



Harvard Family
Research Project



Resource Guide for Family Engagement Across the Developmental Pathway

Addendum to the 2006/2007 *Family Involvement
Makes a Difference* Research Briefs

Heidi M. Rosenberg, Senior Research Analyst
Elizabeth Heymann, Graduate Research Assistant
M. Elena Lopez, Senior Consultant
Helen Westmoreland

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For questions or comments about this paper,
email hfrp_pubs@gse.harvard.edu

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Harvard Family Research Project • Harvard Graduate School of Education • 3 Garden Street • Cambridge, MA • 02138
www.hfrp.org • Email: hfrp_pubs@gse.harvard.edu • Tel: 617-495-9108 • Fax: 617-495-8594

Introduction

Families matter. From the time children are born, parents influence their cognitive, social, and emotional development. Familial interactions and activities help shape children's readiness for school, and consistent engagement during children's elementary years is also related to positive academic and behavioral outcomes. Family engagement remains important in adolescence and predicts healthy youth behaviors and higher rates of college enrollment. Yet, while family engagement contributes to student success from cradle to career, parents, schools, and other support organizations are often unaware of the most effective ways to support family engagement in children's learning at different points along this developmental and educational pathway.

Recognizing this gap, between 2006 and 2007 Harvard Family Research Project published the three-part *Family Involvement Makes a Difference* series, a set of research briefs that provide comprehensive summaries of effective family engagement practices at the early childhood, elementary school, and middle/high school levels. Taken together, these briefs make the case that family involvement predicts children's academic achievement and social development as they progress from early childhood programs through K–12 schools and into higher education. All three publications in this series contain substantive bibliographies that include listings of seminal research in the family engagement field. You can access these publications here:

- [Family Involvement in Early Childhood Education](#)
- [Family Involvement in Elementary School Children's Education](#)
- [Family Involvement in Middle and High School Students' Education](#)

This bibliographic resource builds on the work presented in the *Family Involvement Makes a Difference* series to provide you with a selected listing of post-2006 publications across the full developmental spectrum. Included are research reports, examples of best practices, and toolkits that show how communities and schools can reach out to families to meaningfully engage them in their children's educational journey, from readying them for kindergarten through preparing for post-secondary college or training. A number of these resources focus on critical transition periods, such as entry into kindergarten, ninth grade, or college, and discuss specific strategies to help families and schools support students in successfully navigating these transitions. Policymakers can use this guide to examine recommendations for family engagement programs in light of the latest research. Practitioners, including teachers, can use it to learn about promising strategies and best practices in engaging families for student success.

The resources in this bibliographic guide are grouped into categories that align with key components that Harvard Family Research Project has identified as necessary for effective family engagement: connecting family engagement to student learning, reaching out and engaging families, leveraging community resources, building school capacity, and creating family engagement pathways. Within each category, you will find a selected list of resources that can guide your work with families of children at different points along the developmental pathway. Resources relating to specific developmental phases are grouped together for quick reference.

Connecting Family Engagement to Student Learning

This section of the guide provides information on connecting family engagement to learning. Resources reveal how parental roles change as children move from the early childhood years into adolescence to reflect developmentally-appropriate strategies for supporting student learning, and address the ways that schools and communities can help families and students navigate the requirements of high school and prepare themselves for successful college attendance.

Early Childhood

Lahaie, C. (2008). School readiness of children of immigrants: Does parental involvement play a role? *Social Science Quarterly*, 89(3), 684–705.

This article analyzes the connection between parent engagement and the school readiness of children in immigrant families. Findings suggest that increased parent involvement is associated with smaller discrepancies in math and reading skills of immigrant and non-immigrant children entering school.

McWayne, C., Campos, R., & Owsianik, M. (2008). Family involvement in preschool: A multidimensional, multi-level examination of mother and father involvement among low-income, culturally diverse families. *Journal of School Psychology*, 46(5), 551–573.

This study examines the relationships between family demographics and level of satisfaction with school contact as possible determinants of family involvement in early childhood education. Involvement at school was significantly associated with level of satisfaction with school contact for both mothers and fathers.

