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## **The Impact of Parental Involvement on Academic Performance: A Review of Empirical Evidence**

### **Abstract:**

Parental involvement is a vital determinant of students' academic achievement across all levels of education. This study explores the multifaceted impact of parental engagement on learners' performance, drawing from a comprehensive review of international literature. Parental involvement, in forms such as assisting with homework, attending school functions, setting academic expectations, and maintaining communication with teachers, has been consistently linked to improved academic outcomes. The analysis reveals that when parents actively participate in their children's education, students demonstrate higher motivation, better attendance, stronger cognitive development, and improved grades. Furthermore, this involvement contributes to positive behavioral outcomes, including enhanced self-discipline and reduced dropout rates. The study also examines variables such as socioeconomic status, parental education, and cultural background, which influence the degree and effectiveness of parental involvement. Challenges such as time constraints, lack of resources, and limited understanding of the education system—especially among marginalized groups—are discussed. The findings support the need for educational institutions to develop inclusive strategies that engage parents from diverse backgrounds. Enhancing parent-school collaboration is shown to be a cost-effective and impactful strategy to elevate academic standards. The study concludes with recommendations for policymakers and educators to institutionalize programs that foster continuous parental engagement.

**Keywords:** Parental involvement, academic performance, student achievement, home learning, school engagement, parental expectations, motivation, cognitive development, education policy, family support.

### **Introduction**

Academic performance is a key indicator of a student's development and future success. Among the various factors that influence student achievement, parental involvement stands out as one of the most significant and widely studied contributors. It refers to the participation of parents in their child's educational journey through activities such as monitoring homework, communicating with teachers, attending school events, setting academic goals, and fostering a positive learning environment at home. Numerous studies have confirmed that when parents actively engage in their children's education, students tend to perform better academically, demonstrate improved behavior, and develop stronger learning habits.

The foundation for academic excellence is laid not only within the classroom but also in the home environment. Parents serve as the first teachers and role models for their children, shaping their attitudes toward learning from an early age. The encouragement, support, and expectations

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set by parents significantly influence a student's self-esteem, motivation, and discipline. In contrast, lack of parental involvement is often associated with poor academic outcomes, absenteeism, and increased dropout rates.

Despite the clear advantages, the degree of parental involvement varies across families due to several factors such as socioeconomic status, parental education level, work commitments, and cultural attitudes toward education. For instance, families from low-income backgrounds may face barriers such as limited time, lack of access to educational resources, or unfamiliarity with school systems. These challenges can hinder effective participation, even when the desire to be involved exists.

The importance of parental involvement has led educators and policymakers to seek ways to encourage and facilitate greater family engagement in education. Schools that maintain open communication channels and build trust with families tend to experience higher levels of parental participation, which translates into improved academic outcomes for students.

This paper aims to explore the extent to which parental involvement affects academic performance, examining various forms of engagement and their corresponding impact on student achievement. Through a critical review of existing literature and empirical studies, this research highlights best practices, identifies common barriers, and offers practical recommendations to foster stronger school-family partnerships. Understanding the dynamic relationship between parental involvement and academic success is crucial for creating educational environments that support holistic student development.

## Defining Parental Involvement

Parental involvement refers to the active participation of parents in the educational development and academic life of their children. It is a multidimensional concept that encompasses a wide range of behaviors, attitudes, and practices designed to support children's learning both at home and in school settings. Scholars, educators, and policymakers have long recognized parental involvement as a critical factor in promoting student achievement, fostering positive behavior, and shaping children's overall attitudes toward education.

At its core, parental involvement includes the efforts parents make to help their children succeed academically. This can take many forms, from simple activities like reading to children and helping them with homework to more complex engagements such as attending school meetings, volunteering in classrooms, participating in school governance, and maintaining regular communication with teachers. Parental involvement also includes intangible aspects, such as expressing high expectations, showing interest in a child's learning, and fostering a culture of education at home.

