

# Parent engagement programs increase student readiness for kindergarten

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Kindergarten teachers report that of the 32 million children living in poverty or low-income homes in the United States, nearly half lack strong social-emotional skills and are not "ready to succeed in school," according to the latest research brief released by the Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center at Penn State and the Robert Wood Johnson

Foundation.

"Because [children](#) begin learning at home long before they enter a classroom, [parents](#) play a critical role in supporting early childhood learning and [school readiness](#)," said Karen Bierman, Evan Pugh Professor of Psychology and Human Development and Family Studies and co-author of the report. "But, parents living in poverty, despite their love and devotion to their children, often don't have the resources and support systems available to help them adequately prepare preschoolers for the social, emotion and academic demands of school."

Social-emotional skills include the ability to manage emotions, set and achieve goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. The development of these skills in preschool combines with academic preparation to set the stage for school success.

The second of a 10-part series on social and emotional learning, "Parent Engagement Practices Improve Outcomes for Preschool Children" provides strong evidence that parent engagement programs during the preschool years have the potential to close the school readiness gap and promote optimal development for all children.

Parent engagement is the effort made by a parent, caregiver or family member to promote their child's social-emotional, cognitive and physical development in partnership with schools, child-care programs and communities.

The brief synthesizes a growing base of rigorous intervention studies with low-income parents and outlines the need to intensify strategic efforts to reduce disparities and improve outcomes for all children. It provides evidence of "what works" and support for the implementation of parent engagement programs and practices for educators,

policymakers and other community leaders.

Evidence-based parent engagement programs promote positive parenting practices that build strong parent-child relationships, provide parents with home learning activities and effective teaching strategies, encourage strong parent-teacher partnerships, and emphasize the importance of child nutrition and physical health.

"We want all parents to have the opportunity to increase a child's capacity for learning during the preschool years by building early attention, memory and problem-solving skills," said Bierman. "When children are ready for kindergarten with strong language, thinking and self-management skills, it sets the stage for success in elementary [school](#) and beyond."

**More information:** Parent Engagement Practices Improve Outcomes for Preschool Children: [www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/preschool-child.html](http://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/preschool-child.html)

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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