Raikes, H., Luze, G., Brooks-Gunn, J., Raikes, H.A., Pan, B.A., Tamis-LeMonda, C.S., et al. (2006). Mother-child bookreading in low-income families: Correlates and outcomes during the first three years of life. *Child Development* 77(4), 924–953.

This study examined the factors correlated with early mother-child bookreading and the effects of this exposure on children's early language learning between 14–36 months of age. Children whose mothers read to them more frequently during this period—particularly those who engaged in a pattern of daily reading over time—demonstrated increased vocabulary, comprehension, and cognitive development.

Elementary School

Mbwana, K., Terzian, M., & Moore, K.A. (2009). *What works for parent involvement programs for children: Lessons from experimental evaluations of social interventions*. Washington, D.C.: Child Trends.

This Fact Sheet synthesizes the findings from 67 evaluations of parent involvement interventions, focusing on parents of children aged 6–11. The authors examined intervention programs that emphasize skills training, parent education, parent-child involvement, and therapy focused on a parent or family issue, and found that nearly all the programs evaluated that involved parents had some positive impact on student developmental outcomes, reinforcing the idea that parent involvement is linked to student achievement.

http://www.childtrends.org/Files//Child_Trends-2009_12_09_FS_WWParentInvolveProg.pdf

University of Nebraska-Lincoln/Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families, and Schools

This website provides links to a comprehensive set of presentations and publications on parent engagement and children's learning in early and school-age childhood.

<http://www.cyfs.unl.edu/pubspres.shtml#engagement>

Middle School/High School

Auerbach, S. (2007). From moral supporters to struggling advocates: Reconceptualizing parent roles in education through the experience of working-class families of color. *Urban Education* 42(3), 250–283.

This qualitative study examined the beliefs, goals, and practices of African American and Latino families with non-college backgrounds whose children participated in a college preparatory program. Parents' roles in their children's education were influenced by their children's motivation, performance, and requests for involvement, as well as co-constructed with the school and its policies for welcoming parent involvement.

Englund, M.M., Egeland, B., & Collins, W.A. (2008). Exceptions to high school dropout predictions in a low-income sample: Do adults make a difference? *Journal of Social Issues* 64(1), 77–94.

This study found that children who had positive relationships with their parents were more likely to continue on a positive trajectory towards high school graduation. These findings suggest that parenting education programs that promote healthy relationships between parents and adolescents may be useful components of dropout prevention programs.

Epstein, J.L. (2008). Improving family and community involvement in secondary schools. *Education Digest*, 73(6), 9–12.

This resource provides evidence that when families are involved in partnership programs with middle and high schools, more students earn higher grades in English and math, demonstrate improvement in reading and writing skills, earn more course credits, set higher aspirations, have better attendance, come to class more prepared to learn, and have fewer behavioral problems.

Hill, N.E., & Tyson, D.F. (2009). Parental involvement in middle school: A meta-analytic assessment of the strategies that promote achievement. *Developmental Psychology*, 45(3), 740–763.

This article reveals that among middle school students, parental involvement that focuses on academic socialization, such as sharing expectations for achievement and developing academic and career goals, had the greatest impact on academic achievement of all types of parental involvement. Parental involvement at this level should also foster middle school students' growing autonomy and positive decision-making skills.

Hooker, S., & Brand, B. (2009). *Success at every step: How 23 programs support youth on the path to college and beyond*. Washington, D.C.: American Youth Policy Forum.

This compendium examines 23 successful programs that help youth complete high school ready to achieve success in college and their future careers, and includes a logic model illustrating the necessary steps in preparing youth for college. <http://www.aypf.org/publications/SuccessAtEveryStep.htm>

Jeynes, W.H. (2007). The relationship between parental involvement and urban secondary school student academic achievement. *Urban Education*, 42(1), 82–110.

The results of this meta-analysis reveal that parental involvement is associated with higher academic achievement for both white and racial minority students. Aspects of parental involvement such as having high expectations for student achievement and parenting style were more strongly associated with high academic achievement than were more demonstrative aspects of parental involvement like providing homework help and attending school functions.

