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## Parental and community involvement in education

### BRIEF 4

#### Community education

**Parents are the first educators of their children. The support they provide affects their child's learning and development and linked to subsequent educational outcomes.**

Parental support includes direct effects on learning before and during formal education, as well as monitoring and facilitating factors that are indirectly linked, such as nutrition, behaviours, health, and hygiene. Several factors are important for understanding these types of parental support including: support needed pre- and post-birth for healthy infant development, support needed during children's early years and prior to entering formal schooling, support needed during primary and secondary school years, school strategies for involving parents in their child's education, and costs associated with parent education programmes.

#### **Issues and Discussion**

Parental support for children 0 to 2: Parent support to learning during the infant and toddler years takes place mostly in the home and includes interacting with and attending to the needs of infants, continuous expressions of affection, and engaging in two-way talk by listening and responding positively to encourage vocabulary expansion and develop language skills.(9) Programmes that improve parents' confidence and capacity to enrich their children's early life experiences can have positive effects on children's cognitive, socio-emotional, and linguistic development.(1)(29) Many effective interventions are feasible even in poorly-resourced communities, such as [Kangaroo Mother Care](#) which is designed to enhance pre-mature infant care through skin-to-skin contact,(3) and public information campaigns on parenting that use accessible media such as radio.

Parental support for children 3-5: Parent support to learning during the pre-schools years requires maintaining the activities above, but now with a supplement on developing school-readiness, such as by exposing children to emergent literacy and numeracy.(1)(3)(9) Similar to the activities offered through [Pupa](#), a Brazilian teacher training programme for low-income parents of children under the age of 6, parents should stimulate an interest in learning through storytelling, role-playing, and music.(2)(3)(9) Children benefit when parents help them participate in community activities that have educational value including attending a cultural event; visiting libraries and museums; encouraging observation and learning from everyday settings; and [learning through play](#).(2)(3)(9)

Parental support for children 6 -11: Parent support to learning during the primary school years includes the above activities while [supporting children's transition to school](#).(1)(3)(4) The parental support needed during the primary school years is characterized by greater direct support to their

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child's education including assistance with their homework and volunteering in classrooms and with school functions.(1)(3)(4) Many parents feel they are able to assist their child with school-related work during the primary years. However, some parents—especially those with lower education levels themselves—may need help understanding the importance of their support and learning how to assist their children; programmes like [Literacy Boost](#) offered to out-of-school children in Malawi can promote family involvement in early literacy activities.(1)(3)

Parental support for children 12-18: Parent support to learning during the secondary school years can have positive educational outcomes when parents encourage, supervise, and motivate their child within a stable home environment.(1)(3)(4) Parental support becomes more indirect as their child takes greater responsibility over their learning, and many parents feel less capable of assisting with their child's homework as the curriculum becomes more advanced.(1)(3)(4) By providing workshops and training to parents, such as initiatives like the [Community Education Support Project](#), parental support and efficacy to participate in their child's education can improve.(3)

Delivering parenting programmes to parents of young children: Reaching parents to facilitate and share skills and knowledge about parenting and support to learning can include one-to-one programming, parent groups, and the use of media.(2) Programmes provided should be delivered either through intensive one-to-one home visits and parenting groups sustained over a period of a year or through less-intensive but regularly scheduled interventions that span two to three years.(1)(2)(9) The use of media can be an important tool for reaching low-income, rural, or isolated families.(2) Parent programmes like [Programa de Padres y Hijos](#) in Chile, that are designed to promote the psychosocial development of children 0 to 6 in low-income communities can result in positive long-term outcomes.(1)(2) *Programa de Padres y Hijos* combines weekly worker-facilitated parent meetings that coincide with a radio broadcast that uses radio dramas and activities to stimulate conversations and develop parent activities that can stimulate child-parent interactions during the week.(1)(2) Whether conducted in conjunction with formal early childhood education programmes or apart, programming should focus on child-parent interactions and promote whole-child development—including parenting skills and knowledge to ensure proper child nutrition, health, and hygiene.(1)(2)(9)

Communicating to improve parental involvement in schooling: Communication between teachers and parents can be facilitated through home/school link programmes. Such programmes may be implemented by special school staff who are responsible for connecting families with schools, building relationships, encouraging school attendance, and linking the curriculum in the home with school instruction.(1)(9) Policies can help to ensure regular communication when descriptions of parents' responsibilities are developed with and articulated to parents, and when networks between parents are established.(3)(7)(9) Teachers plan lessons that involve parents in the assignment, in addition to applying other [tips and resources](#) to improve parental involvement.(1) School staff can arrange to meet families at their home or in the community, or use technology to maintain contact including email, phone calls, school portals and district websites, teacher [blogs](#), phone [apps](#), sending letters home with students, and administering school surveys to determine how [parents wish to communicate](#).(3)(6)

Multi-sector coordination and costs of comprehensive parent programmes: Education planners may need to work through multi-stakeholder teams to improve parental involvement, since parent programmes and services are often spread across several sectors including education, health, and family welfare.(2) Costs for delivering parenting education varies globally and depends on the programme model, duration, and type of skills and training being offered.(2) Centre-based programmes and one-to-one models within home visiting programmes are more costly due to staff

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training, salaries, and turnover so such programmes may need to transition towards more sustainable models, including the use of parent and other volunteers to extend programme reach.(2)

## Inclusiveness Considerations

Parents of ethnic and/or linguistic minority: Parents who are of ethnic and/or linguistic minority may be viewed by teachers and schools as having less ability and effectiveness to contribute to their child's education.(5) Lack of diversity in parental involvement programs or policies and leadership can also lead to a limited presence of parents of ethnic and racial minority in schools.(5) These barriers can be addressed through targeted interventions that: provide specific information regarding how parents can be more involved, are designed to develop healthy parent-school relationships, use interpreters when necessary, build mutual trust, and integrate parental support into the curriculum.(3)(5)(7)

## Policy Examples

- Ireland [[PDF](#)]
- Jamaica [[PDF](#)]
- Portugal [[PDF](#)]
- Sweden [[PDF](#)]

## References and sources

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