



What Works in Education?

Using Evidence to Improve Education

11

October 2018

Do programs to encourage parental involvement in education improve school performance?

Jaume Blasco

The idea that parents' involvement in their children's education has a positive influence on their academic performance is so intuitive and attractive that educational administrators, teachers and families have recognized it as critical for succeeding in school. However, what is the evidence that this is true? And if it is true, which kinds of parental practices, at home or at school, influence which kinds of performance? Which types of programs help to alleviate situations where the levels or quality of parental involvement are inadequate? What can we recommend to families, schools and educational administrations to ensure that parental involvement contributes positively to children's educational success?

“For too long, education has been subject to inertia and based on traditions, and educational changes have been grounded in unfounded intuitions and beliefs. The ‘What Works’ movement irrupts into the world of education with a clear objective: to promote evidence-based policies and practices. [Ivàlua](#) and the [Jaume Bofill Foundation](#) have come together to push this movement forward in Catalonia.”



What Works in Education?

Using Evidence to Improve Education

Do programs to encourage parental involvement in education improve school performance?



Jaume Blasco

Holds a degree in Environmental Sciences and a Master's degree in Public Administration from the Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service at New York University. He has worked as an evaluator at the Catalan Institute of Public Policy Evaluation (Ivàlua) and as a researcher at the Institute of Government and Public Policy (IGOP) of the Autonomous University of Barcelona. His main field of research is the evaluation of public policies, especially education, family and employment policies. He is currently a consultant and independent analyst. He has been a consultant and trainer for projects led by the OECD, the European Union, EUROsocial and Coursera.

Motivation

The idea that parents' involvement in their children's education has a positive influence on their academic performance is so intuitive and attractive that educational administrators, teachers and families have adopted and recognized it as critical for succeeding in school. If we admit that the family is a leading educational player which shares responsibility for learning processes with the school and the child himself or herself, we should assume that what parents do has a considerable influence on the educational performance of their children. However, what is the evidence that this is true? And if it true, which kinds of parental practices influence which types of performance? Thirdly, which kinds of programs can attempt to alleviate situations where the levels or quality of parental involvement are inadequate?

Fortunately, these questions have attracted the attention of researchers, who in recent decades have developed a large body of important evidence about the effects of parental involvement on

education. However, whilst some studies show positive effects, others find that the effects are negligible or even negative. We should not be surprised when we consider that the definition of parental involvement may be intuitive, but is far from clear and unequivocal. In practice, it ranges from subtle attitudes, like the parents' expectations for their children's academic performance, to specific actions, like parental participation in school activities and functions or the development of structured parental tutoring sessions explicitly focused on learning. At the same time, academic performance is a multidimensional construct that includes different subjects and skills like mathematics, language and science, which can be measured with standardized tests, the qualifications of the teachers or ad hoc tests conducted in each evaluation study. Finally, the samples analyzed in the different studies are heterogeneous, so they can focus on different stages of education (from primary school education to post-compulsory secondary education), socio-demographic features of the families or the children (parents' level of education, family income, ethnicity, etc.) or the child's performance levels. Therefore, it seems reasonable to think that at least part of the inconsistencies among the studies can be explained by the different levels of parental involvement, different areas of knowledge and different parts of the population evaluated.

The definition of parental involvement may be intuitive, but is far from clear and unequivocal. It ranges from subtle attitudes to specific actions explicitly focused on learning.



Furthermore, parental involvement programs are generally promoted by the educational administrations or schools for the purpose of stimulating parents' involvement and helping them to develop skills to contribute positively to their children's learning processes. It is im-

portant to discern whether these programs are effective, since the fact that parents' voluntary and spontaneous involvement has a positive impact on their children's academic performance does not necessarily mean that programs to induce parental involvement and improve their quality also work, either because they cannot stimulate involvement or because the induced involvement does not have the same effect as spontaneous involvement. In this case, it is equally important to know which kind of program works best for which type of child or family, since the programs are as different from each other as the forms of parental involvement.

Parental involvement programs are generally promoted by the educational administrations or schools for the purpose of stimulating parents' involvement and helping them to develop skills to contribute positively to their children's learning processes.



This review attempts to unravel the lessons derived cross-cuttingly from the accumulated empirical evidence. We ask ourselves What Works, both in spontaneous parental involvement and in parental involvement induced by programs. As such, we also ask what we can recommend to families, schools and educational administrations to help parents' involvement to contribute positively to their children's success.

Questions influencing the review

This paper aims to answer the following questions about What Works in the field of parental involvement:

1. What effect does spontaneous parental involvement have on children's academic performance?
2. What impact do programs to foster parental involvement have on children's academic performance?
3. Which types of programs have a greater impact for which kinds of families and children?
4. Which practical implications could we apply to our own context?

What is parental involvement in education?

Though intuitive, the definition of parental involvement is far from being clear and consistent across the different studies whose effects are evaluated. Generally, we could say that parental involvement consists of the parents' links to and support for their children's learning process [1]. The difficulty in finding a more precise definition is rooted in the very different ways in which parents provide this support. Therefore, it is a complex multidimensional construct that covers different knowledge, attitudes and behaviors.

Many theoretical studies have attempted to categorize these activities and frame them in a model, whilst the meta-analyses evaluating the effects have developed several classifications to try to address the multiple practices identified. We

have chosen to adopt the most frequent of the various classifications, which distinguishes between parental involvement at home, involvement in school and communication between the family and the school [2].

The most frequent of the various classifications distinguishes between parental involvement at home, involvement in school and communication between the family and the school.



1. **Home-based involvement** includes activities to encourage and facilitate learning at home, such as:

- Communicating with children about school issues (for example, taking interest in what the child does at school and in his or her progress).
- Parental supervision, especially of how time is managed for leisure and study and of the proper completion of homework.
- Creating suitable study environments and routines.
- Valuing education and managing parents' expectations regarding educational performance and achievements.
- Engaging in proper educational activities with small children, which may consist of pronouncing words, naming objects in a book, recognizing letters and

words, holding cognitively demanding conversations with a rich and varied vocabulary and building memories (conversations between parents and children about past events).

- Providing parental tutoring sessions to older children to strengthen or develop certain skills (for example, reading or mathematics).
 - Sharing reading activities with children, which includes reading stories or books, making children read aloud and providing feedback and practices like dialogic reading, in which the adult practices active listening and guides the children to help them to understand and explain the story of a book.
 - Enjoying games and educational leisure activities.
 - Providing the children with materials like books or videos to foster the desire to learn.
 - Arranging visits to libraries, museums and play centers.
2. **School-based involvement** includes actions taken by parents at school and their frequency, such as by participating in open house days, in cooperation with the teachers; getting involved in or organizing some activity or workshop in the classroom; helping to organize day trips or field trips; volunteering; attending school parties and functions; or participating in the school's governance through parent associations.
3. **Family-school communication** includes interactions between teachers and parents to connect what happens at school with what happens at home, with the main and shared focus on the child's positive development and education. It includes visits to the families at home before the start of the school year; orientation sessions at the beginning and end of the school year; informal talks between teachers and parents; formal routine and extraordinary meetings to resolve specific issues or problems; and notifications sent on paper or by telephone or email to provide curricular information or information on specific school activities or the child's progress.

We exclude from this review any activities that parents undertake to support the well-being and development of their children, including the type and quality of the relationship between parents and children, the establishment of rules and boundaries and the general atmosphere in the home, which are often viewed as part of the concept of positive parenting. Even though these practices do have a very significant influence on the learning processes of children, we have not included them as they are not focused on the learning processes directly.

Spontaneous parental involvement is heavily influenced by family characteristics: the higher the parents' socio-economic status and level of education, the greater the involvement at home as well as at school. This is because parents who

work jobs with low qualifications often have less flexible hours and less time available to get involved in education, so the lower the parents' level of education, the less confidence they have in their ability to represent their children at school and

Spontaneous parental involvement is heavily influenced by family characteristics: the higher the parents' socio-economic status and level of education, the greater the involvement at home as well as at school.



help them with their schoolwork, especially when the curriculum becomes complicated and when the parents are of foreign origin. At the same time, the parents may trust the teachers less if they suffered discrimination, neglect or failure at school in their own childhood. Finally, school communication and participation channels are not usually designed with the most vulnerable families in mind [3] [4].

