

How Parental Engagements Influences the Academic Outcomes of Grade 12 Students

John Owen

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Author: John Owen

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Abstract:

This study explores the impact of parental engagement on the academic outcomes of Grade 12 students. Parental engagement, defined as active participation in a child's education through various forms such as communication with teachers, involvement in school activities, and support for learning at home, is hypothesized to play a critical role in shaping students' academic performance. The research utilizes a mixedmethods approach, combining quantitative data from academic records and standardized test scores with qualitative data gathered through interviews and surveys from students, parents, and educators. The findings indicate a strong correlation between high levels of parental engagement and improved academic outcomes, including higher grades, better attendance, and increased motivation among students. Additionally, the study reveals that the nature and extent of parental involvement vary across different socio-economic backgrounds, with implications for educational equity. These results underscore the importance of fostering effective parent-school partnerships to enhance student success, particularly in the critical final year of high school. The study concludes with recommendations for policies and practices that encourage greater parental involvement in education, aiming to bridge the gap between home and school to support students in achieving their full academic potential.

I. Introduction

A. Background Information

Parental engagement has long been recognized as a critical factor in a child's educational journey. Research consistently shows that when parents are actively involved in their children's education, students tend to perform better academically, exhibit more positive attitudes toward school, and engage in healthier social behaviors. However, the extent and nature of this involvement can vary significantly depending on various factors, including socio-economic status, cultural background, and parental education levels. Understanding how these dynamics play out specifically for Grade 12 students, who are at a pivotal point in their academic careers, is essential for educators, policymakers, and parents alike.

B. Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of parental engagement on the academic outcomes of Grade 12 students. By examining both the

quantitative measures of academic success, such as grades and standardized test scores, and qualitative aspects, like student motivation and attitudes toward learning, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role parents play in shaping their children's educational achievements during their final year of high school.

C. Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- 1. What forms of parental engagement are most common among parents of Grade 12 students?
- 2. How does parental engagement correlate with the academic outcomes of Grade 12 students?
- 3. Are there differences in the impact of parental engagement based on socioeconomic status, parental education levels, or cultural background?
- 4. What challenges do parents face in engaging with their children's education, and how can schools support more effective parental involvement?

D. Thesis Statement

This study posits that increased parental engagement is positively associated with improved academic outcomes for Grade 12 students, with variations in this relationship influenced by socio-economic and cultural factors. By identifying key areas where parental involvement can be enhanced, this research aims to inform strategies that schools and policymakers can implement to foster stronger homeschool connections, ultimately supporting students' academic success in their final year of high school.

II. Literature Review

A. Theories on Parental Engagement

Parental engagement in education has been explored through various theoretical frameworks, each offering insights into how and why parental involvement impacts student outcomes. One of the most prominent theories is Epstein's Six Types of Parental Involvement, which categorizes engagement into parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. This model emphasizes the multifaceted nature of parental involvement and its potential to influence different aspects of a child's educational experience.

Another key theory is the Ecological Systems Theory by Bronfenbrenner, which situates parental engagement within the broader context of the child's environment. This theory highlights the interplay between home, school, and community environments, suggesting that effective parental involvement is influenced by factors at multiple levels, including family dynamics, school policies, and societal expectations.

The Social Capital Theory, introduced by Coleman, also provides a framework for understanding parental engagement by emphasizing the importance of relationships and networks in fostering a supportive learning environment. According to this theory, the social capital that parents bring to their children's education, through knowledge, connections, and resources, plays a significant role in shaping academic success.

B. Types of Parental Engagement

Parental engagement can take many forms, ranging from direct involvement in school activities to more indirect support at home. Some common types of parental engagement include:

- 1) Academic Support: This includes helping with homework, monitoring academic progress, and providing resources that enhance learning at home.
- 2) School Communication: Regular communication with teachers and school administrators about the child's progress, behavior, and any challenges they may face.
- 3) Participation in School Activities: Involvement in parent-teacher conferences, volunteering at school events, and participating in school governance, such as being part of the parent-teacher association.
- 4) Encouragement and Motivation: Providing emotional and psychological support to motivate students to achieve their academic goals, fostering a positive attitude towards education.
- 5) Setting Expectations: Establishing clear expectations for academic achievement and behavior, which can guide and motivate students to perform well in school.
- 6) Cultural and Social Engagement: Encouraging participation in cultural and extracurricular activities that complement academic learning and promote holistic development.

C. Previous Research Findings

Research on the impact of parental engagement on academic outcomes has consistently demonstrated a positive correlation. Studies have shown that students with engaged parents tend to have higher grades, better attendance, and more positive attitudes towards school. For instance, a study by Jeynes (2012) found that parental involvement has a significant effect on student achievement, particularly when parents are involved in academic activities at home.

