

Parent Involvement: What Works?

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Parent involvement is the latest trend sweeping Ontario education. It is a priority in most of our schools, making demands on our time, energy and resources. But what does the research say about parent involvement? What really works? Where should we be focusing our efforts for the greatest impact on student achievement?

We examined a number of studies, from Canada, the U.S. and the U.K., and overall the research indicates that parental involvement at home has more impact on student achievement than parental involvement in school-based activities (Jenynes, 2005). Having high expectations of your child is the most significant contributor to their academic achievement (Jeynes, 2005). The next most important forms of parental involvement are reading with your children and communicating with them about school. Surprisingly, the research showed that checking homework had no impact on children's academic achievement.

What this means is the less conspicuous aspects of parental involvement may have more of an impact than we tend to believe. And getting involved in your children's education in a way that improves their chances for success at in school may be as simple as creating an educationally oriented atmosphere at home.

School-based parent involvement programs that tend to be the most successful are programs that are built on a philosophical foundation of partnership. These include programming for both parents and children, programs that target the home as well as the school, and those programs that have a focus on involvement that is linked to achievement (See Pelletier & Corter, 2005). Programs and interventions work best when they include strategies that respect the needs of families and address barriers to involvement such as childcare, transportation, and scheduling conflicts. Furthermore, for culturally diverse families, programs that recognize, respect, and address cultural and class differences are more effective. When programs are reflective in this way, parents are more likely to participate as well (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

While the research proves that there is a direct benefit for students when their parents are involved in their education, there are also side benefits for parents themselves - they learn more about public education in Ontario, they become part of a school community, and they become engaged as citizens (People for Education, 2008) (Corter & Pelletier, 2004).

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List of Research Sources on Parent Involvement

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