

Increasing participation

What kinds of family engagement are most effective?

To understand what kinds of family engagement predict student achievement, researchers often use meta-analysis. That involves working through hundreds of studies to compare data to draw out common and contrasting findings.

One meta-analysis has found the following: ⁱ

- Helping families understand the importance of education strongly predicts student success.
- Practices which help that understanding can be labelled under one umbrella term called **academic socialization**. It has a number of components aimed at parents, shown here.

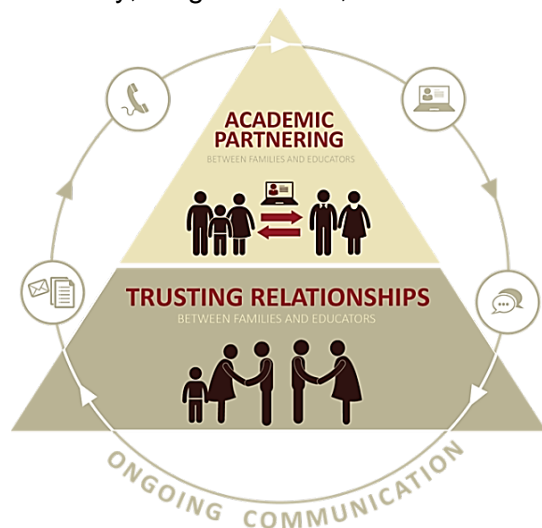
- Schools need to support these practices.
- Parents need to support their children to read, and engage with informal and formal learning occasions in many different settings.
- Parental involvement in school life as volunteers and supporters of conferences and events, and by being open to communicating with school staff also predict student success.
- Such involvement helps families feel comfortable and welcome in school settings, and it is strategic rather than accidental, so schools need proactively to plan for it.
- Homework is controversial and there is conflicting evidence about its worth. ⁱⁱ

Five Family Roles that Accelerate Learning



So ... the message seems to be 'put out the welcome mat'

- For each subject provide families with a list of skills to try and help children master
- Invite parents to share their hopes for and concerns about their children and then work together to set student goals
- Print and send home:
 - In February: As a parent, I promise ...
 - In March: What your child should be learning
 - In April: Help your child get the most out of homework
 - In May: Coping with high stakes tests and so on ...
- Create a parent resource room or, minimally, an information stand.
- Provide materials on child development, health and safety, drug education, and local services.
- Share information on Facebook
- Invite parents to share with the school community their specialized knowledge or skills
- After parent-teacher and report time, offer workshops on improving study skills
- Maintain communication in relation to home-based learning that can be done together
- Compile a wish list of goods and services parents might contribute—from craft sticks to software, from stapling newsletters to chaperoning field trips. Be sure to spell out any conditions, such as working with vulnerable people clearances.ⁱⁱⁱ



"School-aged children in both two-parent and single-parent families are more likely to get mostly A's, to enjoy school, and to participate in extracurricular activities and are less likely to have ever repeated a grade and to have ever been suspended or expelled if their fathers or mothers have high as opposed to low levels of involvement in their schools."^{iv}

ⁱ Adapted from Flamboyant Foundation (2011). What kinds of family engagement are most effective? <https://goo.gl/tYXACQ>.

See also Calachan, C. (2017) Setting the stage for effective family engagement. Flamboyant Foundation, <https://goo.gl/jkM1ty>.

ⁱⁱ Specifically, the Flamboyant Foundation (2011, np) notes: "Two out of the three meta-analyses that investigated the impact of families helping their children with homework found a negative relationship between this practice and student achievement. The researchers explain that this may be due to: 1) the quality of homework is poor enough that it harms student achievement, 2) families use improper help strategies that interfere with its effectiveness, and/or 3) families may spend more time monitoring if their child is struggling in school. Schools would be wise to look critically at their homework practices and guidance to families about how to support it if they want to make homework help a central part of their family engagement efforts."

ⁱⁱⁱ Starr, L. (no date) Activities to promote parent involvement. Education World, <https://goo.gl/YqpbHs>.

^{iv} Nord, C.W., Brimhall, D.A. & West, J. (1997) *Statistical Analysis Report October, National Household Education Survey. Fathers' Involvement in Their Children's Schools*. Washington DC: National Center for Education Statistics, US Department of Education, <https://goo.gl/cG9sRf>.