

## Research shows children's school performance tied to family 'type'

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The way a family interacts can have more of an impact on a child's predicted school success than reading, writing or arithmetic, according to a University of Notre Dame study published recently in the *Journal of Child Development*.

University of Notre Dame Professor of Psychology Mark Cummings and colleagues at the University of Rochester studied the relationship patterns of some 300 families (with six year-olds) over the course of three years, and found distinct family-school connections. Specific family “types” emerged as predictors of school success:

“Coming from a cohesive family, in which members tend to be warm and responsive to one another, where problems are resolved, and members cope well, increases the likelihood of children doing well in school,” according to Cummings.

Children from enmeshed families, characterized by over involvement, hostility and only moderate warmth, enter school with no more problems than their cohesive family peers, but suffer more anxiety and feelings of alienation later, Cummings explains.

The third family type, “detached,” in which all problems are avoided, in which hostility is present, and without displays of affection, tend to have children with the most problems.

“They often start school with more [disruptive behavior](#) and higher levels

of aggression and difficulty cooperating,” Cummings explains.

Though dysfunctional [family](#) relationships can negatively impact a child’s school experience, Cummings points out that other factors - schools in high-crime areas or poverty, for example — also can contribute to problems in [school](#).

Specializing in parental impact on child development and the psychology of children and families, Cummings is author or co-author of several books including “Marital Conflict and [Children](#): An Emotional Security Perspective” (Guilford Press, 2010).

Provided by University of Notre Dame

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