

Parent involvement continues to be important in elementary years

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Promoting parent involvement has been a big part of efforts to improve school performance. A new study has found that children whose parents were more involved across elementary school had fewer problem behaviors and better social skills, but that children's academics weren't affected.

The study, in the May/June 2010 issue of the journal *Child Development*, is based on information about more than 1,300 children from 10 U.S. cities who were followed from birth to fifth grade. They are part of the Study of Early Childcare and Youth Development, a [longitudinal study](#) carried out under the auspices of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).

Extending past research that's focused on parent involvement among preschoolers, the researchers, from the University of Pittsburgh, sought to learn how parent involvement affects children's academic, social, and emotional well-being in elementary school. The children studied were mostly White and about evenly divided by gender.

According to the findings, when parents boosted their involvement in elementary school (by increasing visits to the school and encouraging educational progress at home), children's [problem behaviors](#) (including both aggressive and disruptive behaviors as well as anxiety and depression) decreased. At the same time, their so-called pro-social skills (such as [cooperation](#) and self-control) improved.

However, the parents' involvement didn't affect children's achievement. One explanation for the absence of such associations may be that the study's measure of parents' involvement didn't focus on involvement that was specific to [academic performance](#).

"The study shows that parents continue to wield considerable influence on children's development through elementary school," according to the researchers. "Therefore, the study has implications for policies to encourage involvement."

Provided by Society for Research in Child Development

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