What effect does parental involvement have on educational performance?

- **Measured simultaneously, parental involvement and academic performance are positively and significantly correlated.** This means that the more the parents are involved, the better the child's performance in school. The evidence for this link is solid and based on an extensive and consistent body of academic literature: all the meta-analyses on parental involvement agree that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship, though small to moderate in magnitude (Table 1). It should be borne in mind, however, that a causal relationship cannot be inferred from this correlation between parental involvement and academic performance, as it may instead be a spurious relationship caused by a third variable, the family's socio-economic status and level of education, as well as greater parental involvement and better academic performance.

- **The positive relationship between parental involvement and performance holds for all types of parental involvement, but the magnitude of the effect is very uneven.** In general, we can say that:

1. **The effect of the parents' involvement at home is often greater than that of their involvement at school.** This may be because home involvement is more frequent, intense and directly aimed at learning than parental participation in school. It may also be the case that meta-analyses employ fairly generic indicators of involvement in school, whereas in reality it includes activities of very different kinds, some of which, like helping to organize a workshop or attend a play, have no direct relationship to their children's academic performance. Some studies show that when the various forms of involvement in school are disaggregated, those most directly related to learning, like meetings with teachers to monitor the child's development and needs, have a significant effect on performance (Box 1).

2. **At home, subtle attitudes and behaviors linked to educational expectations seem to have a greater effect than the educational activities themselves.** Parents' educational expectations or aspirations probably lead to a general atmo-

Parents' educational expectations or aspirations probably lead to a general atmosphere of parental support and to the establishment of high unspoken performance standards that seem to be very effective in stimulating learning and performance.



sphere of parental support and to the establishment of high unspoken performance standards that seem to be very effective in stimulating learning and performance. In all meta-analyses that include expectations as a form of involvement, the positive effect that they produce is always the one of the highest

magnitude. Nevertheless, it cannot be ruled out that expectations may at least partially be capturing the effect of the parent's socio-economic class and level of education.

3. **Forms of involvement based only on parental control do not usually have a positive effect.** Generally, supervising homework appears to be a form of involvement with a small or even insignificant or negative effect. However, since most of the studies are correlational, we should consider the possibility that parental control is a consequence of low performance and not just a cause, which complicates estimates of the real impact of this form of involvement.
4. **Communication between parents and children about school issues appears in all the meta-analyses as a form of involvement with a modest, but always positive and statistically significant effect.**

Table 1.

Meta-analyses included in the review: descriptive studies of the relationship between spontaneous parental involvement and academic performance

Meta-analysis	N	Population	Size of the effect (general)	Size of the effect according to the type of involvement	Time range	Conclusions
Fan and Chen (2001) [5]	25	Not specified.	r = 0.25 (small to moderate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational aspirations: $r = 0.40$ General involvement: $r = 0.33$ Participation in school: $r = 0.32$ Communication between parents and children: $r = 0.19$ Parental supervision $r = 0.09$ 	ND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The area of academic performance and the type of parental involvement explain 28% and 27% of the variability, respectively. The effect on global performance indicators is higher than on specific areas of knowledge. Age and ethnicity are less important moderating factors but are still significant. The type of performance measurement is not a significant moderating factor.
Jeynes (2003) [6]	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> K-12 (kindergarten to compulsory secondary education). Ethnic minorities. 	Black: d = 0.44 to 0.48 Latin American and Asian: d = 0.43 to 0.48 Asian: d = 0.22 (small to moderate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For African-American children, the most effective forms of involvement are checking homework ($d = 0.72$), expectations ($d = 0.57$) and communication with the children ($d = 0.53$). For Latin Americans and Asians, encouragement to read is the only form of involvement with a significant positive effect ($d = 0.21$). 	1988 to 1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All the ethnic groups benefit from parental involvement. Children of Asian origin are those who benefit least, even though parental involvement is high. The most effective types of involvement for African-American children are not the same as those of the general population.
Jeynes (2005) [7]	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary education. Urban environments. 	d = 0.74 (moderate to large)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational expectations: $d = 0.58$ Shared reading: $d = 0.42$ Parenting style: $d = 0.31$ Communication between parents and children: $d = 0.24$ Parental assistance and participation in school: $d = 0.21$ Checking homework: n.s. 	1969 to 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The effect of spontaneous involvement is much higher in grades (0.85) than in standardized tests (0.37) or ad hoc tests (0.34). The effect is maintained between different ethnic groups, but the effect is higher if there is a white majority or a minority-majority than if the sample is exclusively composed of minorities. The effect is maintained between genders, but it is a little higher for boys than for girls.
Jeynes (2007) [8]	52	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory and post-compulsory secondary education (middle and high school). Urban environments. 	d = 0.46 (moderate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational expectations: $d = 0.88$ Parenting style: $d = 0.40$ Checking homework: $d = 0.32$ Communication between parents and children: $d = 0.24$ Parental assistance and participation in school: n.s. Establishing rules: n.s. 	1972 to 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The evidence of a positive association is strong for expectations and parenting style. Evidence is mixed for supervising homework, communication between parents and children and attendance of school activities: it tends to disappear in studies with statistical controls and/or when the unit for measuring performance is a standardized test. Establishing rules at home has no effect on performance. The magnitude of the effect is smaller than that obtained by the same author in the meta-analysis for urban primary education (0.74). The effect is maintained between different ethnic groups, but the effect is higher if there is a white majority or a minority-majority than if the sample is exclusively composed of minorities. No differences in effect according to gender.
Patall <i>et al.</i> (2008) [9]	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> K-12 (kindergarten to compulsory secondary education). USA and Canada. 	r = 0.04 (small)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing rules to complete homework: $r = 0.54$ Help with homework: $r = 0.10$ Checking homework: $r = -0.90$ 	1987 to 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The results of the analyses with statistical controls is inconsistent, with approximately half the studies identifying positive results and the other half showing negative or no results. Simple correlational analyses show a positive association in primary education ($r=0.06$) and post-compulsory secondary education (0.17) and a negative association in compulsory secondary education (-0.17). Involvement in homework has a positive and significant effect on performance in language and reading (0.12 to 0.20) and a negative effect on mathematics (-0.19).
Hill and Tyson (2009) [10]	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory secondary education. 	r = 0.18 (small)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic socialization at home: $r = 0.39$ Involvement in school: $r = 0.19$ Involvement at home: $r = 0.12$ Help with homework: $r = -0.11$ 	1985 to 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic socialization is the form of involvement with the greatest effect on compulsory secondary education. Help with homework has a negative association. The children's ethnic group is not a significant moderating factor. The measured effect for Caucasians and African-Americans is 0.19 and 0.11, respectively.
Castro <i>et al.</i> (2015) [4]	37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From kindergarten to compulsory secondary education. 	d = 0.12 (small)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents' expectations: $d = 0.22$ Communication with the children about school issues: $d = 0.20$ Reading activities with the children: $d = 0.17$ Parenting style: $d = 0.13$ Supervising homework: $d = 0.02$ Attendance and participation in school activities: n.s. 	2000 to 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to the area of knowledge, the effect is the greatest in art and music (0.39), followed by general academic performance (0.14), reading (0.08), mathematics (0.06) and foreign languages (0.05). However, the effect is not significant on performance in science, even though the sample in this case is very small. The magnitude of the effect of parental involvement grows with the age of the student, reaching its highest point in secondary school (0.14), followed by primary school (0.13) and kindergarten (0.05). The magnitude of the effect is greater for standardized performance measures (0.15) than for non-standardized ones (0.09).

d = standardized mean difference (Cohen's d), r = correlation coefficient. Source: Author's creation.

Box 1.

Parental involvement in school: a public or private good?