New Visions for Public Schools. (n.d.) *Is your 9th grader on track for college?*

This resource, designed for families of students in New York, explains the necessary steps to high school graduation and college attendance, including information about Regents exams, coursework, attendance, and grades. <http://michaelmassiah.x7hosting.com/collegebound/NV9thguide-ENGLISH-web.pdf>

Terzian, M., & Mbwana, K. (2009). *What works for parent involvement programs for adolescents: Lessons from experimental evaluations of social interventions*. Washington, D.C.: Child Trends.

This Fact Sheet, published in tandem with Child Trends' publication on parent involvement programs for younger children, reviews the findings of 47 evaluations of parent involvement interventions for adolescents. The authors found that building parenting skills, teen- and family-focused therapy, a combined focus on parents and adolescents, and sustained program length were all associated with more positive developmental outcomes for adolescents.

http://www.childtrends.org/Files//Child_Trends-2009_12_09_FS_WWParentInvolveAdol.pdf

Reaching out and Engaging Families

This set of resources, focusing on strategies to reach out to parents and engage them in their children's education, provides tools to help schools and other organizations understand how to better engage families in student learning and create processes that help families understand what is expected of them in partnering with schools.

Bouffard, S. (2008). *Tapping into technology: The role of the Internet in family-school communications*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.

This research digest summarizes the ways that Internet-based communication methods, such as email, Web sites, and other social networking technologies, impact home-school communication.

<http://www.hfrp.org/TappingIntoTechnology>

Ferguson, C. (2008). *The school-family connection: Looking at the larger picture*. Austin, TX: National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools.

This synthesis of literature regarding family involvement reveals that newer studies focus more explicitly the following themes: how programs can be welcoming to families across contexts, cultures, and languages; misconceptions and mistrust that teachers and families hold about family engagement in schools; understanding the contexts of different parenting practices and how these practices relate to student achievement in school; and emphasis on systemic approaches to family involvement programs.

<http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/sfclitrev.pdf>

Early Childhood

Council of Chief State School Officers (2009). *A quiet crisis: The urgent need to build early childhood systems and quality programs for children birth through age five*.

This policy statement from the Council of Chief State School Officers stresses the need to provide a sustained, cohesive, and carefully sequenced system of early learning experiences for young children to help those from disadvantaged backgrounds enter school ready to learn. It includes a section on the need for meaningful family engagement to help parents partner with early childhood programs and enhance their children's earliest learning experiences.

<http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/A%20Quiet%20Crisis-PolicyStatement%20final.pdf>

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Washington State. (2009). *Starting Strong P-3 Conference: Connecting schools and early learning providers birth through 3rd grade: Materials from conference*. August 10–11.

This resource provides links to presentations on best practices in engaging families as presented by early learning practitioners and experts who participated in an August 2009 conference that focused on family engagement.

<http://www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/StartingStrong/>

Elementary School

Sheldon, S. (2007). *Improving student attendance with school, family, and community partnerships*. *Journal of Educational Research*, 100(5), 267–275.

This article discusses how elementary schools in which teachers, parents, and administrators formed action teams, planned family and community involvement activities linked to student learning goals, and engaged in dedicated outreach efforts to involve all families saw increases in the percentage of students attending class.

Middle School/High School

Bridgeland, J.M, Dilulio, J.J., Streeter, R.T., & Mason, J. R. (2008). *One dream, two realities: Perspectives of parents on America's high schools*. Washington, D.C.: Civic Enterprises.

This report reveals that low-income parents often feel they lack options for making decisions about how to equip their children for the future. Parents cite lack of information, communication, knowledge of what is going on in the school, and their own lack of education and knowledge about what is being taught at school as barriers to involvement.

<http://www.civicerprises.net/pdfs/onedream.pdf>

Leveraging Community Resources

This section of the guide focuses on the importance of creating inclusive community partnerships to help ensure students' academic success. Resources include information on community-based resources designed to help families support their children's learning and prepare them for college.

