

The Importance of

by Sheena White

It shouldn't come as any huge surprise the importance of parental involvement in education. However, the reality is that most parents don't know how important.



Parents today are busier than ever before and being pulled in a multitude of different directions. "More than 80 percent of new teachers feel that parental support and involvement is the most challenging area they face; parents are either unwilling or don't have time to participate in their child's education."

One thing that's also important to remember is that education is more than what happens inside the four walls of a classroom. For example, spending time together around the dinner table, sharing stories and having a conversation is a part of educating your kids and it goes without saying that parental involvement here is key.

Even if you're actively involved in your child's formal education, if you're absent in the other, less formal, parts of their education (and life), there will be far-reaching consequences.

So while I think we would all agree that involvement in our kids' education (the one they get both in and out of the classroom), is important, the bigger question is: why is parental involvement in education so important?

Students Will Perform Better in School

If parents are showing interest in their kids' education, kids will, in turn, be more likely to recognize that their education is important.

"Research suggests parental involvement helps give children attention and praise which, in turn, helps them recognize their education is worthy of adult interest. As children tend to model adult behaviors, when parents are actively involved with their schooling, children will learn the importance of education and try to emulate those behaviors from their parents.

According to the National Education Association, "Ongoing research shows that family engagement in school improves student achievement, reduces absenteeism, and restores parents' confidence in their children's education. Students with involved parents or other caregivers earn higher grades and test scores, have better social skills, and show improved behavior."

And while it's better to have one parent show an interest in a child's education, research shows that getting both parents on board can have a major impact.

“Students with two parents operating in supportive roles are 52% more likely to enjoy school and get straight A’s than students whose parents are disengaged with what’s going on at school.”

Research shows that students perform better in school if both parents are involved, regardless of the whether both parents live with the student or not.

Improved Behavior and a More Positive Attitude

The reality is that behavioral issues tend to start to show up during the tween and teen years, especially as their cognitive development leads them to start taking more risks.

Being involved in all aspects of a child’s education, though, can help minimize the number of behavior issues you’ll encounter. For example, kids whose parents are involved in their lives have a lower rate of substance abuse and behave better, both in and out of the classroom.

It’s been found that “children with involved parents also have enhanced skills for regulating emotions and feel negative emotions less often.”

When parents are intentional about being involved in their kids’ lives, kids benefit not only in the classroom but far beyond it.

Improved Social Skills

Research shows that having involved parents not only improves behavior and performance in school, but also improves social skills.

“Parent involvement in education... aids kids’ social functioning. In particular, kids with involved parents have better peer interactions than kids with uninvolved parents. Their social skills also seem to be more advanced. Notably, advanced social skills, in turn, to lead to better academic outcomes.”

How to Be More Involved in Your Kids’ Education

So now that we’ve established how far-reaching involvement in your child’s education is, the next question is “how can parents be MORE involved?”

This can be a big challenge for the parents of tweens and teens, as kids at this time are wanting more independence and suddenly spending time with their parents isn’t “cool.”

Well, while your kids’ may be resistant to the idea of spending time with you, studies consistently demonstrate that kids really do like spending quality time with their parents.

Get to Know Your Kids’ Teachers

This may seem easier said than done, especially as your kids get into high school. However, a positive relationship with your child’s teachers can have a massive impact on your student. “A positive parent-teacher relationship helps your child feel good about school and be successful in school,” advises Diane Levin, Ph.D., professor of education at Wheelock College. “It demonstrates to your child that he can trust his teacher, because you do. This positive relationship makes a child feel like the important people in his life are working together.”

Establish Regular Together Time

Are you making time for your kids every day? Even just ten minutes of one-on-one time can have a major impact. As Amy McCreedy of Positive Parenting Solutions explains, just ten minutes of one-on-one time each day can go a long way towards establishing a positive relationship with your child and curbing behavioral problems.

Establish a regular routine. Go for a walk, get ice cream, or even just sit and visit while playing board games.

Eat Meals or Snacks Together as Often as You Can

Family meal or snack time is a great opportunity to bond with your kids and talk about the day's events. Studies show that families who eat together each week are much less likely to be involved with drugs or alcohol or have major behavioral issues.

Final Thoughts: Importance of Parental Involvement in Education

As we've discussed, education is far more than what happens within the four walls of the classroom. It happens when you're making a snack together, teaching your kids to do chores. It happens as you're chatting with your child before bed.

And yet, parent involvement in all of these aspects of your kids' education are so very important. Without parental involvement, you're sending your kids a clear message that they don't matter, which I know is never your intention, Mom and Dad. We WANT to do the best we can by our kids. We just oftentimes make the mistake of letting work and everything else distract us from the most important people in our lives. Our kids.

Studies have shown that when parents are involved in their kids' lives and education:

- Students Will Perform Better in School
- Kids Will Have Improved Behavior and a More Positive Attitude
- Kids Will Have Better Social Skills

Fortunately, there are some very simple ways you can make this kind of impact in your kids' lives:

- Get to Know Your Kids' Teachers and talk to them about how to help your child keep on learning at home
- Establish Regular Together Time to spend with your child, on-on-one if possible
- Eat Together as Often as You Can – There is lots to be learned from conversing as a family