

What is the PTO?

The purpose of the Parent Teacher Organization at Steen School is to bring school personnel and parents together to best serve the student population of the school. Two primary ways in which this is done is through fundraising and events, which both help to improve the climate of the school and bring together the whole school community for the purpose of positive and enriching events. We provide a voice for all families at the school, fundraise to support teachers to provide enriching programs for students, and provide events for the whole school community to come together.

Why should you get involved in your child's education? Because it can make a dramatic difference in your child's achievement at school and beyond.

Researchers have been studying the effects parent attitudes and actions have on their children's academic success for more than 30 years. The results have been consistent. Anne Henderson and Nancy Berla summed it up in their book *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family Is Critical to Student Achievement*, which reviewed the existing research: "When parents are involved in their children's education at home, they do better in school. And when parents are involved in school, children go farther in school and the schools they go to are better."

Much of the information here is taken from publications that examine parent involvement research by Henderson, a consultant at New York University's Institute for Education and Social Policy, and various coauthors; from publications by Joyce Epstein, director of the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University; from the National Center for Parent Involvement in Education, which Henderson helped found; and from summaries of research prepared by the Michigan Department of Education, San Diego Unified School District, and others.

Major Benefits

Research shows that when parents are involved in their children's education, the children are more likely to:

- earn better grades.
- score higher on tests.
- pass their classes.
- attend school regularly.
- have better social skills.
- show improved behavior.
- be more positive in their attitude toward school.
- complete homework assignments.
- graduate and continue their education.

Schools with involved parents enjoy:

- better morale among teachers.
- higher ratings of teachers by parents.
- more support from families.
- a better reputation in the community.

More Is Better, at All Levels

As a parent, you can serve many different roles in the educational process: home teacher, advocate for your child, volunteer, fundraiser, booster. You can even serve in decisionmaking and oversight roles for the school. The more parents participate in a sustained way at each of these levels, the better for student achievement.

When you get involved early in your child's education, the results are more pronounced and long-lasting. And studies indicate that parent involvement in education has a positive effect at all grade levels: elementary, middle, and high school.

Dads Matter!

In two-parent households as well as father-only households where dads are highly involved in their children's schools, those children are more likely to: •succeed academically. •participate in extracurricular activities. •enjoy school.

They are less likely to: •have to repeat a grade. •be suspended or expelled.

Significant Effects

One study found that students from families with above-average parent involvement were 30 percent more successful in school than those with below-average parent involvement. Success was measured by GPA; test scores in math, science, reading, and social studies; promotion and retention rates; and teacher ratings.

Another study found that in schools where teachers reported high levels of outreach to parents, test scores grew at a rate 40 percent higher than in schools reporting low levels of outreach to parents.

Home and School

A three-year study of 12,000 high school students concluded that "When parents come to school regularly, it reinforces the view in the child's mind that school and home are connected and that school is an integral part of the whole family's life."

A two-year study of home and school influences on literacy achievement among children from low-income families found that the single variable most positively connected to all literacy skills was formal involvement in parent-school activities, such as PTO participation, attending school activities, and serving as a volunteer.

Parents Benefit, Too

When parents become involved in their children's education, the parents are more likely to: •be more confident at school. •be more confident in themselves as parents and their ability to help their children learn. •be held in higher esteem by teachers and have teachers expect more from their children. •enroll in continuing education to advance their own schooling.

What if you could help your child enjoy school more, get better grades, and reduce behavior problems at the same time? Reams of research has shown that regardless of parents' income and educational background, their involvement in education helps their kids do better in and out of school. Parent involvement can be as simple as helping with math homework or reading a book together at bedtime. Going to parent-teacher conferences is important, but taking the family to the school spaghetti supper makes a difference, too. More involvement is better, but you don't have to be president of the PTO or run the school carnival. As long as your actions show that you value education, your child is likely to respond. Here are just a few of the reasons you should get involved in your child's education:

Higher grades. Kids whose parents are involved in their education get better grades and have higher test scores. And the more parents are involved, the more their children seem to benefit. A study of parents highly involved in the educational process showed that their children were more likely to improve in reading and math.

Better behavior. Kids develop better social skills and show improved behavior when their parents are involved at school. Studies have also shown that kids are less likely to skip school, less disruptive in class, and more likely to do their homework when their parents are involved. One study showed that when dads are highly involved in schools, their children enjoy school more and are less likely to be suspended, expelled, or required to repeat a grade.

Improved education. Research shows that parent involvement can help improve the quality of schools, raise teacher morale, and improve a school's reputation in the community. Involved parents gain the respect of teachers; as a result, teachers have higher expectations of their children. Involvement pays off in the long term, too: Children stay in school longer and are more likely to continue their education after high school.

Increased confidence. When students feel supported at home and school, they develop more positive attitudes about school, have more self-confidence, and place a higher priority on academic achievement. Children of involved parents are more likely to feel that they're accepted, included, and respected and at school.

Parents benefit, too. When parents become involved in their children's education, they become more comfortable in the school building, gain confidence in their parenting skills, and feel more capable of helping their children learn. They're also more likely to continue their own education.

Involvement is easy. You don't have to log hundreds of volunteer hours for your child to benefit. Even if you can only volunteer a few hours a year, every little bit counts. If you're ready to do more, your school's parent-teacher group can help you find ways to get involved that fit both your schedule and your interests.