Bireda, S. (2009). *A look at community schools*. Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress.

This report argues that in order to build successful community schools and ensure that they provide the most necessary and useful services, parents should have a voice in making these decisions. Parents who receive services from their children's community school are more likely to attend activities related to their children's education.

http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/10/community_schools.html

Family Strengthening Policy Center (2007). *The parenting imperative: Investing in parents so children and youth succeed*. Washington, D.C.: National Human Services Assembly.

This policy brief suggests that communities should adopt a "parenting success" strategy that would aim to connect higher-risk families to community supports, build the capacity of families to function effectively and carry out their responsibilities, and improve the community environment for families. The brief also provides policymakers and practitioners a definition of parenting success strategies and steps for implementing such a strategy in their communities.

http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED499303&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED499303

Mann-Erickson, G., & Martinez, J. (2007). *21 ways to engage students in school*. Denver, CO: National Center for School Engagement.

This resource provides strategies for schools to implement in order to improve student engagement in school and improve attendance, including recommendations for building school-community relationships.

<http://www.schoolengagement.org/TruancyPreventionRegistry/Admin/Resources/Resources/21WaystoEngageStudentsinSchool.pdf>

Weiss, H.B., & Lopez, M.E. (2010). **Community support for family engagement in children’s learning.** In H.B. Weiss, H. Kreider, M.E. Lopez, & C. Chatman-Nelson, (Eds). *Preparing Educators to Engage Families: Case Studies Using an Ecological Systems Framework* (2nd ed.), pp. 32–37. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

This book chapter introduces a set of cases that describe the ways neighborhoods and communities can support family engagement in children’s learning. Focusing on family strategies to bridge negative neighborhood conditions and to connect children to learning opportunities outside the community, the chapter also cites the role of community organizations in assisting families to advocate for school improvements.

Middle School/High School

Dabbah, M. (2008). Help Your Children Succeed in High School and Go to College

This audio-visual tool and accompanying facilitator’s guide, sponsored by Ronald McDonald House Charities and Hispanic American Commitment to Educational Resources, help trainers conduct productive workshops for Latino families about supporting their children during high school and the transition to college.

http://www.meencanta.com/hacer/guide_for_parents_and_educators.html

Building School Capacity

The resources in this section focus on developing systemic family engagement strategies within early childhood programs, schools and districts. The featured resources guide stakeholders through the strategic planning process of building school capacity to carry out effective family engagement policies and programs, and provide examples of districts that have successfully implemented strong family engagement strategies.

America’s Promise Alliance (2009). *Organizing for effective parent engagement.*

This report provides resources for schools to help them build effective parent engagement teams as part of a dropout prevention agenda.

<http://www.americaspromise.org/Resources/ParentEngagement/Organizing-Effective-Parent-Engagement.aspx>

Bouffard, S.M., & Stephen, N. (2007). Promoting family involvement. *Principal’s Research Review*, 2(6), 1–8.

This article outlines the ways that family support can help students’ academic achievement, and provides guidance for principals about how to engage families to improve educational outcomes.

<http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/promoting-family-involvement>

Bryk, A., Sebring, P., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., & Easton, J. (2009). *Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

This book analyzes the factors that led to substantial improvements in one hundred Chicago-area elementary schools since the city’s 1988 decentralization efforts. The authors discuss a comprehensive set of practices and conditions that were key factors for improvement, including school leadership, the professional capacity of the faculty and staff, and a student-centered learning climate.

Davies, D., Henderson, A.T., Johnson, V., & Mapp, K.L. (2006). *Beyond the bake sale: The essential guide to family-school partnerships.* New York: The New Press.

This seminal book provides guidance on forming family–school partnerships to help parents become actively involved in their children’s education, both at home and at school. The book offers advice from principals and teachers on how to build strong collaborative relationships between families and school staff, and includes a series of checklists and a resource section to guide schools in creating their own partnership-building strategies.

Muscott, H.S., Szczesiul, S., Berk, B., Staub, K., Hoover, J., & Perry-Chisolm, P. (2008). Creating home–school partnerships by engaging families in schoolwide positive behavior supports. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 40(6), 6–14.

