

RESEARCH &
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KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS

Impact of Family Involvement on Education

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I. Literature on impact of family involvement on general education outcomes

A. Positive impact

A majority of the existing research regarding the impact of family involvement on educational outcomes shows a positive correlation. Barnard (2004) looked at the association between parental involvement in elementary school and student success in high school, and concluded that early parental involvement in a child's education promotes positive long-term effects. Conversely, Bronstein et al. (2005) found a lack of guidance by parents of fifth grade students to be related to poor academic achievement. Hill and Tyson (2009) reported various types of parental involvement to be positively associated with academic achievement through a meta-analysis of 50 studies, with the exception of parental help with homework. Fan and Chen (2001) found that parental expectations for their child's educational achievement have the strongest relationship with students' academic achievement, while home supervision has the weakest relationship. The relationship between parent involvement and educational achievement was also found to be stronger for global achievement indicators such as cumulative GPA rather than for subject-specific indicators.

In a 1992 literature review, Christenson et al. cited multiple studies which support the positive impact of family involvement on educational outcomes. Five factors that affect student achievement were identified – parent expectations and attributions, structure for learning, home affective environment, discipline, and parent involvement. The authors quoted a 1991 study by Comer and Haynes, stating that “achievement gains have been the greatest when parents are involved at all levels of school life, through general support of schools' academic and social goals, active participation in daily activities, and in school planning and management, a pattern that is referenced as meaningful parental participation”. This concept was reinforced in a study by Henderson (1987), which found that parental involvement restricted to the home, as opposed to all aspects of school, is not enough to improve student achievement by itself. The authors also referred to research conducted by Epstein (1991) which found that students with teachers who intentionally emphasize family involvement have larger achievement gains in literacy than those who do not.

Barnard, W.M. (2004). Parent Involvement in Elementary School and Educational Attainment. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 26, 39-62.

Bronstein, P., Ginsburg, G.S., & Herrera, I.S. (2004). Parental Predictors of Motivational Orientation in Early Adolescence: A Longitudinal Study. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 34 (6), 559-575.

Christenson, S.L., Rounds, T., & Gorney, D. (1992). Family Factors and Student Achievement: An Avenue to Increase Students' Success. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 7(3), 178-206.

Fan, X., & Chen, M. (2001). Parental Involvement and Students' Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 13(1).

Hill, N.E., & Tyson, D.F. (2009). Parental Involvement in Middle School: A Meta-Analytic Assessment of the Strategies That Promote Achievement. *Developmental Psychology*, 45(3), 740-763.

B. No impact

Several research articles reported findings that suggest that family involvement may have no impact on student achievement in school. Balli et al. (1998) investigated the effects of increased family involvement in homework. Sixth grade students were placed in one of three classes, with each class requiring differing levels of involvement from family members. The results showed that the level of family involvement with homework is not a significant predictor of student achievement, reinforcing the findings from the Hill and Tyson study described in the previous section.

Another study by Drissen et al. (2005) supported the findings above. The authors examined the effects of family involvement on students belonging to ethnic minority groups. They concluded that although the majority of schools involved in the study provided extra effort in regards to promoting family involvement, the direct effects of that involvement could not be discerned.

Balli, S.J., Demo, D.H., & Wedman, J.F. (1998). Family Involvement with Children's Homework: An Intervention in the Middle Grades. *Family Relations*, 47(2), 149-157.

Drissen, G., Smit, F., & Slegers, P. (2005). Parental Involvement and Educational Achievement. *British Educational Research Journal*, 31(4), 509-532.

II. Literature on impact of family involvement on literacy

A considerable number of studies regarding the impact of family involvement were found which focused specifically on literacy. Purcell-Gates (1994) showed that children of parents who read and write at relatively more complex levels and read together with their children have a better understanding of critical written language concepts when beginning formal instruction in literacy, compared to other children.

The UK National Literacy Trust (2001) conducted a literature review on the effects of parent involvement and literacy achievement. Findings from this literature review were categorized into two age groups, preschool and school-age. The preschool findings showed a number of influences within the home to be strong predictors of children's attainment scores when entering into pre-school. These included the frequencies with which children play with letters and numbers at home, parents teach

their children songs or nursery rhymes, parents read to their child, and parents take their children to visit the library. Parent attitudes and support towards their children's education were also found to influence performance on literacy tests.

In the school-age category of findings, Weinberg (1996) discovered a causal relationship between the presence of books and computers in the home with educational achievement. Brooks et al. (1997) were also cited, showing low frequencies of leisure reading to be associated with low literacy achievement. Rowe's 1991 study found that for children between the ages of 5 and 14, reading activity at home exerts a significantly positive influence on a student's reading achievement, as well as his or her attitudes towards reading and attentiveness in the classroom.

Storch (2001) found that home and family characteristics account for approximately 40% of the variance in preschool skills such as vocabulary development and conceptual knowledge. Parental characteristics were found to be the strongest contributing factors in this domain, followed by literacy environment and parental expectations. Bennett (2002) examined the relationship between family environment and children's language and literacy and showed the "family as educators" model to be significantly related to child language and literacy outcomes. Results from Hood's 2008 research showed that parent-child reading and literacy teaching are weakly correlated with each other. Parental teaching was related to R.W. Woodcock's (1997) Letter-Word identification scores. Parent-child reading in preschool was also related to grade 1 vocabulary showing that home practices are relevant to literacy and language development.

