



Quality Parenting Enhances School Engagement

Can parenting style predict school dropout?

Research tell us that the short answer is 'yes'. It probably won't come as any surprise to most of us to read that the involvement of mums and dads in their children's school activities (attending school events; meeting with teachers; volunteering to join a committee) has long been recognised as one of the primary contributors to children's performance in school. When children see their parents involved, they take school and doing well more seriously.

Maybe you're thinking "I already knew that... it pays to be involved in school activities." But maybe what isn't more widely known is that your style of parenting can significantly affect your kids' school success.

Researchers from Iceland studied how authoritative parents (those who provide high levels of acceptance, supervision while encouraging independence in their children) contribute to their child's completing upper secondary school.

Specifically, the research looked at what authoritative parents do during the critical period of adolescence when students tend to become less motivated. Adolescents of authoritative parents who are both responsive and demanding are less disengaged at the end of compulsory schooling.

Responsive, authoritative parents are accepting, warm, and encouraging toward their children. But at the same time, they are also demanding. They supervise their children's behaviour, communicate clear standards and developmentally appropriate expectations without being intrusive or restrictive. Research tells us that during adolescence, parents' high level of acceptance and supervision continues to be important for successful development.

KEY FINDINGS

- Authoritative parenting practices help adolescents to adjust positively to school and to succeed there.
- Our kids benefit when we convey general interest in their life and wellbeing and that it's up to us as parents to communicate clear and fair standards and respect their need for autonomy.
- Regardless of a student's academic achievement, the quality of the relationship between parents and their adolescents can lead to students having positive feelings toward their academic tasks and school. It can also lead to kids behaving well in school, thereby increasing the chance that they will complete upper secondary education.
- Compared to their peers raised in non-authoritative families, children and adolescents from authoritative families have been shown to score higher on a wide variety of measures of adjustment, psychosocial development, and academic achievement.

THINGS YOU CAN DO

- ✓ Support your child's educational progress by involvement in school activities where possible.
- ✓ Keep communication lines open between home and school.
- ✓ Without too much intrusion or restriction, try to keep expectations developmentally appropriate.
- ✓ Supervise behaviour on the home front.
- ✓ Practise responsiveness, acceptance and encouragement.
- ✓ Keep on top of the homework scene.
- ✓ Help to build your child's self-esteem, perseverance and resilience.

Source: Parenting practices and school dropout : a longitudinal study (Blondal & Adalbjarnardottir), Adolescence, Vol. 44, No. 176, Winter 2009.



TAKEAWAY

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Adolescents are more likely to be interested and engaged in school including doing homework if their parents continue to show interest in what they are learning while supporting them by gradually loosening the reins of parental control.