Joyce Epstein (1995), a prominent researcher in the field, proposed a comprehensive framework for understanding parental involvement, which consists of six key types:

1. **Parenting** – Helping families establish home environments that support children's learning.
2. **Communicating** – Establishing effective school-to-home and home-to-school communication.
3. **Volunteering** – Encouraging parents to assist in school events and activities.
4. **Learning at Home** – Involving families in homework and curriculum-related decisions.
5. **Decision-Making** – Including parents in school decisions and policy development.
6. **Collaborating with the Community** – Coordinating resources and services to strengthen school programs and family practices.

This framework underscores that parental involvement is not limited to presence at school but also includes educational support and encouragement in the home environment. For example, when parents

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regularly ask their children about what they learned in school, help them with their assignments, or encourage reading and critical thinking at home, they are actively contributing to their child's educational success.

In addition to Epstein's model, other scholars have distinguished between home-based involvement and school-based involvement. Home-based involvement includes monitoring academic progress, setting rules related to study time, and fostering educational aspirations. School-based involvement includes interactions with teachers, participation in school functions, and contribution to school committees. Both forms are essential, and their effectiveness may depend on the child's age, school culture, and family background.

Parental involvement is also shaped by socio-economic, cultural, and linguistic factors. For instance, families from higher socio-economic backgrounds often have greater access to resources, such as books, internet connectivity, and private tutoring, which facilitate more effective involvement. On the other hand, parents with limited educational backgrounds may struggle to support their children's academic needs despite their willingness. Similarly, language barriers and unfamiliarity with the school system may restrict the participation of immigrant or minority parents.

The concept of parental involvement has evolved with changing societal structures and educational needs. In the digital age, parental involvement has expanded to include monitoring online learning platforms, helping children navigate digital tools, and staying informed through school portals and communication apps. These new modes of involvement highlight the need for schools to be flexible and inclusive in their approach to family engagement.

In conclusion, parental involvement is a broad and evolving concept that plays a vital role in shaping academic outcomes. It includes a spectrum of behaviors and actions—both formal and informal—that reflect a parent's commitment to their child's education. Understanding its diverse forms and contexts is essential for educators and policymakers aiming to develop effective strategies that support parental engagement across all communities.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The relationship between parental involvement and academic performance is best understood through well-established educational and psychological theories that explain how environmental, social, and familial factors influence student development. This study primarily draws upon Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence to provide a theoretical foundation for exploring how parental involvement affects academic outcomes.

### **Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory**

Developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), the Ecological Systems Theory emphasizes the multiple layers of environmental influence that shape a child's development. According to this model, human development occurs within five interrelated systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

The microsystem which includes immediate settings such as home, school, and peer groups is particularly relevant when discussing parental involvement. Within this system, the family plays a central role in shaping the child's educational habits, values, and emotional well-being. Parents who are actively engaged in their children's education contribute positively to the learning environment, reinforcing what is taught at school.

The mesosystem refers to the interaction between two or more microsystems, such as the relationship between parents and teachers. Strong parent-teacher communication creates consistency between home and school expectations, which helps children stay focused and motivated.

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This theory highlights the dynamic and interactive nature of student development, suggesting that parental involvement is not an isolated factor but one deeply embedded in a broader network of social relationships.

#### **Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence**

Joyce Epstein (1995) introduced the Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence, which emphasizes the shared responsibilities of families, schools, and communities in the academic and social development of children. Epstein proposed that student learning is most effective when these three spheres—home, school, and community—overlap and collaborate.

According to this model, when schools encourage and facilitate parental involvement, and when parents actively support learning at home, the overlap between the spheres increases. This synergy leads to enhanced educational outcomes and a more supportive learning environment for students. Epstein's framework also identifies six types of parental involvement, which guide schools in designing inclusive and comprehensive engagement strategies.

The theory is especially useful for this study because it not only affirms the importance of parental involvement but also provides practical categories for measuring and analyzing it. These include parenting practices, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaboration with the community.