Dearing (2004) performed a longitudinal study to examine associations between family educational involvements during kindergarten, measuring children's feelings about literacy, and children's literacy achievement from kindergarten through fifth grade. Results collected while children were in kindergarten showed that the effect of family educational involvement on feelings about literacy and achievement is moderated by parental education; involvement is more positively associated with literacy outcomes for children whose mothers are less educated compared with children whose parents are more educated. Results collected when students entered 5th grade showed that within families, increased school involvement predicts improved child literacy. The results also showed that although there is an achievement gap in literacy performance related to the education level of the mother if family involvement is low, this gap is nonexistent if family involvement levels are high.

Bennett, K.K., Weigel, D.J., & Martin, S.S. (2002). Children's acquisition of early literacy skills: examining family contributions. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 17, 295-317.

Carter, D.R., Chard, D.J., & Pool, J.L. (2009). A Family Strengths Approach to Early Language and Literacy Development. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 36, 519-526.

Dearing, E., Kreider, H., Simpkins, S., & Weiss, H.B. (2006). Family Involvement in School and Low-Income Children's Literacy: Longitudinal Associations Between and Within Families. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 98(4), 653-664.

Hood, M., Conlon, E., & Andrews, G. (2008). Preschool home literacy practices and children's literacy development: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100, 252-271.

National Literacy Trust. (2001, May). *Parental Involvement and Literacy Achievement: The Research Evidence and the Way Forward*. Consultation Paper. London, England: Author.

Purcell-Gates, V. (1994). *Relationships Between Parental Literacy Skills and Functional uses of Print and Children's Ability to Learn Literacy Skills*. Washington, D.C.: National Institute for Literacy.

Storch, S.A., & Whitehurst, G.J. (2001). The Role of Family and Home in the Literacy Development of Children from Low-Income Backgrounds. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 92, 53-71.

Weigel, D.J., Martin, S.S., & Bennett, K.K. (2006). Contributions of the home literacy environment to preschool-aged children's emerging literacy and language skills. *Early Child Development and Care*, 176, 357-378.

III. Literature on impact of family involvement on education and literacy for indigenous peoples

There is a limited body of available research regarding the impact of family involvement on educational outcomes for indigenous peoples, with the readily accessible literature relying primarily on family members' and educators' self-reported results rather than objective measures and assessments. One discussion paper produced by the Australian Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) Taskforce on Indigenous Education in 2001 outlined the efforts of the Australian national government to improve the literacy development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and involve Indigenous parents in their children's education. The paper emphasized the need to explicitly associate literacy with spoken language for children from an oral-based background tradition as well as the need to overcome a history of 'cultural bias and deficit images' associated with literacy for Indigenous Australians. The paper also claimed that students with the highest academic achievement tend to come from families whose literacy practices mirror those of in-school practices, while acknowledging the validity of the diversity of home literacy practices. Three types of parental involvement (family as educators, family resilience, family-school partnerships) were cited, but the paper presented no quantifiable findings regarding their impact on Indigenous children's educational and literacy outcomes and simply highlighted the need for further research regarding.

A 2002 hearing before the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs gave voice to parents and educators representing flagship early childhood education programs for Native Hawaiian children in the state of Hawaii. The hearing included a discussion of the role of parents and extended families in teaching young children. One parent of a Keiki O Ka'Aina preschool student stated that the program's emphasis on the parents' importance in the educational development of their children encouraged her to be active in every phase of her preschooler's learning, which in turn caused her to become more involved in the home education of her 7 year-old daughter. Momi Durand, the executive director of Keiki O Ka'Aina, stressed the importance of holistically improving relationships between parents and their children in addition to encouraging the parents to become more academically involved.

Finally, a 2008 study conducted by Yamauchi et al. investigated the involvement of family members in the education of children attending a Hawaiian language immersion program (Papahana Kaiapuni). The study found that the participating families believed their involvement promoted "(a) the development of children's

values, (b) family and community bonding, (c) children's English language learning, and (d) family members' learning about Hawaiian language and culture." Semi-structured interviews revealed that most family members considered the first two effects to be primary, while several participants mentioned the third effect as the perceived responsibility of families due to the program's focus on Hawaiian language.

Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs Taskforce on Indigenous Education. (2001). *Effective Learning Issues for Indigenous Children Aged 0 to 8 Years*. Discussion Paper. Carlton South, Australia: Author.

Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. (2002). *Native Hawaiian Early Education, Development and Care*. Hearing before the Committee on Indian Affairs To Receive Testimony on Early Childhood Education and Development (Senate-Hrg-107-451). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Yamauchi, L.A., Lau-Smith, J., & Luning, R.J.I. (2008). Family Involvement in a Hawaiian Language Immersion Program. *The School Community Journal*, 18(1), 39-60.

Not readily available:

Chodkiewicz, A., Widin, J., & Yasukawa, K. (2008). Engaging Aboriginal Families to Support Student and Community Learning. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, 2(1), 64-81.

Fleer, M., & Williams-Kennedy, D. (2002). *Building Bridges: Literacy Development in Young Indigenous Children*. Watson, Australia: Australian Early Childhood Association, Inc.

Streelasky, J. (2001). Literacy Boxes in a Pre-Kindergarten Classroom: Exploring Parent-Child Involvement. *Canadian Children*, 26(2), 30-33.

Torr, J. (2008). Mothers' Beliefs about literacy Development: Indigenous and Anglo-Australian Mothers from Different Educational Backgrounds. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 54(1), 65-82.

Summary

The vast majority of relevant literature supports the concept that increased family involvement has a constructive impact on the domains of children's general educational and literacy outcomes, for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous families. Although the amount of available research decreases as the domains become more specified, the studies considered for this review consistently produced findings showing a positive correlation for diverse varieties of involvement types and outcomes, with a few exceptions. As would be expected, reliable data on Indigenous children and Native Hawaiians in particular remains the scarcest, emphasizing the need for further research.