Park and Holloway (2017) [3] have conducted one of the few longitudinal studies on parental involvement in school, which means that instead of analyzing whether involvement and performance tend to appear together at the same time, they have verified how variations in parental involvement over time are associated with subsequent variations in the child's academic performance. They also differentiate parental activities at school into two major categories: activities characterized as being **private goods** (aimed at benefiting the child, such as participating in meetings with teachers) and activities characterized as being **public goods**, which are aimed at benefiting all the children in the class-group or of the school as a whole (like participating in the parent's association, volunteering or helping to collect money). The following conclusions stand out:

- Parental involvement in education at school varies widely between schools and families, but for the same family it stays quite stable over time. Therefore, the starting level strongly determines what parental involvement will be like throughout the child's life.
- The differences in parents' involvement according to their socio-economic status are very important, both for public good-type and private good-type parental involvement.
- Private good-type parental involvement is strongly associated with performance, both in mathematics and reading, with an effect that intensifies as the children grow. Thus, whilst the simultaneous association between involvement and reading competence is negative and significant, probably due to reactive involvement in low performance, the longitudinal analysis shows that children with more parental involvement end up overtaking their peers in terms of reading skills at the end of their primary education. The authors speculate that, as the curriculum becomes more complicated, knowing what children are studying at school and the problems they may have become more relevant in helping them to learn. Alternatively, it is possible that in the final years of primary school, when the academic activity of some students declines, the most involved parents are better positioned to help their children at a critical time in their educational development.
- The effect of involvement on performance in mathematics and reading grows right along with the family's socio-economic level. Therefore, parents with a high socio-economic level are not only more involved, but their involvement is also more effective.
- The effect of public good-type parental involvement is positive but less intense. It has a stable effect on mathematical skills, which does not progress as the child grows, and is also higher in students with a higher socio-economic level. However, the association with reading competence is negligible.

- **Parental involvement in secondary education is less common, but also effective. The changes experienced by students, schools and family relationships bring variation to the most effective type of parental involvement.**

The transition from primary school to compulsory secondary education often brings important changes: adolescents become more autonomous, secondary schools are often larger and more bureaucratized structures than primary schools and the curriculum becomes more complicated. All in all, this makes it more difficult for parents to get involved in the same way as they did in primary school and parental involvement declines. However, these same changes may lead to a decline in the student's academic performance, which is why it seems appropriate to maintain forms of involvement adapted to the new context.

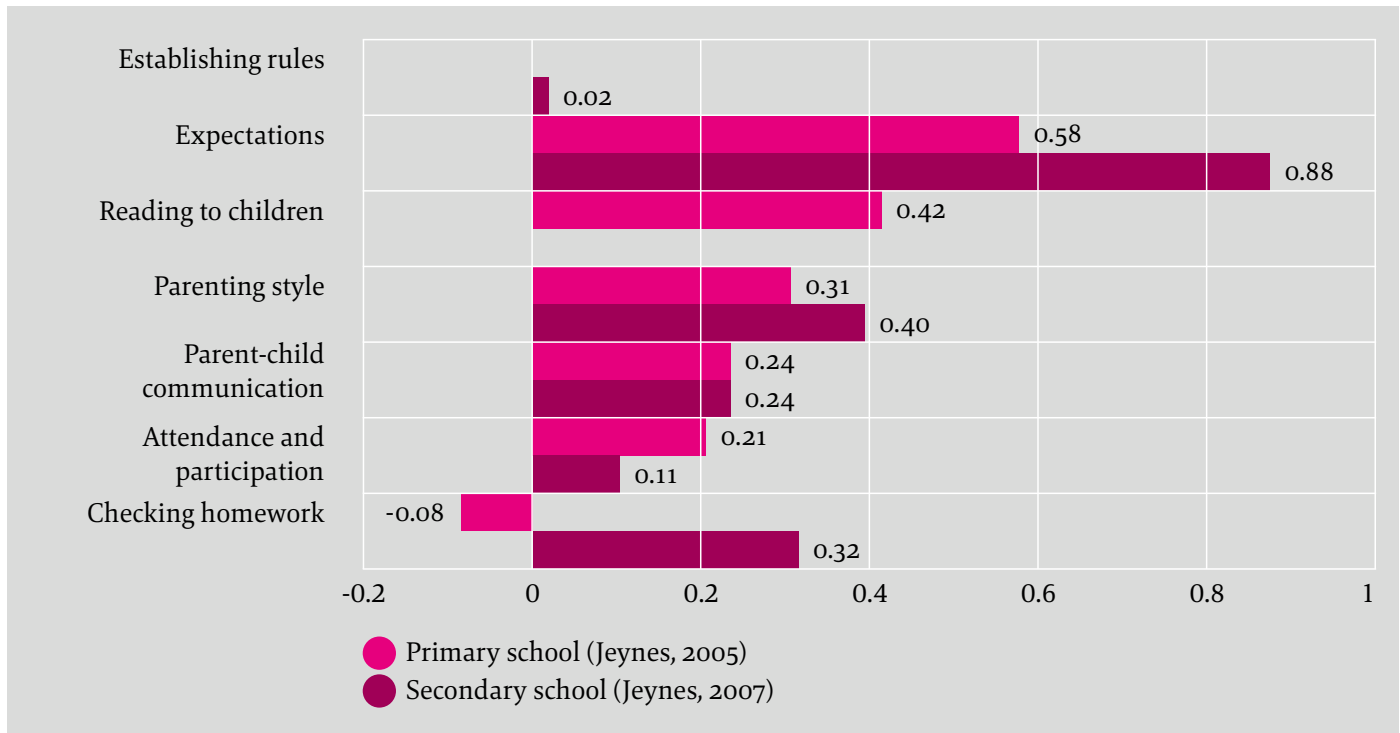
The three meta-analyses focused on secondary education [4] [8] [10] agree on attributing a positive and significant impact to parental involvement in secondary education and indicate a greater effect on those more subtle forms of involvement, which promote the intrinsic motivation to learn, foster educational and work aspirations and help to connect the studies with present events and with the student's life project to reinforce a sense of usefulness, discuss his or her learning strategies and future plans and respect his or her autonomy. Furthermore, these forms of "academic socialization" adapt better to the context of secondary schools, since they are not as dependent on a high-quality relationship with the teacher (which is probably not even feasible for teachers and more motivated parents) and are basically built on the relationship between children and parents, complemented by a rather non-personalized type of information, like knowing the subjects and curricular decisions that the student has been taking.

Studies indicate a greater effect on those more subtle forms of involvement, which promote the intrinsic motivation to learn, foster educational and work aspirations and help to connect the studies with present events and with the student's life project to reinforce a sense of usefulness, discuss his or her learning strategies and future plans and respect his or her autonomy.



Thus, a meta-analysis that reproduces in secondary education the same categories of parental involvement, time range and geographic area used in a study on primary education [7] [8] finds that in secondary school the magnitude of the effect of the parents' expectations and parenting style grows and the effect of participating in the school declines ([Graph 1](#)). Even though the effect of checking homework also grows, this association tends to disappear when only high-quality studies are used or when the performance measuring unit is a standardized test. Another meta-analysis finds that the effect of "academic socialization" is consistently much greater than other forms, such as involvement in school, home-based learning activities and help with homework, which also show statistically significant effects in all cases [10].

Graph 1. Comparison of effects according to the type of parental involvement between primary and secondary education



Source: Created by the author using data from Jeynes (2005 and 2007) [7] [8]

- **Parental assistance in doing homework is the only form of involvement that could have negative effects, even though the influence is inconclusive. It may be the case that establishing rules and routines where, when and how to do homework has positive effects, whereas checking homework has negligible or negative effects.**

Help in doing homework is one of the most controversial forms of parental involvement and, at the same time, one of the most widespread practices and one of the most frequently recommended by schools and teachers. This type of involvement tends to have a positive and significant effect on the completion of homework, but the evidence is inconsistent with respect to its effect on performance [4] [7-10].