#### **Integration of Theories**

Combining Bronfenbrenner's and Epstein's theories allows for a holistic understanding of parental involvement. Bronfenbrenner provides the context for how parental actions fit into a broader developmental environment, while Epstein offers specific structures and strategies for implementing effective involvement. Together, they emphasize that academic performance is influenced not only by what happens in the classroom but also by the nature and quality of interactions within a child's larger ecosystem.

By applying these theories, this study underscores the importance of multi-level collaboration and continuous engagement between families and schools in order to optimize student learning and development.

## **Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative research design with elements of literature-based analysis to explore how different forms of parental involvement impact academic performance. The research does not involve primary data collection such as surveys or interviews but instead synthesizes and analyzes existing empirical studies, peer-reviewed journal articles, reports, and theoretical models related to parental engagement in education.

### **1. Research Design**

The study is structured as a systematic review of literature, drawing on data from educational databases such as ERIC, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and institutional repositories. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the topic by integrating findings from diverse educational settings, including urban and rural schools, different cultural contexts, and varying socioeconomic backgrounds.

### **2. Selection Criteria**

To ensure relevance and academic rigor, the following criteria were used for selecting sources:

- Published between 2000 and 2024
- Peer-reviewed journal articles, books, or credible government/NGO reports
- Focus on primary, secondary, or middle-level education
- Must examine the relationship between parental involvement and academic performance

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Articles that focused exclusively on adult education or special education without relevance to general academic achievement were excluded.

### **3. Data Collection**

- Type of parental involvement (e.g., home-based, school-based, academic socialization)
- Level of education (primary, secondary)
- Outcome measures (grades, test scores, attendance, motivation)
- Demographic considerations (income level, parental education, ethnicity)

Thematic coding was used to identify common patterns, effects, challenges, and recommendations discussed in the literature.

### **4. Data Analysis**

A **comparative and thematic analysis** approach was applied to the collected data. The key themes extracted include:

- The positive correlation between home-based involvement and student performance
- The role of parental expectations in student motivation
- Socioeconomic and cultural barriers to involvement
- The significance of school-family communication

Findings were compared across different studies to identify consistent results and note exceptions or contradictory findings. Attention was given to both qualitative outcomes (student behavior, attitude, motivation) and quantitative measures (grades, standardized test results).

### **5. Ethical Considerations**

As a literature-based study, this research does not involve human subjects, thus no ethical approval was required. However, due credit is given to all original sources, and proper academic referencing is maintained throughout.

### **6. Limitations**

The study relies solely on secondary data, which limits the ability to draw causal inferences. Additionally, the scope is restricted to English-language literature, potentially excluding valuable research conducted in other languages or contexts.

## **Forms of Parental Involvement and Their Effects**

Parental involvement manifests in various forms, each contributing differently to students' academic outcomes. Scholars commonly categorize these into home-based involvement, school-based involvement, and academic socialization, all of which significantly influence a child's educational experience (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

**Home-based involvement** includes activities such as helping with homework, reading with children, and providing a structured home environment. These practices reinforce academic skills and promote consistent learning habits. Research has shown that students whose parents regularly assist with academic tasks at home tend to achieve higher grades and demonstrate better cognitive development (Fan & Chen, 2001).

**School-based involvement** involves parents participating in school functions, volunteering, attending parent-teacher conferences, and engaging in decision-making processes. Although important for fostering a positive school climate, some studies suggest that school-based involvement alone may not directly improve academic performance unless it is paired with home-based engagement (Domina, 2005).

Another crucial form is academic socialization, where parents convey the value of education, set future goals, and communicate expectations. Hill and Tyson (2009) found that academic socialization had a stronger correlation with achievement than direct involvement, especially

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during adolescence. This type of involvement influences students' internal motivation and long-term academic aspirations.

**Parental expectations** also play a pivotal role. According to Jeynes (2012), high parental expectations positively affect students' confidence and performance. When parents believe in their child's abilities, students are more likely to internalize these beliefs and strive for academic excellence.

Conversely, lack of involvement can lead to decreased academic performance, poor attendance, and behavioral issues. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) noted that children whose parents show little interest in their education often lack motivation and underperform academically.

