
Synthesis

Parental engagementⁱ

Moderate impact for moderate cost, based on moderate evidence



+3

We define parental engagement as the involvement of parents in supporting their children's academic learning. It includes:

- approaches and programmes which aim to develop parental skills such as literacy or IT skills;
- general approaches which encourage parents to support their children with, for example reading or homework;
- the involvement of parents in their children's learning activities; and
- more intensive programmes for families in crisis.

How effective is it?

Although parental engagement is consistently associated with pupils' success at school, the evidence about how to improve attainment by increasing parental engagement is mixed and much less conclusive, particularly for disadvantaged families.



Developing effective parental engagement to improve their children's attainment is challenging.

Two recent meta-analyses from the USA suggested that increasing parental engagement in primary and secondary schools had on average two to three months' positive impact. There is some evidence that supporting parents with their first child will have benefits for siblings. However, there are also examples where combining parental engagement strategies with other interventions, such as extended early years provision, has not been associated with any additional educational benefit. This suggests that developing effective parental engagement to improve their children's attainment is challenging and needs careful monitoring and evaluation.

Parents' aspirations also appear to be important for pupil outcomes, although there is limited evidence to show that intervening to change parents' aspirations will raise their children's aspirations and achievement over the longer term.

Latin American Evidenceⁱⁱ

Research conducted in Latin America consistently shows that parental involvement is associated with positive student outcomes. Parental involvement is related to overall good behavior and attitudes toward the school, higher achievement in reading and better academic performance. For example, a quantitative study conducted in Chile states that there is a positive relationship between student performance in language and mathematics and parental involvement. These results suggest that the greater the participation of parents in school, the higher the likelihood of better student performance.

Another study in Peru found that parents have a limited understanding of how teaching is given in the school and what is the best way to support their children. In addition, it is said that not all forms of parental involvement are equally relevant to improving performance. Thus, the most promising ones are those that promote meaningful relationships between family and school, and encourage children's learning, motivation, and development.

Despite the fact that parental involvement is greatly valued for teachers, parents, and students, there is scant evidence written in Spanish to establish what specific effect the parent's role in the teaching and learning process has on students' academic performance. This makes it difficult to know which parental involvement interventions will increase attainment.

How secure is the evidence?

The evidence on adventure learning interventions is moderately secure. The range of effect sizes is fairly wide but all the studies included in the meta-analysis show a positive effect. The association between parental engagement and a child's academic success is well established and there is a long history of research into parental engagement programmes. However, there is surprisingly little robust evidence about the impact of approaches designed to improve learning through increased parental engagement.

The evidence is predominantly from primary level and the early years, though there are studies which have looked at secondary schools. Impact studies tend to focus on reading and mathematics attainment.

What are the costs?

The costs of different approaches vary considerably, from developing workshops for parents and improving communication with them, to intensive family support programs with specialized staff. Costs are generally estimated as moderate.

What should I consider?

Before you implement this strategy in your learning environment, consider the following:

1. Engagement is often easier to achieve with parents of very young children. How will you maintain parental engagement as children get older?
2. Have you provided a flexible approach to allow parental engagement to fit around parents' schedules? Parents of older children may appreciate short sessions at flexible times.
3. How will you make your school welcoming for parents, especially those whose own experience of school may not have been positive?
4. What practical support, advice and guidance can you give to parents who are not confident in their ability to support their children's learning, such as simple strategies to help early readers?

ⁱ **Copyright** © [2016] The Education Endowment Foundation. All rights reserved.

ⁱⁱ **Some rights reserved.** This text is available under a Creative Commons 4.0 Attribution NonCommercial Share Alike license. This means that it is possible to copy, distribute, and make derivative works of the content provided that its original authors are credited. The commercial use of the content is not allowed. In case of making derivative works (such as a translation, for example), you must use an identical license for them. The full text of this license can be found at creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.es