There are several reasons for the disparity in the results. Firstly, parental involvement in homework can take many different forms: the parents can organize a space and time for doing homework; interact with the teacher about the homework, provide structured tutoring sessions or direct help in completing their homework; review and check that the homework is done correctly; establish rules on when to do homework or simply answer the child's questions and meet his or her needs regarding the homework. In this regard, the only meta-analysis specifically dedicated to helping with homework concludes that establishing rules has the most significant positive association, followed by direct help, whilst checking homework shows a negative correlation of notable magnitude. It seems that

establishing rules helps to structure the act of doing homework and involves communicating expectations and criteria about when, where and how to do homework, which probably increases the time spent on homework and the efficiency of this time, and it can have long-term effects if the rules

are internalized. Furthermore, direct assistance can help to improve the child's understanding, whereas checking homework, by itself, constitutes little more than a mechanism of control that may be perceived as intrusive, has a negative effect on motivation and has no effect on learning [9].

Establishing rules helps to structure the act of doing homework and involves communicating expectations and criteria about when, where and how to do homework, which probably increases the time spent on homework and the efficiency of this time, and it can have long-term effects if the rules are internalized.



Secondly, other factors can influence the effect of involvement in homework, like the child's age, the level of academic performance, the time available to the parents and their educational knowledge and skill in tutoring their children. By age, the association is small, positive and significant during primary school, negative during secondary school and positive and significant again during post-compulsory secondary education [9]. This may be because younger children have less developed study habits, so parental help is not only useful for teaching the academic content of the lessons, but also for internalizing proper time-management and emotional management habits; because parents have a greater command of content in primary school; because adolescents in compulsory secondary school try to become more independent and conflicts between them and their parents tend to rise; and because the reverse causality in compulsory secondary education (from performance problems to parental involvement in homework) is more intense. The positive association in post-compulsory secondary education is probably due to its high level of specialization, so that only parents with high levels of technical knowledge can provide their children with help, making it both rare and highly effective.

- **The effect of involvement on performance usually varies by area of knowledge** (for example, general performance, reading, mathematics or social sciences) **and by the type of performance measurement factor** (teacher qualifications, results of standardized tests or ad hoc measures), **but with no clear pattern** [4-9].
- **The positive association between parental involvement and performance usually holds true for all ethnic groups** [6] [8] [10].

In summary, the evidence indicates a causal relationship of moderate magnitude between parental involvement and academic performance, which is not the same for all possible forms of parental involvement or for all levels of education.

However, the level of spontaneous involvement for families is heterogeneous, and a lack of parental involvement is frequently identified as a competing factor in

The evidence indicates a causal relationship of moderate magnitude between parental involvement and academic performance, which is not the same for all possible forms of parental involvement or for all levels of education.



cases of low performance. Indeed, in order to stimulate parental involvement when it does not occur spontaneously, or when it does not occur at the right levels and quality, educational administrations develop different programs to foster parental involvement. In the following section, we ask what these programs are like, what impact they have and which type of program works the best for which kind of family and child.

What are parental involvement programs?

Programs to foster parental involvement are generally promoted by educational administrations and schools to stimulate parents' involvement in their children's education. These programs include a

In general, the programs combine motivation and training so parents can participate effectively in their children's education.



wide range of activities, as varied as the

forms of parental involvement, with different intensities and focuses: from simple encouragement to do a certain activity with the children at home, brief workshops so the families can establish some activity or routine and programs to improve communication between teachers and families, to designing strategies shared by teachers and parents to boost the academic performance of a student with learning difficulties. In general, the programs combine motivation and training so parents can participate effectively in their children's education.

According to the same classification in the previous section, we can distinguish between:

- **Programs that motivate and train parents to improve the learning environment at home or develop educational activities with their children at home.** They include shared reading programs with different methodologies; training programs to perform activities or structured games with the children at home that help them to develop certain skills, like reading and mathematical skills, for example; and programs to promote parental assistance in doing homework.
- **Programs that foster greater parental participation in school.**
- **Programs that focus on improving communication between the school and the family.** These may be simple programs to improve communication between teachers and parents (to transmit regular information about the child's educational progress or about the skills or curricular content that is being worked on at the school at that time) or programs to promote a closer relationship between teachers and parents through group or personalized follow-up meetings. This category also includes training programs in the native language as a second language for parents of foreign origin as a first step in making it easier for them to communicate with the school and participate in their children's education.

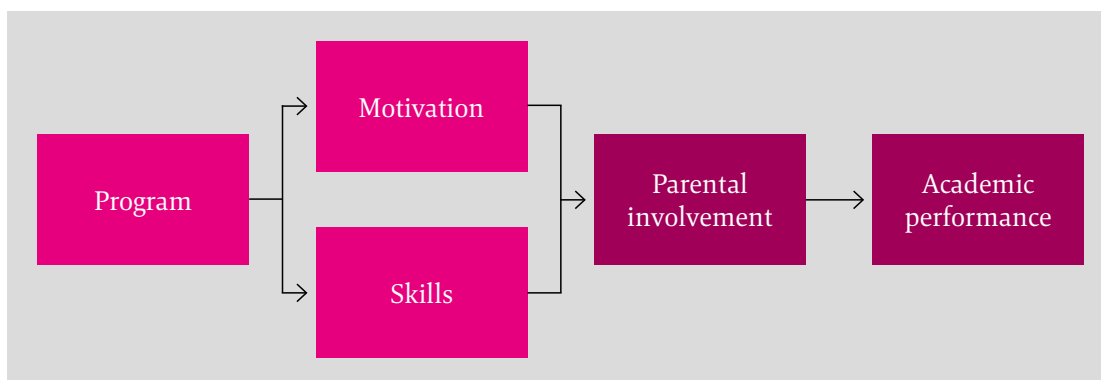
The existing meta-analyses focus especially on motivation and training programs for achieving parental involvement at home (Graph 2). There are various reasons why the approach in this type of parental involvement has a greater potential impact: firstly, they motivate and enable the development of one-on-one interaction between the parent and child, with the consequent opportunity for the child to practice intensively and for the parent to provide individualized feedback. This could be especially significant in the development of reading habits. Secondly, relatively brief interventions, like workshops lasting just a few hours, are intended to induce permanent positive changes in family routines that may produce long-term effects and even have a positive impact on the other children in the home. Thirdly, a focus on family intervention should be adaptable to the child's specific social and cultural situation, which is especially significant when the cultures of the family and the school are different.

Motivation and training programs for achieving parental involvement at home motivate and enable the development of one-on-one interaction between the parent and child, with the consequent opportunity for the child to practice intensively and for the parent to provide individualized feedback.



Graph 2.

Theory of the change of the programs to foster parental involvement in education



The uncertainties, however, lie in the degree to which parents' involvement can be induced through a relatively brief program, especially in the case of less motivated families, and if the induced involvement has the same positive effects as spontaneous involvement if so.

The uncertainties lie in the degree to which parents' involvement can be induced through a relatively brief program, especially in the case of less motivated families, and if the induced involvement has the same positive effects as spontaneous involvement if so.



In this regard, it is a question of clarifying which important aspects of parental involvement can be stimulated and taught effectively so that they have an impact on performance. These aspects do not necessarily need to be the same ones that generate a greater positive impact when parental involvement is spontaneous.

It is also possible that the programs only work with one of the two aspects, motivating the parents to participate without resulting in greater educational success for their children, or adding value to the practices of the parents who were already motivated to participate, but failing to secure or induce behavioral changes in the less

motivated parents, in a kind of Matthew effect, meaning that parents who already had a greater level of motivation and skill before the program are those who tend to participate and improve their ability to provide support as a parent.

Do programs to foster parental involvement improve the children's educational performance?

Generally speaking, they do. Six of the seven meta-analyses of evaluations of reviewed programs show a positive and statistically significant impact on participation in programs to foster parental involvement, though the magnitude

Six of the seven meta-analyses of evaluations of reviewed programs show a positive and statistically significant impact on participation in programs to foster parental involvement, though the magnitude is small to moderate.



is small to moderate. The only meta-analysis that found a non-significant (though still positive) effect is limited to the effect of parental involvement programs on their children's homework. Therefore, it is not just voluntary involvement that generates a positive impact, but also induced involvement via programs launched by the schools. Predictably, the effect of the programs is usually measured as smaller than that of voluntary involvement, since spontaneously involved parents are probably more motivated and devoted than those whose participation was activated by a program, whilst the added value of participation in a program is below the baseline level of involvement.