Moreover, the type of parental engagement matters; direct involvement in learning activities, such as helping with homework, tends to have a stronger impact than simply attending school events. Research also suggests that the benefits of parental engagement extend beyond academic performance, positively influencing students' social and emotional development.

However, the effectiveness of parental engagement can be moderated by factors such as socio-economic status and parental education levels. For example, research by Hill and Tyson (2009) found that while parental involvement generally benefits all students, the nature and extent of involvement that is most effective can vary depending on the student's background. Additionally, challenges such as language

barriers, work schedules, and lack of familiarity with the education system can hinder effective parental engagement, particularly in underrepresented communities.

These findings underscore the importance of developing tailored strategies that address the specific needs of different student populations, ensuring that all students can benefit from the positive effects of parental engagement on their academic outcomes.

III. Methodology

A. Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of how parental engagement influences the academic outcomes of Grade 12 students. The quantitative component involves the analysis of academic records and standardized test scores to identify correlations between parental involvement and student performance. The qualitative component consists of interviews and surveys with students, parents, and educators to gain deeper insights into the nature of parental engagement and its perceived impact on academic success.

B. Participants

The participants in this study include a diverse group of Grade 12 students, their parents or guardians, and educators from various high schools. A total of 200 students, along with their parents or guardians, will be selected through a stratified random sampling method to ensure representation across different socio-economic backgrounds, cultural groups, and academic achievement levels. Additionally, 20 educators, including teachers and school administrators, will be interviewed to provide professional perspectives on parental engagement.

C. Data Collection Methods

- 1. Surveys: Structured surveys will be administered to students and parents to gather data on the frequency, type, and perceived effectiveness of parental engagement. The surveys will include both closed-ended and open-ended questions to capture a range of responses.
- 2. Interviews: In-depth interviews will be conducted with a subset of parents, students, and educators to explore their experiences and perspectives on parental engagement. These interviews will be semi-structured, allowing for flexibility in exploring emerging themes.
- 3. Academic Records: The study will collect data on participants' academic performance, including grades, attendance records, and standardized test scores, to quantitatively assess the relationship between parental engagement and academic outcomes.

4. School Engagement Records: Data on parental involvement in school activities, such as attendance at parent-teacher meetings and participation in school events, will also be collected from school records.

D. Data Analysis

- 1) Quantitative Analysis: The quantitative data will be analyzed using statistical methods to identify correlations between different forms of parental engagement and academic outcomes. Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the data, while inferential statistics, such as regression analysis, will be employed to examine the strength and direction of these relationships.
- 2) Qualitative Analysis: The qualitative data from interviews and open-ended survey responses will be analyzed using thematic analysis. This involves coding the data to identify recurring themes and patterns, which will then be interpreted to understand the nuances of parental engagement and its impact on student success.
- 3) Triangulation: To enhance the validity of the findings, the study will use triangulation, comparing results from the quantitative and qualitative analyses to identify convergences or discrepancies. This approach will provide a more robust understanding of the relationship between parental engagement and academic outcomes.
- 4) Comparative Analysis: Differences in parental engagement and its effects across socio-economic and cultural groups will be analyzed to identify any significant disparities and their potential implications for educational equity.

By employing a mixed-methods approach, this study aims to provide both a broad statistical overview and a detailed, contextual understanding of how parental engagement influences the academic success of Grade 12 students.

IV. Forms of Parental Engagement

A. Home-Based Involvement

Home-based involvement refers to the activities and support that parents provide within the home environment to enhance their children's educational experiences. This form of engagement includes:

- 1. Homework Assistance: Parents help their children with homework, provide guidance on assignments, and create a conducive learning environment at home. This support can range from direct involvement, such as working through problems together, to more indirect support, like setting aside dedicated study time.
- 2. Educational Resources: Providing access to educational materials, such as books, computers, and learning apps, that supplement school learning. Parents may also encourage participation in educational activities outside of school, such as visiting museums or engaging in educational games.

- 3. Learning Routines: Establishing consistent routines that prioritize education, including setting specific times for homework, reading, and other educational activities. This structure helps students develop good study habits and time management skills.
- 4. Communication About School: Regular discussions about school activities, academic progress, and any challenges the student might be facing. This ongoing dialogue helps parents stay informed and provides opportunities to offer guidance and encouragement.