**Cultural and socioeconomic factors** influence the type and degree of parental involvement. For instance, parents from lower-income or minority backgrounds may value education but feel less empowered to engage due to language barriers or limited understanding of school systems (Kim & Hill, 2015). These findings suggest that schools must adopt inclusive strategies to engage all families meaningfully.

In summary, while all forms of parental involvement contribute to academic success, home-based activities and academic socialization have been found to exert the most direct impact. Schools should therefore encourage these forms while also strengthening communication with families and reducing participation barriers.

### **Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Parental Involvement**

While the benefits of parental involvement in education are well-documented, its effectiveness is shaped by a complex interplay of factors. These include socioeconomic status (SES), parental education level, family structure, cultural background, school climate, and the child's age. Understanding these factors is crucial for educators and policymakers aiming to foster inclusive and impactful parental engagement.

One of the most significant determinants is socioeconomic status. Families from higher SES backgrounds often have greater access to educational resources, such as books, technology, and extracurricular opportunities. These parents are also more likely to have flexible work schedules that allow them to attend school events and assist with homework (Fan & Chen, 2001). In contrast, low-income families may face challenges such as long work hours, lack of transportation, or limited access to learning materials, all of which can hinder their involvement (Jeynes, 2012).

**Parental education level** is another key factor. Educated parents are typically more confident in helping with schoolwork, communicating with teachers, and navigating the school system (Hill & Tyson, 2009). They are also more likely to understand academic expectations and foster a learning-oriented home environment. In contrast, parents with limited education may feel inadequate or intimidated by schools, leading to reduced engagement, even if they value education deeply (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003).

**Cultural background** influences not only how parents engage with schools but also how they view education. In some cultures, parental involvement is seen as direct assistance with academic tasks, while in others, it is expressed through emotional support or by emphasizing respect for teachers and authority figures (Kim & Hill, 2015). Schools that fail to recognize and accommodate cultural differences may unintentionally alienate families or overlook their contributions.



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**Family structure** also affects involvement levels. Single-parent households, for instance, often face time and resource constraints, making consistent involvement more difficult. However, research suggests that even in non-traditional family structures, high parental expectations and communication can significantly boost academic outcomes (Jeynes, 2012).

The school climate—including teacher attitudes, communication practices, and inclusivity—greatly determines how welcomed and supported parents feel. Epstein (1995) emphasized that schools play a pivotal role in facilitating partnerships with families. Schools that maintain open communication, respect diverse family backgrounds, and provide multiple channels for involvement tend to see greater parental engagement and student achievement.

Student age and developmental stage are also important. Parental involvement is typically higher in the early years of schooling and tends to decline as children progress through middle and high school. However, research indicates that while the nature of involvement changes, its importance remains significant throughout all educational stages. For older students, involvement through academic socialization—discussing future goals, setting expectations, and fostering independence—is more effective than direct supervision (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

Lastly, technological accessibility has become an emerging factor in the digital age. Access to school portals, online homework tools, and communication platforms enhances parental engagement by making information readily available and interactions more convenient. However, digital divides persist, particularly among economically disadvantaged families, thereby limiting equal participation (Kim & Hill, 2015).

In conclusion, the effectiveness of parental involvement depends on a broad spectrum of interrelated factors. Socioeconomic conditions, educational background, cultural norms, school practices, and developmental considerations all shape how, when, and to what extent parents can contribute to their children's academic success. Recognizing and addressing these factors is essential for creating equitable and supportive learning environments.

## **Challenges and Limitations**

While the positive impact of parental involvement on academic performance is well-established, several challenges and limitations hinder its consistent implementation and effectiveness across different educational contexts. These obstacles arise from personal, institutional, socioeconomic, and cultural factors that complicate efforts to promote inclusive and sustained parental engagement.

One major challenge is time constraints faced by many parents, particularly those from low-income or single-parent households. Due to long work hours, multiple jobs, or other caregiving responsibilities, such parents often lack the flexibility to attend school events, help with homework, or engage in regular communication with teachers (Jeynes, 2012). Even when motivated, their capacity to participate in school-related activities is severely restricted by their personal circumstances.