Notably the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) estimates the standard benefit of this type of program as equivalent to a three-month gain in learning on the students' average academic progress in a school year. It is a qualified impact of moderate magnitude (extensive, but generally not sturdy) [1].

What type of program to foster parental involvement works best?

As we have said, programs to foster parental involvement vary as much as the forms it may take, with very uneven impacts according to the type of program. The findings of the meta-analyses appear in [Table 2](#), leading to the following main conclusions:

Table 2.
Meta-analyses included in the review: studies evaluating the impact of programs to foster parental involvement on academic performance

Meta-analysis	Approach	N	Population	Size of the effect (general)	Size of the effect according to the type of involvement promoted by the program	Time range	Conclusions
Jeynes (2005) [7]		18	• Primary education.	d = 0.27 (small)		1969 to 2000	• The size of the effect of the programs is smaller than the effect of spontaneous voluntary involvement estimated in the same meta-analysis.
Nye, Schwartz and Turner (2006) [11]	• Programs intended for parents to carry out a structured academic support activity at home that lasts at least 4 weeks. • Only experimental evaluations (with random allocation to the test or control group).	18	• Kindergarten and primary education.	d = 0.45 (moderate)	• Collaborative reading: n.s. • General education and training (provide the parents with appropriate activities, materials and information to be used with their children at home): d = 0.61 • Education and training in mathematics: n.s. • Education and training in science: n.s. • Mathematical games (games with cards or dice that illustrate, require or help to develop mathematical skills): n.s. • Reading games: n.s. • Rewards and incentives for children for their performance in school: d = 1.18	1964 to 2000	• Programs for parents to offer children incentives and rewards for performance are the type with the greatest effect. • The size of the effect is greater for mathematics (d = 0.54) than for reading (d = 0.42), even though it is poorly defined (CI 95% = 0.02 to 1.07 for mathematics and 0.18 to 0.66 for reading). • There is no significant association between the duration of the parental involvement coming from the intervention and the size of the effect.
Jeynes (2007) [8]			• Compulsory secondary education or post-compulsory secondary education. • Urban environments.	d = 0.36 (small)		Not specified	• The size of the effect of the programs is smaller than the effect of spontaneous voluntary involvement estimated in the same meta-analysis. • When disaggregated according to types of performance measurement, only non-standardized sizes have a significant effect (d = 0.25).
Patall <i>et al.</i> (2008) [9]	Experiments of programs to motivate and train parents to help with homework, with the family or the child as a unit of allocation or analysis.	6	• K-12 (kindergarten to compulsory secondary education). • USA and Canada.	d = 0.11 (not significant)	• Help with homework: n.s.	1992 to 2003	• The effect is not significant on performance, but it is on completing homework (d = 0.28) and on reducing problems with homework, like refusing to do it, getting frustrated or complaining about it (d = -0.84). • The effect on performance is positive and significant in primary education (d = 0.22) and negative and non-significant in compulsory secondary education (d = -0.18). • The type of performance measurement, area of knowledge, type of program and name of the workshop were not significant moderating factors.
Senechal and Young (2008) [2]	Programs intended to promote parental involvement in shared reading activities at home.	16	• Kindergarten to third grade of primary education	d = 0.65 (moderate)	• Train parents so they can tutor their children in reading (d = 1.15) • Listen to the child read and provide him or her with feedback (d = 0.52) • Read to the child: n.s.	1970 to 2005	• No differences are detected in the size of the effect by age, previous reading level and family's socio-economic class. • No differences are detected in the size of the effect according to whether or not the program includes feedback for parents, in addition to initial training or the duration of the intervention at home. • Brief training programs (1 to 2 hours) have a greater effect than those that last longer (3 to 13.5 hours): d = 0.97 and d = 0.37 respectively, even if they may be capturing the greater focus on parent tutoring in brief programs. • The size of the effect is smaller when standardized measures are taken than when ad hoc measures are taken.
Van Steensel <i>et al.</i> (2011) [12]	Programs intended to stimulate the development of language and reading and writing at home through a combination of proposals of stimulating activities and training so parents can do them properly.	30	• Kindergarten and primary education.	d = 0.18 (small)		1992 to 2010	• There are no substantial differences between the effect on reading comprehension skills (d = 0.22) and codification (d = 0.17). • The magnitude of the effect does not vary significantly according to the approach, type of facilitator, place for implementing the program, duration or delivery of reading materials, level of education of the families and age of the students or time elapsed between the program and measuring the effect. • Programs aimed at vulnerable populations tend to be facilitated by non-professional volunteers or are developed in the homes of the participating families.
Jeynes (2012) [13]	All types of programs.	51	• General.	d = 0.30 (moderate) d = 0.26 if the meta-analysis is limited to high-quality studies	• Shared reading programs: d = 0.51 • School-family collaboration programs: d = 0.35 • School-family communication programs: d = 0.28 • Homework verification programs: d = 0.27 • Programs linked to Head Start (non-compulsory early education for low-income families): n.s. • Programs of English as a foreign language for families of foreign origin: n.s.	1964 to 2006	• The impact is positive and significant for all levels of education and is greater in secondary education (d = 0.35) than in kindergarten and primary education (d = 0.29), even though it is much more frequent in primary school. • The size of the effect is a little greater when results from standardized tests are used (0.31) than when teacher qualifications are used (0.21). • The duration of the program does not have a statistically significant program on the size of the effect. • The size of the effect for some aspects (shared reading and verification of homework) is greater than the size of these forms of involvement when it is spontaneous (not induced by a program), according to the estimates of the same author (Jeynes, 2005).

d = standardized mean difference (Cohen's d).

Source: Author's creation.

- **Programs intended for parents to help their children to learn to read are those which show the greatest impact, even though the evidence is not conclusive.**

Determining which kind of program has a greater impact is complicated, because most of the meta-analyses focus only on fostering a certain type of involvement, generally consistent with the promotion of relatively structured activities at home (for example, encouragement to read or parental help with homework), which makes it possible to compare effectiveness only between variations of programs within a given category.

A single meta-analysis performs an exhaustive and generic survey of programs that foster parental involvement, classifies them as post hoc and compares their relative effectiveness [13]. The categories are: general programs; shared reading programs that encourage parents to read with their children; programs to foster collaboration between teachers and parents to improve a child's academic performance or behavior through the joint design of strategies and rules and the setting of expectations; programs encouraging parents to make sure that their children have completed their homework; programs to improve communication between teachers and parents to minimize misunderstandings and transmit regular information on the child's educational progress or on curricular matters; and programs of English as a second language for parents to make it easier for them to participate in their children's education. One additional category consists of parental involvement activities related to "Head Start", the US federal non-compulsory early education program for low-income families.