The article addresses underlying reasons behind some of the barriers to family involvement in schools, and provides strategies for schools to use in building partnerships with families in order to better engage them in their children’s learning.

Smith, J., Kuzin, C.A., DePedro, K., and Wohlstetter, P. (2009). *Family engagement in education: Seven principles for success*. Washington, D.C.: National Resource Center on Charter School Finance and Governance.

This study focuses on how charter schools employ strategies for engaging families in order to improve student outcomes, and includes seven strategies for charter school leaders to adopt in order to provide more meaningful family involvement structures.

http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/cegov/focus/charter_schools/publications/books_chapters/Family%20Engagement%20in%20Education.pdf

Westmoreland, H., Rosenberg H., Lopez, M.E., & Weiss, H. (2009). *Seeing is believing: Promising practices for how school districts promote family engagement*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.

This issue brief provides a framework for systemic family engagement and examines how six school districts use innovative strategies to create and sustain family engagement “systems at work.”

<http://www.hfrp.org/SeeingIsBelieving>

Westmoreland, H., Lopez, M.E., & Rosenberg, H. (2009). *How to develop a logic model for districtwide family engagement strategies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.

This step-by-step guide helps stakeholders understand and develop a logic model for district-wide family engagement efforts, including identifying resources, activities, and outcomes to help guide programs toward their goals.

<http://www.hfrp.org/DistrictLogicModel>

Elementary School

Auerbach, S. (2009). Walking the walk: Portraits in leadership for family engagement in urban schools. *The School Community Journal*, 19(1), 9–32.

This qualitative study of four elementary school administrators in Los Angeles examined the strategies they used to engage marginalized families in their schools. It discusses implications for family engagement policy and the professional development of school leaders.

http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/44/bd/d3.pdf

Middle School/High School

Agronick, G., Clark, A., O’Donnell, L., & Steuve, A. (2009). *Parent involvement strategies in urban middle and high schools in the Northeast and Islands Region* (Issues and Answers Report, REL 2009–No. 069). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast and Islands.

This assessment of school practices that collect information about parent involvement policies and practices includes a comprehensive appendix of major family engagement models, including available evaluation studies.

http://www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL_2009069.pdf

Ascher, C. & Maguire, C. (2007). *Beating the odds: How thirteen NYC schools bring low-performing ninth graders to timely graduation and college enrollment*. Providence, RI: Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.

This study identifies four key strategies used by schools to prepare low-performing ninth-graders for timely high school graduation and college enrollment: academic rigor, networks of timely supports, college expectations/access, and effective use of data. An accompanying rubric, based on this research, allows high schools to evaluate their work around these four dimensions.

http://www.annenberginstitute.org/pdf/BTO_report.pdf

<http://www.annenberginstitute.org/pdf/CollegePathwaysRubric.pdf>

Savitz-Romer, M., Jager-Hyman, J., & Coles, A. (2009). *Removing roadblocks to rigor: Linking academic and social supports to ensure college readiness and success*. Washington, D.C.: Pathways to College Network and the Institute for Higher Education Policy.

This publication provides definitions of the types of supports students and families need from their schools in order to prepare for the rigors of college. It includes a model of support structures for practitioners and policymakers to use and consider.

http://www.pathwaystocollege.net/uploadedFiles/Pathways_To_College_Network/About_Us/Pathways_Publications/Roadblocks.pdf

Tierney, W.G., Bailey, T., Constantine, J., Finkelstein, N., Hurd, N.F. (2009). *Helping students navigate the path to college: What high schools can do*. Washington, D.C.: Institute of Educational Sciences.

This report recommends that high schools provide more in-depth information to parents and students earlier in students' high school careers about the college financial aid process, provides evidence from research to support this recommendation, and provides tips for implementing this recommendation in high schools.

http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/higher_ed_pg_091509.pdf

Creating Family Engagement Pathways

This section provides resources that focus on helping schools and families create seamless pathways to educational success by developing effective processes to help children enter kindergarten ready to learn, move from middle school to high school, and successfully transition to college or other post-secondary training programs.

