

Why is parent involvement important?

Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler Model of the Parental Involvement Process

Level 5

Student Achievement



Level 4

Student Attributes Conducive to Achievement			
Academic Self-Efficacy	Intrinsic Motivation to Learn	Self-Regulatory Strategy Knowledge & Use	Social Self-Efficacy for Relating to Teachers



Level 3

<i>(Mediated by)</i> Student Perceptions of Learning Mechanisms Used by Parents			
Encouragement	Modeling	Reinforcement	Instruction



Level 2

Learning Mechanisms Used by Parents during Involvement Activities			
Encouragement	Modeling	Reinforcement	Instruction



Level 1.5

Parent Involvement Forms			
Values, Goals, Expectations, Aspirations	Involvement Activities at Home	Parent/Teacher/School Communication	Involvement Activities at School



Level 1

Personal Motivators		Parent's Perceptions of Invitations to be Involved			Life Context Variables		
Parental Role Construction for Involvement	Parental Efficacy for Helping Student Succeed in School	General School Invitations	Specific Invitations from Teacher(s)	Specific Requests/Invitations from Student	Parental Knowledge & Skills	Parental Time & Energy	Family Culture

Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997, 2005, 2010.

Overview of the Hoover–Dempsey & Sandler model of the parental involvement process

The model is a representation of decades of research on family involvement. Structured in five levels, the model addresses **three essential questions**:

1. Why do (and don't) families become involved?
2. What do families do when they are involved?
3. How does family involvement make a positive difference in student outcomes?

This overview describes the model beginning with parents' motivations for involvement in their children's education (Level 1).

Level 1	Personal Motivators		Parent's Perceptions of Invitations to be Involved			Life Context Variables		
	Parental Role Construction for Involvement	Parental Efficacy for Helping Student Succeed in School	General School Invitations	Specific Invitations from Teacher(s)	Specific Requests/Invitations from Student	Parental Knowledge & Skills	Parental Time & Energy	Family Culture

Level 1 of the model suggests that **three major factors influence** the variety and frequency of family involvement. These three factors are parents':

1. Personal motivators.
2. Perceptions of invitations to be involved.
3. Life context variables.

These factors at Level 1 interact to shape the forms and frequency of family involvement.

Personal Motivators

Central to the model is the idea that **parents' motivations for involvement are a function of the social systems** to which they belong. For instance, parents' role construction and sense of efficacy are influenced by their:

- Own family and academic experiences during their childhood.
- Current family systems.
- Recent experiences in the school systems that their children attend.

The **two personal motivators** identified in the model are **parental role construction** for involvement and **parents' sense of self-efficacy** for helping their children succeed in school.

1. **Role construction** is parents' beliefs about what they are supposed to do in relation to their children's schooling. In essence, it is their job description from their own viewpoint.
2. **Self-efficacy** for helping their children succeed in school refers to parents' beliefs about whether or not their involvement is likely to have a positive influence on their children's education. Just as student self-efficacy influences students' academically related behaviors, parents' sense of self-efficacy shapes what parents do.

Parents' perceptions of invitations to be involved

Contextual motivators of involvement take three forms:

1. **General invitations from the school.** Does the school feel welcoming? Do all school staff members (including front office staff, custodians, etc.) greet parents warmly?
2. **Specific teacher invitations,** such as teacher requests for supporting learning at home or attending a parent-teacher conference.
3. **Specific invitations from the child.** Invitations from the child can be explicit—"I need help," "I just don't understand this," "I hate school!" They can also be implied. The child might be struggling with homework or procrastinating to get a school project done.

Life context variables

- **Parents' understanding of their own skills and knowledge** influences their thinking about the kinds of involvement activities they take on. When students' or teachers' requests for involvement fit parents' beliefs about their skills and abilities, they are more likely to act; however, if parents believe their skills or knowledge are inadequate, they may be reluctant to take action.
- **Parents' perceptions of the time and energy** they have available for involvement influence their decisions about involvement. Parents may be constrained by long work hours, varied family obligations and the reality that opportunities to become involved in many educationally-related activities are scheduled for the school's convenience.
- **Family culture may play a significant role** in parents' ideas about the ways they can and should be involved in supporting their child's learning. For example, even when schools are inviting, families whose cultures have traditionally suggested that parents should play a limited role in students' formal schooling may stay "on the side lines." Conversely, families whose cultures expect regular and direct family engagement may offer considerably more active engagement than their students' schools expect.