Another significant limitation is low parental literacy and education levels. Parents with limited academic backgrounds may feel ill-equipped to assist their children with schoolwork or to navigate school systems. This lack of confidence can discourage them from becoming involved, even when they deeply value education (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). In such cases, traditional models of involvement that assume a certain level of parental competence may inadvertently exclude these families.

Language and cultural barriers also hinder parental involvement, especially among immigrant families. Parents who are not fluent in the language of instruction may find it difficult to communicate with teachers or understand school expectations. Moreover, cultural beliefs about the roles of parents and teachers in the education process may lead to misunderstandings or underestimation of their potential

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contributions (Kim & Hill, 2015). Without culturally responsive strategies, schools may struggle to engage families from diverse backgrounds effectively.

School-related challenges also play a role. In some cases, poor communication or lack of initiative from school staff creates a barrier to involvement. When schools fail to build welcoming environments or do not actively reach out to parents, families may feel unwelcome or marginalized. Epstein (1995) emphasized the importance of strong school-family partnerships, noting that institutional attitudes and policies greatly influence whether parental involvement is encouraged or discouraged.

A further challenge lies in the changing nature of parental involvement across developmental stages. As children grow older, especially during adolescence, direct parental involvement often declines. Teenagers tend to seek more independence, and parents may become less certain about how to support their children academically without seeming intrusive (Hill & Tyson, 2009). This natural developmental shift requires schools to guide parents on age-appropriate ways to remain engaged.

From a research perspective, the measurement of parental involvement itself presents limitations. Definitions and indicators vary widely across studies, making it difficult to establish a universal framework. Some research focuses on visible actions such as attending school events, while others highlight subtle forms of involvement like setting expectations or discussing schoolwork at home. This inconsistency complicates comparisons and hinders the creation of standardized policies.

Additionally, many studies are correlational rather than causal, which limits our ability to draw definitive conclusions about the direction of influence. While there is strong evidence of a positive association, it is challenging to isolate the exact contribution of parental involvement from other factors such as teacher quality, peer influence, or a child's intrinsic motivation (Fan & Chen, 2001).

In conclusion, despite its proven benefits, parental involvement is not a simple or uniform solution to improving academic performance. Time limitations, literacy barriers, cultural misunderstandings, inconsistent school practices, and methodological difficulties all limit its potential impact. Addressing these challenges requires targeted efforts by schools, policymakers, and communities to develop inclusive, flexible, and culturally competent strategies that support all families in playing an active role in their children's education.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the review of literature and the challenges identified regarding parental involvement in education, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of parental engagement and support student academic success.

### **1. Provide Flexible and Accessible Opportunities for Parental Involvement**

Given that many parents, particularly those in low-income or single-parent households, face time constraints, schools should offer flexible opportunities for involvement. These can include evening or weekend meetings, virtual parent-teacher conferences, and online engagement platforms. Providing multiple formats (e.g., in-person, phone, digital) ensures that parents can participate according to their schedules and circumstances. Additionally, offering childcare during school events or meetings can further increase accessibility for parents with young children.

### **2. Offer Educational Support and Resources for Parents**

To address the barrier of low parental literacy or education levels, schools should offer resources and workshops aimed at improving parents' confidence and knowledge. These programs could focus on practical ways to support children's learning at home, understanding academic curricula, and navigating school systems. For instance, providing parents with strategies for helping with homework, fostering a positive learning environment at home, or reading together can make a significant difference in student



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achievement. Schools could also offer training in specific skills, such as digital literacy, to empower parents to use educational technologies effectively.

### **3. Promote Culturally Responsive Practices**

To engage diverse families, schools must acknowledge and respect cultural differences in their approaches to parental involvement. Schools should offer culturally responsive programs that consider language differences, cultural values, and unique expectations surrounding education. Hiring bilingual staff or providing translators at school events can eliminate language barriers, making it easier for non-English-speaking parents to participate. Moreover, schools should be mindful of the cultural perspectives parents bring and work to understand their values about involvement. Cultural competence training for educators can help them better support and communicate with diverse families.

