

Involvement Matters: What To Tell Parents

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Hundreds of research studies show that when parents get involved, children do better in school. We sum up the details that every parent should know—and you should tell them.

Building parent involvement is the single most important thing that parent groups do. Often, it's the most difficult, too. And that's too bad because there are many compelling reasons why parents—all parents—should get involved in their children's education. If you're having trouble building involvement, the problem might be that you're not making the right argument. You simply need better ammunition.



A common way to think about getting people involved is to counter their objections. People say they don't have time, so you make it clear you only need them for an hour or two. People don't feel comfortable at school, so you work to make it more welcoming. Schedules won't allow busy people to come to the school, so you find ways they can contribute from home.

Each time you address the "don't" issues, you open up your group to more people: people with time and schedule issues, those who haven't felt welcome in the past, dads, grandparents, people who don't speak English well.

[Involvement Matters video — A great way to get your message to parents!](#)

All of that is important. But don't assume that once you tear down the barriers, people will flock to get involved. They should, sure. But they should go to the dentist more often, too.

It's up to you to make a stronger case for parents to get involved than "It's for the kids." For many people, that's simply not enough to get them energized. The good news is that there are compelling, definitive reasons to get involved, and they are backed up by volumes of research. Plus, they apply to everyone—no matter their bank balance, ethnicity, work schedule, education level, or anything else.

What Every Parent Should Know

Researchers have been studying the effects parent attitudes and actions have on their children's academic success for more than 30 years. The results have been consistent. Anne Henderson and Nancy Berla summed it up in their book *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family Is Critical to Student Achievement*, which reviewed the existing research: "When parents are involved in their children's education at home, they do better in school. And when parents are involved in school, children go farther in school and the schools they go to are better."

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Much of the information here is taken from publications by Henderson, a consultant at New York University's Institute for Education and Social Policy, and various coauthors that examine parent involvement research; and from publications by Joyce Epstein, director of the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University; the National Center for Parent Involvement in Education, which Henderson helped found; and summaries of research prepared by the Michigan Department of Education, San Diego Unified School District, and others.



Major Benefits

Research shows that when parents are involved in their children's education, the children are more likely to:

- earn better grades.
- score higher on tests.
- pass their classes.
- attend school regularly.
- have better social skills.
- show improved behavior.
- be more positive in their attitude toward school.
- complete homework assignments.
- graduate and continue their education.

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