Study: Parenting more important than schools to academic achievement

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Study finds parental involvement more important than the school itself when it comes to academic achievement.

New research from North Carolina State University, Brigham Young University and the University of California, Irvine finds that parental involvement is a more significant factor in a child's academic performance than the qualities of the school itself.

"Our study shows that parents need to be aware of how important they are, and invest time in their children – checking homework, attending school events and letting kids know school is important," says Dr. Toby Parcel, a professor of sociology at NC State and co-author of a paper on the work. "That's where the payoff is."

The researchers evaluated data from a national representative study that collected information from more than 10,000 students, as well as their parents, teachers and school administrators.

Specifically, the researchers looked at how "family social capital" and "school social capital" pertained to academic achievement. Family social capital can essentially be described as the bonds between parents and children, such as trust, open lines of communication and active engagement in a child's academic life. School social capital captures a school's ability to serve as a positive environment for learning, including measures such as student involvement in extracurricular activities, teacher morale and the ability of teachers to address the needs of individual students.

The researchers found that students with high levels of family social capital and low levels of school social capital performed better academically than students with high levels of school social capital but low family social capital. "In other words, while both school and family involvement are important, the role of family involvement is stronger when it comes to academic success," Parcel says.

More information: The paper, "Does Capital at Home Matter More than Capital at School?: Social Capital Effects on Academic Achievement," is published online in the journal *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*. www.sciencedirect.com/science/ … 27656241200042X?v=s5

Abstract: A relatively neglected problem is how individuals derive social capital from more than one context and the extent to which they benefit from the capital in each. We examine whether social capital created at home and at school has differing effects on child academic achievement. We hypothesize that children derive social capital from both their families and their schools and that capital from each context

promotes achievement. Using data from the National Longitudinal Education Study and structural equation modeling, we show that capital from each context is helpful, with social capital in the family more influential than social capital at school. We discuss the implications of these findings for research on child achievement and for studies of inequality generally.

Provided by North Carolina State University

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