

Parental Involvement in Middle School: A Meta-Analysis

Assessment of the Strategies that Promote Achievement

By Nancy E. Hill and Diana F. Tyson

Summary

Brief Summary

The authors conduct a rigorous meta-analysis review of 50 studies on parental involvement in the middle school years. The authors find that parental involvement in middle school students' education is positively associated with academic outcomes. Among the different types of involvement, they find academic socialization to be the most critical component of parental involvement in middle school, as it has the strongest positive relationship to student achievement.

Full Summary

Building on the established relationship between parental involvement and student academic outcomes, the authors of this piece note that the transition into middle school changes the context of student's learning and, consequently, their parental involvement. Middle school contexts can often be complex, as students now have more than one teacher and teachers have fewer interactions with students. This makes it more difficult for teachers and parents to develop strong relationships. In other words, as students are experiencing biological and cognitive growth, social development, and changes in their family roles, they are also experiencing a structural change in their schooling. All this creates a need to reconsider how parental involvement must change in order to address these changes. The authors of this study conduct a meta-analysis that takes this context into consideration and explores whether or not parental involvement is related to middle school student achievement.

As children become adolescents and experience changes in school structure, their perceptions of parents' roles in their education also change; students' increased autonomy is related to their desires to not have their parents physically present in their schools. Parents interpret this desire for autonomy as a cue to reduce more direct forms of involvement, including being physically present in the school and directly communicating with teachers. Taking these changes into account and the need to develop students' decision-making skills at this age, the authors of this paper argue that parents' strategies should change as well, hypothesizing that "involvement that scaffolds adolescent's burgeoning decision-making and problem solving skills and elucidates linkages between their schoolwork and future goals may be more strongly linked to achievement in middle school than is home or school involvement (742)."

For the purpose of their meta-analysis, the authors define parental involvement in education as "parents' interactions with schools and with their children to promote academic success (p.741)." Specifically, they look at three types of parental involvement in education and their relationship with academic achievement:

- *Home-based involvement*: includes strategies like communication between parents and children about school, involvement with schoolwork (e.g., helping with homework), taking children to events and places that help their academic development (i.e., museums, libraries, college campuses, etc.), and establishing a learning environment in the home (e.g., having books to read, purchasing educational games, etc.).
- *School-based involvement*: includes parents visiting schools for events (e.g., PTA meetings, open houses, etc.) participating in school governance committees, volunteering at school and school events, and creating communication lines between parents and school personnel.
- *Academic socialization*: includes parents communicating their academic expectations to their children, such as conversations about the value of education and its utility, linking schoolwork to current events, developing educational and occupational aspirations, discussing learning strategies, and making preparations and plans with their children for their children's future.

Using these definitions of involvement, the authors narrowed their meta-analysis to 50 empirical articles published between 1958 and 2006. The articles for the analysis used represent three types of studies: 1) Naturalistic longitudinal and cross-sectional studies that included correlations between parental involvement and achievement (n=27); 2) Studies on the effects of interventions designed to enhance parental involvement (n= 5); and 3) Studies that used data from public-access, nationally representative datasets (e.g., the National Education Longitudinal Study 1988 [NELS-88]) (n= 13).

Criteria for Inclusion

- Study had to include a measure of parental involvement and academic achievement, - measured by academic outcomes -
- Study had to focus on middle school samples (grades 6-8)
- Report had to include enough information to determine effect size (e.g., include correlations [Pearson's r], d indexes, etc.)

The authors used “meta-analytic techniques to calculate the relations between parental involvement and achievement and the 95% confidence interval (753).”

Findings

- Across the correlational studies ($n=32$), the authors found a positive relationship between general parental involvement and student achievement in middle school. Correlations ranged from $-.49$ to $.73$, with an average of $r = .18$.
- In order to determine whether all types of involvement are equally effective, the authors examined each type (home-based involvement, school-based involvement, and academic socialization) separately. The average weighted correlations between parental and student achievement were positive and statistically significant for school-based involvement and academic socialization. The relationship for home-based involvement was not significant.
- When the relationship between student achievement outcomes and academic socialization and school-based involvement were compared, the relationship was stronger for academic socialization.
- The authors also explored different versions of home-based involvement in order to determine if some forms of home-based involvement were more helpful than others in the studies sampled. Overall, they found that educationally enriching activities (e.g., providing educationally enriching materials and books at the home, visiting museums, etc.) were positively associated with educational achievement while helping with homework had the strongest negative association with achievement. These findings support similar trends found in existing research.
- The authors also attempted to determine if there are ethnic differences in the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement. Due to the limitations of their sample and the way these studies collected data, the authors were only able to infer that the strength of the relationship is similar between African Americans and European Americans.

Conclusion

From their meta-analysis of 50 studies on parental involvement in middle school, the authors found that there is a strong positive association between parental involvement and student academic achievement. Additionally, from their sample, they determined that academic socialization as a form of parental involvement has the strongest positive relationship to student academic achievement in middle school. Academic socialization includes parents discussing their academic expectations with their children and the value of education, developing educational and occupational aspirations and concrete goals, discussing learning strategies, and linking their education with real life implications. The authors point out that this form of involvement is likely to be the most effective since it supports where middle school students are developmentally—“Academic socialization includes the types of strategies that will scaffold adolescents’ burgeoning autonomy, independence, and cognitive abilities.” Additionally, this type of engagement “fosters and builds upon the development of internalized motivation for achievement, focuses on future plans, provides a link between school work and future goals and aspiration,” providing “young adolescents with the tools to make semi-autonomous decisions about their academic pursuits (758).”

Citation

Hill, Nancy E., and Diana F. Tyson. "Parental Involvement in Middle School: A Meta-Analytic Assessment of the Strategies That Promote Achievement." *Developmental Psychology* 45, no. 3 (2009): 740-63.

Summary written by Stephany Cuevas.