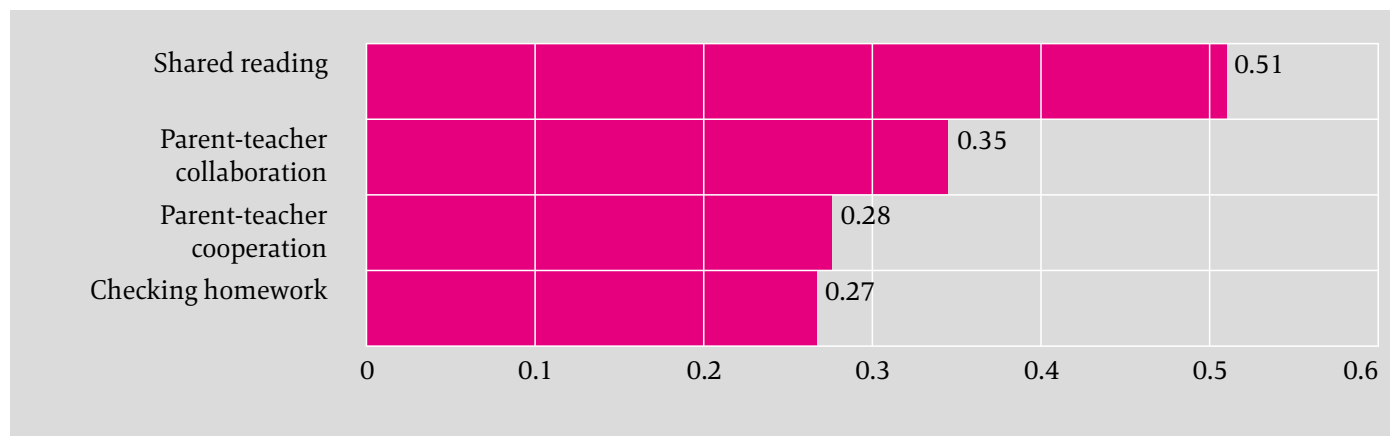
The effects are positive and significant for practically all the categories and are greater for the shared reading programs and programs to foster collaboration between teachers and parents (Graph 3). The impact is only statistically insignificant in "Head Start" and the teaching English as a second language, though it is positive.

Furthermore, it shows that the type of practice that has a greater impact on academic performance when it is voluntary differs from the type of practice that has a greater impact when it is promoted through a program. Thus, both shared reading and homework verification have a greater impact on the meta-analysis of programs than on the meta-analysis of voluntary parental involvement practices by the same author [7] [8]. On the contrary, parental expectations, which are the spontaneous form of involvement with the greatest effect, are not even considered in the meta-analysis of program evaluations. We understand that this is because no programs have been identified that are aimed at influencing them.

The type of practice that has a greater impact on academic performance when it is voluntary differs from the type of practice that has a greater impact when it is promoted through a program.



Graph 3.
Comparison of the effect of different types of programs to foster parental involvement



Source: Created by the author using data from Jeynes (2012) [13]

• **The most structured activities and those most directly oriented towards learning tend to have a greater impact on academic performance.**

Several meta-analyses indicate that parents are more effective when they are trained to tutor their children through specific learning activities, which seems intuitive, since it is reasonable to expect that forms of involvement that are explicitly more instructive and more directly focused on a clear educational goal would have a greater short-term impact on performance.

Several meta-analyses indicate that parents are more effective when they are trained to tutor their children through specific learning activities.



On the one hand, the order of magnitude of the effect is higher in the meta-analyses limited to specific structured activities than in those that include more diverse forms of involvement, with one exception [2] [7] [8] [11-13].

On the other hand, an experimentally designed meta-analysis of evaluations (and therefore methodologically sound evaluations) limited to activities to foster parental involvement in the home that could lead to the father and/or mother conducting a planned academic support activity at home for at least four weeks concludes that parental training activities that provide parents with activities, materials and information about how to do them at home have a greater effect on programs that induce looser forms of involvement, like shared reading and educational games [11].

Parental training activities that provide parents with activities, materials and information about how to do them at home have a greater effect on programs that induce looser forms of involvement, like shared reading and educational games.



Finally, in programs to foster parental involvement in shared reading activities, the more structured the activity, the greater the impact of reading on learning (from early education to the first three years of primary school). The effect is greatest in tutoring activities, followed by listening to children read and giving them feedback with questions and corrections, whereas simply reading books to children does not show a significant effect [2].

- **Programs to help children to do their homework have a small effect on performance in the best cases.**

The effect is positive, small and statistically non-significant on academic performance in primary school and negative and non-significant in compulsory secondary education [9]. Similarly to what happens with spontaneous involvement, the programs' effect is greater when they do not measure performance, but rather completion of homework.

- **Although the programs are more frequent in early education and primary schools, they also work for secondary school, and maybe even better.**

The impact of parental involvement is positive and significant for programs aimed at children and families in early, primary or secondary education alike. However, the programs seem to be more common in the earliest ages, probably because it is easier to get the parents of children of those ages to participate than it is when they are bigger [4].

Box 2.

The effectiveness of programs to involve families in education: the experiment of the *Mallette des Parents* experiments

Mallette des Parents (“Parents' Schoolbag”) was an experimental pilot program launched in the 2008-09 academic year in 34 schools. The program made it possible for families with children beginning the sixth grade (first year of middle school, pupils 11 years of age) to participate in at least three meetings with the school principal. The purpose of these meetings was to make families aware of the importance of supporting the children through the schooling process and of guiding them towards the best way to do so. The families were asked to participate right after the year began and 750 families in 183 classes in eligible schools requested to participate in the program (the volunteer families). The experimental protocol consisted of randomly dividing these 183 classes between a test group (the volunteer families of these classes received orientation sessions) and a control group (which did not receive the program). The random allocation was performed school-by-school and ended up identifying 96 test group classes and 87 control group classes.

The meetings with the school principal took place between November and December 2008. Since many of the families involved were newcomers and had little command of French, mediators or interpreters from the respective source languages often participated in these sessions. After the participating families completed the three basic sessions, they were invited to receive additional work and orientation sessions throughout the year, an option chosen by very few. At the end of the year, the situation of the participating volunteer families and the non-participating families was compared regarding the different variables of interest (or outcomes). Specifically, this comparison shows that the *Mallette des Parents* program does increase families' involvement in educating their children and in their participation in school, whilst also improving the pupils' attitudes and behaviors (absenteeism, lack of discipline and lack of effort). On the other hand, no impacts on the children's academic results in different subjects are seen. In addition, the comparison between the outcomes of non-volunteer families in test classes and non-volunteer families in control classes allows us to identify positive gains in the former with regard to the children's attitudes towards school; meaning that it seems that the positive impacts that the program has on the children of the participating families "spread" to the children of the non-participating families with whom they share the class [14].

The same team that evaluated the *Mallette des Parents* supported and analyzed an extension of the same program in the school district of western Paris. It was carried out during the 2010-11 school year and was this time limited to the completion of two orientation sessions with parents of students in the last year of middle school (ninth grade), students identified by the teachers as at risk of dropping out. The talks were also conducted by the school principal, although here they were oriented to emphasize the importance of education and to choose the itinerary of continuity well. An average of 10 parents participated in each talk. The event covered a sample of 37 volunteer schools and 179 classes. A drawing was held to choose which classes within these schools would participate in the program (97 classes received the talks) and which would make up the control group (82 classes). This study measured the levels of repetition, dropping out and performance of test and control students throughout two school years. The findings of this comparison point to significant lasting impacts of the program on the key educational outcomes: the children of the participating families stay in the education system for longer than control students (mainly in options less required by professional training), and during this time they perform better and repeat less. This case also reveals a "contagious effect" in relation to those same outcomes, favoring the classmates of the children of the test families over the classmates of the non-test volunteer families [15].

The *Mallette des Parents* program currently forms part of the service catalogue of the French Ministry of Education and is offered nationwide to families with children at three key times during their education: in the preparatory year (at the start of primary education), sixth grade (beginning of middle school) and ninth grade (end of middle school).

- **The impact of the programs is supported by all types of children and families.**

The two meta-analyses that study the effect of the parents' socio-economic status or level of education do not estimate a significant moderate effect [2] [12]. In turn, a set of meta-analyses of programs on urban environments is always expected to have a positive effect, albeit small and moderate, even though all of them are confined to samples mainly composed of families of a low socio-economic level [7] [8] [13]. Finally, regarding programs that foster parental involvement in reading, the child's previous reading level has no significant moderating effect [2].

- **Longer-lasting programs are not more effective than short ones.**

All the meta-analyses agree that neither the number of sessions, the length of the training nor the duration of later parental involvement are significantly linked to a greater impact

Neither the number of sessions, the length of the training nor the duration of later parental involvement are significantly linked to a greater impact on performance.



on performance [2] [9] [11-13]. Even in one case, brief training programs (lasting 1 to 2 hours) have a significantly greater effect than those lasting 3 to 13.5 hours [2], although this may be due to the fact that brief training programs tend to be more structured and instructive, so both effects could be combined. In this same meta-analysis, the use of support and feedback sessions for parents during home intervention (after the initial training) also fails to produce significant differences.

