Question

1. What role do positive parental interactions play in student academic and social success?

Background

REL Midwest received a request for information on positive parenting.

Following an established REL Midwest research protocol, we conducted a search for reports, descriptive and policy-oriented briefs, and articles with information on positive and proactive parenting and the role these actions play in student academic and social achievement. The sources included federally funded organizations, additional research institutions, several educational research databases, and a general Internet search using Google, Google Scholar, and other search engines.

We also searched for appropriate organizations that may act as resources on this issue. We have not done an evaluation of these organizations or the resources themselves but offer this list to you for your information only.

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From the abstract: “The relation between family functioning and school success was examined in 211 at-risk, African American, inner city adolescents attending middle school (grades 6–8). Interviews with adolescents and caregivers yielded data on family cohesion, parental monitoring, and school engagement; school records provided data on grade point average. Results showed that both family cohesion and parental monitoring predicted school engagement, but neither family characteristic predicted GPA. Important gender differences also emerged. For boys only, the relation between family cohesion and school engagement was stronger when parental monitoring was high. For girls only, the effects of cohesion and monitoring on school engagement were additive: girls with both high family cohesion and high parental monitoring were most likely to be engaged in school. These findings extend the research base on family protective factors for antisocial...
behavior in young adolescents. Implications for future examination of family process characteristics in high-risk adolescents are discussed.”


*From ERIC abstract:* “The notion that parent involvement impacts student learning outcomes for children who are at risk for failing academically has been supported by prominent early childhood education experts. Recent attention has been given to specific ways parents can help increase student learning through their interactions with children as they complete home learning activities. It is important to note that the term parent is used interchangeably with the terms adult, guardian and family member. The term "at-risk reader" refers to readers who are at risk of failing school because of reading deficiencies. This report will examine whether parent training to increase parent-child interactions during the completion of second grade Interactive Homework Assignments (IHA) can facilitate increases in a student’s ability to draw inferences from reading selections, a skill closely aligned with proficiency in reading acquisition. The second grade level was chosen because these children were those whose teachers were concerned with preparing them to take the third grade SAT9. Third grade level was not selected because many of their professional development activities were prescribed due to their immediate concern with preparing students to take the SAT9. IHA, for the scope of this study, is homework designed to increase parent involvement and student achievement. The results indicate that specific parent training during a brief period of time, approximately four weeks, has the potential for improving academic performance for academically at-risk students.”

*Note: We were unable to locate a link to the full-text version of this resource. Although we try to provide publicly available resources whenever possible, we determined that this resource may be of interest to you. It may be found through university or public library systems.*


*From the abstract:* “In this longitudinal study, we examined identity development using the life story model (McAdams, 2001), in addition to a traditional identity status approach, in order to explore the association between perceived parenting in adolescence and the subsequent quality of life story narration in emerging adulthood…. Structural equation modeling showed that participants who experienced more positive parenting at age 17 narrated their low points with clearer evidence of coherent positive resolution at age 26. Coherent positive resolution of the low point was also related to concurrent measures of identity achievement and emotional adjustment at age 26.”

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*From the abstract:* “This study explored the utility of a conception of parental involvement as the arrangement of contingency operations that normatively change: the frequency of children’s school-related behavior, the reinforcing potency of stimuli produced by studying, and children’s tendencies to request parental intervention. A child-report measure of parental contingency use was developed and administered to 1520 schoolchildren (Grades Four to Six). An exploratory factor analysis revealed three internally consistent dimensions of parental practices: use of punishment and negative reinforcement contingencies; use of positive reinforcement contingencies; and non-responsiveness to children’s requests for educational intervention. Frequencies of use of punishment/negative reinforcement contingencies and of parental non-responsiveness were inversely correlated with use of positive reinforcement contingencies and with teacher’s reports of children’s achievement.”

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*From the abstract:* “The present study examined children’s coping strategies as mediators and moderators of the association between parenting factors and outcomes in 235 African American children (mean age = 10.37 years). Information about parenting and child coping strategies were obtained by child self-report. School adjustment was assessed by standardized achievement scores and by teacher ratings of behavior. Structural equation modeling indicated that positive parenting was related to higher achievement and lower behavioral problems.”

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*From the abstract:* “This longitudinal study followed 142 children to determine whether the quality of mother-child interactions, as measured in kindergarten, predicted high school academic achievement and attainment. Findings showed that, regardless of race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and IQ, positive mother-child interactions in kindergarten were associated with an increased likelihood of high school graduation and, for some students, a higher grade-point average by 12th grade. However, mother-child
interactions in kindergarten were not related to reading or math achievement test scores. The findings suggest that school psychologists should attend to children’s interactions with their caregivers during their earlier years of school to forecast and deflect future problems given the long-lasting importance of early mother-child interactions for children’s educational attainment and the protective function of such interactions for children facing risk.”