### **4. Foster Strong School-Family Partnerships**

School policies and practices should emphasize the importance of building strong partnerships with parents. Schools should actively reach out to parents and caregivers, making them feel valued and respected as partners in the educational process. This can be achieved by implementing welcoming practices, such as creating a warm and inclusive school environment, sending regular communication, and organizing events that encourage family participation. Teachers and administrators should also be trained in the importance of clear and consistent communication, ensuring parents are informed about their child's academic progress and school events.

### **5. Encourage Academic Socialization**

For older children, particularly those in middle and high school, the focus should shift from direct involvement in academic tasks to fostering academic socialization. Parents can support their children's motivation and academic performance by discussing future goals, encouraging independence, and setting high academic expectations. Schools can assist by providing resources and workshops that guide parents on how to engage in academic socialization. By promoting an environment where both parents and children set and strive for long-term educational goals, parents can have a lasting impact on their children's motivation and academic success.

### **6. Utilize Technology to Enhance Parental Engagement**

As technology becomes increasingly integrated into education, schools should take advantage of digital tools to keep parents informed and involved. Platforms such as school websites, online grade portals, and communication apps allow parents to monitor their child's progress in real time. Offering virtual workshops and webinars can also support parental involvement, particularly for working parents or those with mobility limitations. However, it is important to recognize the digital divide and provide alternative options for parents who may lack internet access or digital literacy.

### **7. Encourage Community-Based Initiatives**

Community organizations can play a key role in facilitating parental involvement. Schools should collaborate with local organizations to support and engage families in their children's education. For example, local libraries, churches, and nonprofit organizations can host workshops on educational topics, provide tutoring or mentorship programs, or organize community events where families can learn about school expectations and resources. Creating community networks that support both parents and children can help bridge the gap between home and school, providing a stronger foundation for academic success.

### **8. Monitor and Evaluate Parental Involvement Programs**

Finally, it is essential for schools to regularly assess the effectiveness of their parental involvement strategies. Schools should gather feedback from parents and teachers to identify barriers and refine engagement programs. This process of continuous evaluation can ensure that parental involvement

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efforts remain relevant and effective over time, adapting to changing community needs and educational demands.

In conclusion, enhancing parental involvement requires a multifaceted approach that addresses time constraints, cultural barriers, educational disparities, and changing developmental needs. By implementing the above recommendations, schools can create inclusive, supportive environments that encourage meaningful parental engagement and ultimately contribute to improved academic outcomes for all students.

## **Conclusion**

Parental involvement plays a crucial role in shaping students' academic success, with a growing body of research demonstrating its positive impact on a wide range of educational outcomes, including academic performance, motivation, and behavior. However, the effectiveness of parental involvement is influenced by several factors, including socioeconomic status, parental education levels, cultural differences, and the school climate. These factors often create significant challenges that can hinder meaningful and sustained engagement by families, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Despite these challenges, the evidence overwhelmingly supports the importance of fostering strong school-family partnerships. Schools must adopt flexible and inclusive strategies to engage all parents, regardless of their background or circumstances. By offering varied opportunities for involvement, providing resources to support parental capacity, and recognizing cultural and linguistic diversity, schools can create an environment where parents feel empowered to contribute to their children's education. Additionally, schools must ensure that communication between home and school is clear, consistent, and welcoming to all families.

The transition from early childhood to adolescence presents another critical opportunity for parental involvement. While direct academic support may diminish as children grow older, parents can continue to influence their children's educational success through academic socialization, setting high expectations, and fostering a positive attitude toward learning. Thus, the role of parental involvement evolves, but it remains essential at all stages of a child's education.

In light of these findings, it is clear that addressing the barriers to parental involvement is vital for improving educational equity. Schools, communities, and policymakers must work collaboratively to overcome these obstacles, ensuring that all families, regardless of their circumstances, can play an active role in supporting their children's academic journey. By doing so, we can create more equitable educational environments where every child has the opportunity to thrive academically.

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