Transition from Early Childhood to Formal Schooling

Gregory, A., & Rimm-Kaufman, S. (2008). **Positive mother-child interactions in kindergarten: Predictors of school success in high school**. *School Psychology Review*, 37(4), 499–515.

This longitudinal study analyzed how the quality of mother-child interactions in kindergarten predicted high school academic achievement and attainment. The authors found that high-quality mother-child interactions were associated with an increased likelihood of high school graduation and a higher grade-point average in the twelfth grade.

Howes, C., Burchinal, M., Pianta, R., Bryant, D., Early, D., Clifford, R., & Barbarin, O. (2008). Ready to learn? Children's pre-academic achievement in pre-Kindergarten programs. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 23(1), 27–50.

This article analyzes children's growth in school-related learning and social skills during the pre-kindergarten year in programs designed to prepare children for kindergarten. Children showed larger gains in academic outcomes when they experienced higher-quality instruction or closer teacher–child relationships.

Transition to Middle School/High School

Bottoms, G. (2008). *Redesigning the ninth-grade experience: Reduce failure, improve achievement, and increase high school graduation rates*. Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education Board.

This report reveals that involving families in conversations with teachers and advisors about their children's coursework and postsecondary plans is an important element of programs that successfully improve the experiences of ninth graders and promote academic success in high school. The report recommends holding orientation programs for middle school students and their parents to help them better understand the expectations of students in high school and to recommend ways to prepare for ninth grade.

http://www.sreb.org/publications/2008/08V06_9th-grade_redesign.pdf

Hill, N.E., & Chao, R.K. (Eds.) (2009). *Families, school and the adolescent: Connecting research, policy, and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

This book presents cutting-edge research that can help families and schools understand how to support student achievement during the transition to middle and high school, including effective strategies to help parents remain involved in their adolescents' education.

Kennelly, L. & Monrad, M. (2007). *Easing the transition to high school: Research and best practices designed to support high school learning*. Washington, DC: National High School Center.

This report features The Success Academy at Thomas Edison High School in Philadelphia as an example of a promising practice in helping students to transition to ninth grade in a comprehensive urban high school. An important element of the Success Academy's accomplishments is its emphasis on student academic success, which was reinforced by including report card conferences in which each student, his or her family, and teachers meet to discuss academic achievement.

http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/NHSC_TransitionsReport.pdf

Smith, J.S. (2006). *Transition from middle school to high school*. Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association.

This brief reviews existing research on the transition to high school and outlines the need for comprehensive transition programs to address the changes students experience between eighth and ninth grades.

http://www.nmsa.org/portals/0/pdf/research/Research_Summaries/Transition_from_MStoHS.pdf

Transition to College

CIP Parental Involvement. (n.d.) Partner Institution: University of Massachusetts Boston. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education.

College Is Possible (CIP) is the American Council on Education's (ACE) K–16 youth development program, which motivates middle and high school students from underserved communities to seek a college education. The University of Massachusetts Boston (UMass Boston) has involved a cadre of students and parents in the development and implementation of *Making the Connection*, an innovative program of interactive college and math workshops

providing parents with information about how best to support their children's transition to college and provides both parents and students with information about college planning and the importance of math achievement in attaining college success.

<http://www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=parental&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=14446>

Foley, C. (2008, Spring). Family involvement can help with student's college success. *IUPUI Family Ed.*

This resource, created by the Director of Admissions at Indiana University–Purdue University–Indianapolis, suggests that parents can help their children be successful in college through providing moral support, financial advice, and career planning.

http://enroll.iupui.edu/admissions/documents/presentations/family_involvement.pdf

National Survey of Student Engagement (2007). Experiences that matter: Enhancing student learning and success. Annual report. Washington, D.C.

This study reveals that students who regularly sought support from their parents reported higher levels of engagement in their first years in college.

http://nsse.iub.edu/NSSE_2007_Annual_Report/docs/withhold/NSSE_2007_Annual_Report.pdf