From the abstract: “A group of 162 out of 5,400 former Head Start children were identified at the end of third grade as highest achieving and thriving both socially and academically. Families of these children have somewhat more resources on which to call and somewhat fewer stresses. Caretakers of high achievers ascribed to more positive parenting attitudes and were more encouraging.”

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From the abstract: “This research study tested a social cognitive model in which family socioeconomic status (SES) and neighborhood quality predicted parental efficacy, which then predicted the academic and social-emotional adjustment of adolescents through 3 parental behaviors (monitoring, parental involvement, and parent-adolescent communication).

Design. The study investigated parental efficacy among a stratified random sample of 929 parents and their adolescent children in the United States. Parents and adolescents provided reports through telephone interviews. Structural equation modeling tested the model fit for the overall sample and for European American (n = 387), African American (n = 259), and Latin American (n = 283) subsamples.

Results. The model fit for the overall sample and for each racial or ethnic group. Paths within each model also were examined. For the overall sample, neighborhood quality predicted parental efficacy, parental efficacy predicted reported parental involvement and monitoring, both of which predicted academic and social-emotional adjustment of adolescents, and parent-adolescent communication predicted social-emotional adjustment. Some racial or ethnic differences in paths emerged.

Conclusions. Overall, the study supported predictions made by social cognitive theory. Given the link between parental efficacy, parenting behaviors, and adolescent outcomes, 1 important goal of programs for parents of adolescents might be to bolster parental efficacy.”
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*From ERIC abstract:* “A meta-analysis of 34 primary studies yielding 438 independent findings shows that 20 specific parenting practices, in combination, can account for as much as one-quarter (23.1%) of the variance in student achievement outcomes. Seven parenting practices, when combined, account for approximately one-sixth (16.3%) of the variance in student achievement. These positive parenting practices are: (1) educational aspirations and grade expectations; (2) parent engagement; (3) authoritative parenting; (4) autonomy support; (5) emotional support; (6) providing resources and learning experiences; and (7) specific parent participation activities in school. Socioeconomic status, grade level, and ethnicity are three moderator factors. Eight negative parenting practices, in combination, also account for 31.9% of the variance in student achievement and are linked to a student's lack of success.”

**Additional Organizations to Consult**

- The Harvard Family Research Project  
http://www.hfrp.org

*From the website:* “The Harvard Family Research Project helps stakeholders develop and evaluate strategies to promote the well being of children, youth, families, and communities. HFRP’s work focuses on early childhood education, out of school time programming, family and community involvement in education, and evaluation.”

- The SEDL National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools  
http://www.sedl.org/connections/

*From the website:* “The Center links people with research-based information and resources that they can use to effectively connect schools, families, and communities. It emphasizes connections that directly impact student achievement in reading and mathematics, as well as connections that contribute to the students’ overall success in school and in life. The Center reviewed emerging findings and research to develop an online database, annual conferences and annual reports to help advance procedural knowledge and to link research findings to practice.”

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**Keywords and Search Strings Used in the Search**
“Positive parenting” OR “proactive parenting” OR “positive reinforcement” OR “positive parenting” AND achievement OR “proactive parenting” AND achievement OR “positive reinforcement” AND achievement OR “parent interaction” AND “student achievement”

Search of Databases and Websites

Institute of Education Sciences Sources: Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Program, Doing What Works (DWW), What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Institute of Education Sciences (IES), IES Practice Guides

Additional Data Resources: The Harvard Family Research Project, Google Scholar, Google, ERIC

Criteria for Inclusion

When Reference Desk researchers review resources, they consider—among other things—four factors:

- **Date of the Publication:** The most current information is included, except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.

- **Source and Funder of the Report/Study/Brief/Article:** Priority is given to IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols.

- **Methodology:** Randomized controlled trial studies, surveys, self-assessments, literature reviews, policy briefs. Priority for inclusion generally is given to randomized controlled trial study findings, but the reader should note at least the following factors when basing decisions on these resources: numbers of participants (just a few? thousands?); selection (Did the participants volunteer for the study, or were they chosen?); representation (Were findings generalized from a homogeneous or a diverse pool of participants? Was the study sample representative of the population as a whole?).

- **Existing Knowledge Base:** Although we strive to include vetted resources, there are times when the research base is slim or nonexistent. In these cases, we have included the best resources we could find, which may include newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, organization websites, and so on.

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