- **It is not clear that the type of performance measurement affects expectations of the programs' impact.**

Two meta-analyses find that the association between participation in programs and academic results is a bit weaker when using standardized test results than when using teacher qualifications or ad hoc measures [2] [8], which is explained by the fact that non-standardized tests designed by the researchers themselves are probably more sensitive to changes that occur during the programs. However, a third meta-analysis observes the opposite trend [13] and a final one finds that the type of measurement does not significantly moderate the programs' effect on performance [9].

- **The evidence available on the programs is very limited, especially for the little attention paid to the details of the design, the implementation process and the translation from content to parental practices.**

The evaluation studies covered by the meta-analyses rarely explain significant particular aspects of design, like the strategy to attract families to the program; the adoption of a specific approach or methodology; whether the parents are attracted to the program at home, at a school or in community centers like libraries; whether the instruction has been given by professional, semi-professional or volunteer educators; whether or not the delivery of materials to the families has been included; or if the teachers or facilitators have previously been trained to perform this role.

Similarly, the studies pay very little attention to the implementation process, although the possible problems are obvious. Firstly, there may be difficulties in the intensity and quality of the motivation and training activities provided to the parents: if the responsibility for promoting parental involvement falls on the school, it implies an extra role on top of those already played by teachers and administrations, which may have trouble implementing it properly or may perceive it as an intrusion and resist implementing it. Alternatively, if the workshops are facilitated by volunteers, their ability to develop the content or adapt it to practical family situations may be limited. Secondly, there may be a problem with the self-selection of participants, so that more motivated parents with more skills tend to aim for activities, or at least those with the greatest need exclude themselves, whether due to problems of work-life balance or psychological barriers to participation.

The studies pay very little attention to the implementation process, although the possible problems are obvious.



Finally, the activities that parents truly do perform with their children at home, and which serve as the link that connects programs to improved child performance, may fail for multiple reasons, such as because the programs require knowledge and skills that the parents lack and that cannot be gained simply by participating in a brief program;

The activities that parents truly do perform with their children at home, and which serve as the link that connects programs to improved child performance.



because the emotional relationship between parents and children is disturbed by the tensions generated by a teaching-learning situation; because the parents do not have the time to implement the activities at home; or because once they sit down to help their children, parents decide to do different activities or demonstrate different behavior than those indicated.

Given a lack of these details on the definition of the evaluated programs and their effective implementation, the effect of the programs is assessed by large categories that mix very different types of programs. This leads to a very incomplete answer about what works best, for which kind of child and family and why, and limits the practical lessons that can be taken away [2] [12].

It should also be noted that the programs are usually very brief and the impact is measured practically immediately. Evidence on the effects over the medium and the long term is scarce, and it could be true that the size of the effect vanishes as time passes after the program, as it would take some time to produce significant effects.

Finally, the most relevant aspect of spontaneous involvement, parents' educational expectations, is not the focus of attention in evaluations of programs included in the meta-analyses, probably because it has not been the subject of programs. Insofar as expectations reflect the effect of the family's socio-economic status and the cultural origin, they would not be a manipulable factor through a program to foster involvement. However, the question of whether or not it is possible to influence the values underlying parental expectations through a program (such as the values on the individual, the role of adulthood and the conception of education as a tool for social promotion, etc.), to the point of boosting children's performance, is highly relevant and remains unanswered.

The most relevant aspect of spontaneous involvement, parents' educational expectations, is not the focus of attention in evaluations of programs included in the meta-analyses.



Summary

There is an extensive body of knowledge that consistently and solidly demonstrates that parental involvement is linked to greater academic performance. Part of this association is quite probably due to the parents' socio-economic status and level of education, which are related to both greater involvement and better educational performance by children. However, although less abundant, the evidence also points to a causal effect between parental involvement and academic performance that is moderate in magnitude.

This positive relationship between parental involvement and performance is not uniform for all possible forms of parental involvement. At first, parental involvement to encourage and facilitate learning at home seems to have a greater effect than parental involvement in school. On the other hand, at home, subtle attitudes and behaviors associated with parents' educational expectations seem to have a greater effect than specific activities, whilst forms of involvement based solely on parental supervision, like checking homework, usually have no effect. At school, the forms of involvement most directly related to learning, like communication and collaboration with teachers, produce a more significant effect on academic performance than attending functions, volunteering or getting involved in parents' associations. Though less common, parental involvement in secondary education seems as necessary and useful as it is in primary education, even though the changes experienced by students, schools and family relationships require adaptation to more subtle forms that are respectful of the adolescent's independence and more focused on giving meaning and importance to the studies than to providing direct help in learning processes.

At home, subtle attitudes and behaviors associated with parents' educational expectations seem to have a greater effect than specific activities, whilst forms of involvement based solely on parental supervision, like checking homework, usually have no effect.



The evidence is equally abundant and conclusive in indicating that not only spontaneous parental involvement works to boost children's academic performance, but also the programs that try to promote it. Overall, these programs, which often combine a motivating aspect with another aspect to train parents to effectively contribute to their children's education, have a generally small effect.

The evidence is equally abundant and conclusive in indicating that not only spontaneous parental involvement works to boost children's academic performance, but also the programs that try to promote it.



Although the evidence is not entirely conclusive, programs that are more directly oriented towards getting parents to help their children to learn to read are those that show greater impacts, especially those that train parents to tutor

Programs that are more directly oriented towards getting parents to help their children to learn to read are those that show greater impacts, especially those that train parents to tutor their children in reading.



their children in reading. In general, programs that promote more structured activities directly oriented towards learning tend to produce a greater impact. Due to their greater focus and structure, programs that are based on brief training are more effective than relatively long ones. Finally, programs to help children to do their homework seem to be the least effective. In the best of cases, they produce a small effect on performance, a greater effect in primary than in secondary school and maybe even a negative effect. On this type of involvement, it seems like a better idea to encourage rules and create routines on when and where to do homework, rather than to check whether the homework is completed.

Although programs to foster parental involvement are more common in early and primary education than secondary education, there is evidence that there are significant differences in their effectiveness at both stages. By type of child or family, there is no evidence that there are significant differences in impact, from which it can be inferred that these programs' small impacts can also be supported by the vulnerable population.

Unfortunately, the evidence available about the programs is notably very limited. Correlational studies abound between spontaneous parental involvement and performance, from which neither causal relations nor elements for understanding the mechanisms can be inferred. With regard to the programs, the evaluations included in the meta-analyses pay very little attention to the details of the design, its implementation and the translation from the program content to parental practices. Since what the reviewed meta-analyses do is estimate the average effects of large categories of highly internally heterogeneous programs, the questions about what works, for which type of child or family and why are very incompletely answered. Finally, it is worth highlighting the Anglo-Saxon origin of much of the evidence, which cannot discount the validity of the conclusions applied to our context.

Table 3.
Summary

In favor	Against
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is extensive and consistent evidence that spontaneous parental involvement has positive impacts on performance. • There is evidence that programs to induce parental involvement also generate positive impacts. • There is evidence that practically all types of programs work, even if the magnitudes of the effect are different. • Even though spontaneous parental involvement is associated in quality and quantity with the family's socio-economic status and level of education, programs to foster involvement also seem to work for children and families of a lower socio-economic status and level. • Parental involvement seems effective at all stages of education, from early to post-compulsory secondary education. • Programs based on relatively brief training (and therefore more affordable ones) have greater impacts than longer ones if they are focused. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies in which the meta-analyses on spontaneous parental involvement are generally correlative and do not clarify the mechanisms of action. • The magnitude of the estimated impact for programs to foster parental involvement is small. • The studies provide little detail about aspects of design and implementation: they do not specify what works and how to design programs to maximize their effectiveness. • The evidence is essentially Anglo-Saxon, so it may not be valid for our context. • There are no studies of programs that try to influence the apparently more important aspect of spontaneous involvement: educational expectations. • Parental involvement programs have been entrusted to the educational system and is unclear who should lead them and how they should be developed. • The programs require minimal abilities and availability from parents. It is unclear how to get the most vulnerable populations involved, which might need them most.

