasy about schools and will not enter one unless formally invited. Providing more situations where parents can interact with the school in an informal and pleasant setting, or put their own expertise to use, will increase the chances that they will convey a more positive image of the school system to their children. The same goes for any interactions with school staff where parents could perceive a judgment of their parenting. It is always beneficial to students that such perceptions be broken down. The earlier that parents get involved in their children's schooling, the more positive the effects on the student. To this end, closer cooperation and more systematic joint efforts between the preschool community and its different partners (health and social services network, municipalities, community organizations, etc.) is another way to reach out to families.

Complementary to this, it may be worthwhile to rethink campaigns to promote education, both regionally and province wide. While the value of education and a diploma must be emphasized, it is also important to restore a stature of respectability to schools and the people who work in them in order to counterbalance the negative discourse and attitudes of parental and social withdrawal that also impact success at school.

Avenues for effective action related to the value placed on education and parental involvement

Target and provide guidance to parents who struggle to support their children's education:

- in helping with homework and class work and in setting educational expectations;
- in developing their children's social skills (living with others, sharing, conflicts, etc.);
- in stimulating children's motor, cognitive, and language skills (emergent literacy, physical development, etc.);
- in instilling healthy habits for their children's stage of development (sleep, nutrition, physiological changes, etc.);
- in properly preparing their children for the various transitions that they will experience as they go through school (starting school, elementary-high school transition, academic orientation, etc.);
- in establishing consistency in lifestyle, routine, and discipline at home;
- in supporting their child's emotional development and in establishing emotional bonds with significant adults.

Improve parent-school interaction:

- to create positive relationships between ALL parents and the school (appreciation events, activities that make use of parental expertise, activities that promote informal discussions and ties with the school staff, etc.),
- to encourage parental participation at the school (volunteering, committees, events, etc.).

Promote the value of education and the school:

- by fostering partnerships between the school and the community to have a complementary effect on parents and students (e.g., a partnership with a Carrefour jeunesse emploi to implement a youth psychosocial monitoring program that builds ties between parents and the school, and the establishment of a social pediatric committee that connects the school with workers from various sectors in order to support families),
- to improve public perception of education, the school, and the people who work in it, on a small and large scale.