Level 1.5

Parent Involvement Forms			
Values, Goals, Expectations, Aspirations	Involvement Activities at Home	Parent/Teacher/School Communication	Involvement Activities at School

Level 1.5 of the model defines several forms of involvement:

- One form of involvement incorporates parents' clear communication with their children about their **personal and family values, goals, expectations and aspirations** for student learning. The communication of these goals and expectations, in turn, shape students' beliefs and behaviors related to learning (see Level 4).
- The model also acknowledges that families support student learning through **involvement activities at home**. These often include such activities as talking about the school day, expressing interest in the student's learning, and monitoring and reviewing student work.
- Effective **family-school communication** influences students' academic progress. The value of effective communication is generally strongest when the communication is consistently characterized by mutual respect, careful listening, and school responsiveness to parents' questions, ideas, suggestions and concerns.
- Finally, the model includes **participation in school-based activities**. Educators sometimes assume that parents who are not at school are not involved. The breadth of involvement forms described in Levels 1.5 and 2 of the model are important reminders that involvement at school is not necessarily a good indicator of parents' actual breadth and level of involvement.

Level 2

Learning Mechanisms Used by Parents during Involvement Activities			
Encouragement	Modeling	Reinforcement	Instruction

Level 2 of the model argues that parents influence the student attributes necessary for school success (outlined in Level 4) via **four specific kinds of activities**. These "active ingredients" are: **encouragement, modeling, reinforcement and instruction**.

Level 3

<i>(Mediated by)</i> Student Perceptions of Learning Mechanisms Used by Parents			
Encouragement	Modeling	Reinforcement	Instruction

Level 3 asserts that these mechanisms remain inert unless students perceive their parents' actions. In this way, **student perceptions of their parents' use of the four mechanisms** is an essential channel whereby parents' beliefs and behaviors are translated into attributes that lead to academic success.

For example, when parents encourage their child to persist in academic work, and the child perceives this encouragement, parents contribute to the development of student academic self-efficacy or confidence in their child’s ability to learn.

In another example, when parents attend meetings and events at school or ask their child about the school day, and the child is engaged in these activities, parents are modeling the importance of education.

Level 4	Student Attributes Conducive to Achievement			
	Academic Self-Efficacy	Intrinsic Motivation to Learn	Self-Regulatory Strategy Knowledge & Use	Social Self-Efficacy for Relating to Teachers

This level of the model views students as the authors of their academic success. It describes a set of **four student beliefs and behaviors** associated with academic achievement:

1. One belief important to achievement is **academic self-efficacy**. Put simply, efficacy is the belief that “I can.” When students believe that they are capable of learning, they are more likely to persist in the face of new and sometimes challenging academic work. If they do not hold this belief then they are less likely to persist.
2. Another important student attribute is **intrinsic motivation to learn**. Highly effective learners have a genuine interest in mastering the content and this curiosity sustains their engagement in learning both in and out of school.
3. A third attribute is **self-regulatory skills**. This means that students behave in ways that support their learning, including managing time well, setting goals and monitoring their progress.
4. The fourth attribute at this level of the model underscores the **social dimensions of school success**. Successful students know how to ask for help when they are confused and how to work cooperatively with others in the classroom. We know that these attributes are important to academic success.

Level 5	Student Achievement
----------------	---------------------

Our ultimate goal is **student achievement**. The Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler model asserts that parent involvement, as described at each level of the process, influences and to some degree predicts student outcomes.

See also: Hoover-Dempsey, K.V., Walker, J.M.T., Sandler, H.M., Whetsel, D., Green, C.L., Wilkins, A.S., & Closson, K.E. (2005). Why do parents become involved? Research findings and implications. *Elementary School Journal*, 106(2), 105-130.