Implications for practice

Based on the evidence reviewed, it seems appropriate to encourage teachers, schools and educational administrations to offer motivation and training programs for parental involvement and to foster parental participation, since that can have a positive influence on the children's educational development and performance.

It seems appropriate to encourage teachers, schools and educational administrations to offer motivation and training programs for parental involvement and to foster parental participation.



However, it is not very clear how we can design and implement this type of program to be more effective. In light of current knowledge, it would be advisable to promote programs based on the following lines of action:

- **Specific and brief activities heavily focused on learning.** There are several indications that the more structured and similar to parental tutoring the programs are, the better. This is due both to their more direct connection with academic performance and to a greater ease in facilitation, since many families ask for

ideas and guided practices for interacting with their children effectively and respond well when the proposals for involvement are clear, feasible and pleasant. This type of intervention is usually based on organising relatively brief workshops that present specific activities, deliver the necessary materials and train the parents to use them.

Many families ask for ideas and guided practices for interacting with their children effectively and respond well when the proposals for involvement are clear.



- **Activities geared for parents to help their children to learn to read** during the first few years of primary education. According to the available evidence, tutoring in reading should especially be promoted (in activities like learning the alphabet, reading words, using vocabulary flash cards to learn to read new words and sentences containing those words, following guidelines for selecting environments and suitable moments for reading and employing techniques to correct the mistakes children make when reading and to show the correspondence between letters and sounds, as well as to connect sounds to different letters, etc., with a controlled level of difficulty appropriate for the child's stage of development and learning); followed by dialogical reading activities in which the adult practices active listening and helps the child to learn and explain the story of the book, or encourages the child and gives him or her feedback with corrections spoken out loud. However, there are no general impacts on the development of reading and language skills when the adult merely reads stories. We must also consider the challenge posed by the fact that the forms of involvement that have been the most effective require the parents to possess a certain level of reading skill.
- **Activities that encourage the creation of routines to do homework and address parts that the child does not understand (instead of making sure that it is complete).** According to the available evidence, the most suitable thing to do is to stimulate forms of involvement that provide structure to the act of doing homework, respond to the child's requests for help and support his or her autonomy, whilst avoiding those that the child may feel as intrusive or as a form of control, since they can have a negative effect on motivation and performance.
- **Activities that foster "academic socialization" in the family during secondary education.** Faced with the combination of changes involved in the transition from primary to secondary school (greater autonomy for the child, greater barriers for parents to be present at school and a possible decline in academic performance), the best strategy is to foster "academic socialization" at home, so that parents shift from helping the child directly in his or her learning to promoting the intrinsic motivation to learn, helping the student to link the studies to his or her own interests, plans and future aspirations and empowering him or her to make academic decisions. This requires schools and educational administrations to provide parents with timely information about the core subjects and electives that the student must take, as well as guidelines on how to establish this type of link with the student.

In the transition from primary to secondary school, the best strategy is to foster "academic socialization" at home.



It should also be noted that, as programs to foster parental involvement are particularly aimed at families that are less motivated or able to engage in spontaneous involvement, schedules must be flexible enough to adapt to parents' variable and/or rigid working days, take place in a welcoming environment and adapt to the language and forms of attracting, advising and training parents who are less confident in their ability to help their children to learn.

Programs to foster parental involvement must take place in a welcoming environment and adapt to the language and forms of attracting, advising and training parents who are less confident in their ability to help their children to learn.



Finally, the lack of more specific evidence is an invitation to innovation and solid program evaluation, which ideally should combine experimental designs

The lack of more specific evidence is an invitation to innovation and solid program evaluation.



for a quantitative estimation of the impact, an implementation analysis that sheds light on what works, from capturing vulnerable populations to translating content from training to the home, as well as qualitative techniques like longitudinal ethnographic studies that help us to understand how parents influence learning processes and how a program can help them to exercise the right to get involved in their children's education. In this regard, two priority lines of research consist of clarifying what works for vulnerable populations with little ability, confidence and/or motivation to engage in parental involvement, and how to use a program to promote the most influential forms of spontaneous involvement: parents' expectations about their children's performance in school.

Priority lines of research consist of clarifying what works for vulnerable populations with little ability, confidence and/or motivation to engage in parental involvement, and how to use a program to promote the most influential forms of spontaneous involvement: parents' expectations about their children's performance in school.



Bibliography

- [1] EEF (2018). "Parental engagement" Retrieved from <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/school-themes/parental-engagement/>
- [2] Sénéchal, M. and Young, L. (2008). "The effect of family literacy interventions on children's acquisition of reading from kindergarten to grade 3: A meta-analytic review". *Review of Educational Research*, vol. 78, no. 4, pp. 880-907.
- [3] Park, S. and Holloway, S. D. (2017). "The effects of school-based parental involvement on academic achievement at the child and elementary school level: A longitudinal study". *The Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 110, no. 1, pp. 1-16.
- [4] Castro, M. et al. (2015). "Parental involvement on student academic achievement: A meta-analysis". *Educational Research Review*, vol. 14, pp. 33-46.
- [5] Fan, X. and Chen, M. (2001). "Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A meta-analysis". *Educational Psychology Review*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 1-22.
- [6] Jeynes, W. H. (2003). "A meta-analysis: The effects of parental involvement on minority children's academic achievement". *Education and Urban Society*, vol. 35, no. 2, pp. 202-218.
- [7] Jeynes, W. H. (2005). "A meta-analysis of the relation of parental involvement to urban elementary school student academic achievement". *Urban Education*, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 237-269.
- [8] Jeynes, W. H. (2007). "The relationship between parental involvement and urban secondary school student academic achievement: A meta-analysis". *Urban Education*, vol. 42, no. 1, pp. 82-110.
- [9] Patall, E. A.; Cooper, H. and Robinson, J. C. (2008). "Parent involvement in homework: A research synthesis". *Review of Educational Research*, vol. 78, no. 4, pp. 1039-1101.
- [10] Hill, N. E. and Tyson, D. F. (2009). "Parental involvement in middle school: a meta-analytic assessment of the strategies that promote achievement". *Developmental Psychology*, vol. 45, no. 3, p. 740.
- [11] Nye, C.; Turner, H., Schwartz, J. and Nye, C. (2006). "Approaches to parent involvement for improving the academic performance". *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, vol. 4.
- [12] Van Steensel, R.; McElvany, N.; Kurvers, J. and Herppich, S. (2011). "How effective are family literacy programs? Results of a meta-analysis". *Review of Educational Research*, vol. 81, no. 1, pp. 69-96.
- [13] Jeynes, W. (2012). "A meta-analysis of the efficacy of different types of parental involvement programs for urban students". *Urban Education*, vol. 47, no. 4, pp. 706-742.
- [14] Avvisati, F.; Gurgand, M., Guyon, N. and Maurin, E. (2013). "Getting parents involved: A field experiment in deprived schools". *Review of Economic Studies*, vol. 81, no. 1, pp. 57-83.
- [15] Goux, D.; Gurgand, M. and Maurin, E. (2017). "Reading enjoyment and reading skills: Lessons from an experiment with first grade children". *Labour Economics*, vol. 45 (abril), pp. 17-25.

First edition: October 2018
 © Fundació Jaume Bofill, Ivàlua, 2018
fbofill@fbofill.cat, info@ivalua.cat
www.ivalua.cat
www.fbofill.cat

Author: Jaume Blasco
 Translator: textosBCN (Dustin Langan)
 Edited by: Bonal·letra Alcompas
 Publishing Technical Coordinator: Anna Sadurní
 Projects Manager: Miquel Àngel Alegre
 Ivàlua analist: Núria Comas
 Design and layout: Enric Jardí
 ISBN: 978-84-947888-7-1

This work is subject to the Creative Commons license **Attribution-Non-commercial-NoDerivs (BY-NC-ND)**. You can reproduce, distribute and publicly communicate this work whenever you attribute authorship. You may not make commercial use or produce derivatives.

