

# Lessons Learned



## Improving Academic Achievement Through Family Involvement

Thirty years of research confirms that children do better in school when families are involved.<sup>1-2</sup> Further involving families in health instruction facilitates their children choosing health-enhancing behaviors that can lead to improving health and well-being.



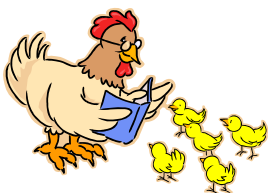
### Family Involvement Increases Student Academic Achievement



Numerous studies have shown that if family members are involved in their child's schooling, the child will not only do better,<sup>3-5</sup> but will stay in school longer.<sup>5</sup> Positive effects on reading and mathematics scores have been documented<sup>6-7</sup> as well as positive effects on other subjects.<sup>8-9</sup> Involvement also increases aspirations for post secondary education, enrollment in a more challenging high school curriculum and successful transitions from special education to regular classes.<sup>10</sup>

### Family Involvement Increases Adoption of Health-Enhancing Behaviors

Involving families in supplemental health education facilitates increased participation in those behaviors known to enhance health while decreasing participation in health risk behaviors. Regardless of whether the health behavior is flossing,<sup>13</sup> choosing appropriate nutrients,<sup>14-15</sup> reducing behaviors leading to unintended pregnancy<sup>16</sup> or refusing alcohol and other drugs,<sup>17</sup> research documents the value of involving families as an adjunct to classroom instruction.



### Family Involvement Increases Student Social Functioning

Involving families in schooling promotes motivation, social competence and positive student-teacher and peer relationships.<sup>10,18</sup>

### Family Involvement Improves School Climate

Enhanced school climate and a more open school culture occurred as a result of family and community involvement.<sup>12</sup>



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## Opportunities for Family Involvement

National standards for parent/family involvement have been set by the National PTA.<sup>19</sup>

- Communication between home and school is regular, two-way and meaningful.
- Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
- Parents/families play an integral role in assisting student learning.
- Parents/families are welcomed in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.
- Parents/families are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
- Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families and student learning.



While numerous studies of family involvement and schooling have found positive relationships, additional studies must be done to clarify what aspects of family involvement are related to specific outcomes (achievement, absenteeism, drop-out rate, motivation) and if the outcomes vary depending on the age of the child. Numerous mediating variables between family connections and academic achievement have been suggested including parenting styles, parenting effectiveness, parents own schooling experiences, class size, school culture, and the social and political context in which the school operates.<sup>10</sup>

Those parenting characteristics related to children scoring higher on self-esteem, self-control, conflict resolution and choosing health-enhancing behaviors as well as adjusting better to school are a combination of demanding and responsive behaviors.

Demanding behaviors:

- Setting/enforcing standards of behavior
- Actively monitoring a child's activities
- Maintaining structure and regimen
- Making maturity demands consistent with the developmental phase of their child

Responsive behaviors:

- Being affectionate and accepting
- Providing support
- Being involved in their child's academic and social development

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### For information on family involvement see:

- [www.ed.gov/pubs/familyinvolve/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/familyinvolve/index.html)
- [www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/pa0cont.html](http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/pa0cont.html)
- [www.pta.org/parentalinvolvement/standards/index.asp](http://www.pta.org/parentalinvolvement/standards/index.asp)
- [www.ncpie.org/aboutNCPIE/AboutPartnerships/html](http://www.ncpie.org/aboutNCPIE/AboutPartnerships/html)