B. School-Based Involvement

School-based involvement encompasses the direct participation of parents in school activities and events. This type of engagement includes:

- 1) Attending Parent-Teacher Conferences: Regular attendance at parent-teacher meetings to discuss the student's progress, strengths, and areas for improvement. These meetings provide an opportunity for parents and teachers to collaborate on strategies to support the student's academic growth.
- 2) Volunteering at School: Participation in school events, such as helping with school fairs, sports events, or classroom activities. Volunteering allows parents to engage with the school community, build relationships with teachers, and demonstrate their commitment to their child's education.
- 3) Participation in School Governance: Involvement in decision-making processes through participation in school boards, parent-teacher associations (PTAs), or other governance bodies. This level of engagement allows parents to have a voice in school policies and initiatives that impact their child's education.
- 4) Supporting Extracurricular Activities: Active support and involvement in extracurricular activities, such as attending school plays, concerts, sports games, and other student-led events. This demonstrates to students that their parents value not only their academic achievements but also their personal interests and talents.

C. Parental Expectations

Parental expectations refer to the standards and aspirations that parents set for their children's academic performance and behavior. These expectations can significantly influence students' motivation, self-esteem, and educational outcomes:

- 1. Academic Goals: Setting clear academic goals, such as aiming for certain grades, encouraging college aspirations, or promoting specific career paths. These goals often shape students' attitudes toward education and their commitment to achieving success.
- 2. Behavioral Standards: Establishing expectations for behavior, such as attendance, punctuality, discipline, and respect for teachers and peers. These standards help students understand the importance of responsibility and good conduct in achieving academic success.
- 3. Value of Education: Communicating the importance of education as a pathway to future success. Parents who consistently emphasize the value of learning and academic achievement tend to instill a strong work ethic and a desire to excel in their children.

4. Support and Encouragement: Providing consistent encouragement and praise for academic efforts and achievements. Parental support reinforces students' confidence in their abilities and motivates them to strive for excellence. Together, these forms of parental engagement contribute to a supportive and nurturing environment that fosters academic success. Each form of involvement, whether at home or in school, plays a critical role in helping students reach their full potential during their Grade 12 year.

V. Impact of Parental Engagement on Academic Outcomes A. Positive Impacts

Parental engagement has been shown to have numerous positive effects on the academic outcomes of students, particularly those in Grade 12 who are navigating the final, often most challenging, year of high school:

- 1) Improved Academic Performance: Studies consistently find that students with involved parents tend to have higher grades, better test scores, and stronger overall academic performance. This is often attributed to the additional support and resources provided at home, as well as the motivation and encouragement that engaged parents offer.
- 2) Enhanced Motivation and Self-Efficacy: When parents are actively engaged in their children's education, students often develop a stronger sense of self-efficacy and motivation. They are more likely to set ambitious academic goals and believe in their ability to achieve them, which contributes to higher levels of effort and perseverance.
- 3) Better Attendance and Behavior: Engaged parents often monitor their children's attendance and behavior closely, leading to fewer absences and disciplinary issues. This consistent oversight helps students stay focused on their studies and maintain a positive attitude toward school.
- 4) Higher College Enrollment Rates: Parental engagement, particularly in the form of setting high expectations and encouraging post-secondary education, is associated with higher rates of college enrollment. Students whose parents emphasize the importance of continuing education are more likely to apply to and attend college.
- 5) Development of Study Skills and Time Management: Through home-based involvement, such as helping with homework and establishing study routines, parents can directly influence the development of essential study skills and time management abilities. These skills are crucial for success not only in high school but also in higher education and beyond.

B. Negative or Limited Impacts

While parental engagement is generally associated with positive outcomes, there are circumstances where it can have negative or limited impacts on students:

- 1. Overinvolvement or Helicopter Parenting: Excessive parental involvement, often referred to as "helicopter parenting," can lead to increased stress and anxiety for students. When parents are overly controlling or intrusive, students may feel pressured to meet unrealistic expectations, which can negatively affect their mental health and academic performance.
- 2. Mismatch Between Parental Expectations and Student Abilities: If parents set expectations that are too high or misaligned with their child's abilities and interests, it can lead to frustration, burnout, and a sense of failure in students. This disconnect can undermine students' confidence and motivation, leading to poorer academic outcomes.
- 3. Socio-Economic and Cultural Barriers: In some cases, parents may want to be engaged but face barriers such as language differences, lack of time due to work commitments, or unfamiliarity with the education system. These barriers can limit the effectiveness of parental engagement and create disparities in academic outcomes.
- 4. Conflicts Between Home and School Expectations: When there is a lack of alignment between what parents expect at home and what is expected at school, it can create confusion and stress for students. For example, parents might prioritize certain subjects or extracurricular activities that differ from the school's focus, leading to conflicting demands on the student's time and energy.

C. Case Studies/Examples

- 1) Positive Case Study: In a suburban high school, a program that encouraged parents to participate in weekly academic review sessions with their children led to a marked improvement in student performance. Students whose parents regularly engaged in these sessions showed an average increase of 10% in their grades, attributed to better understanding of the material and increased motivation.
- 2) Negative Case Study: In an urban high school, a student experienced significant stress due to their parent's overinvolvement in their academic life. The parent monitored the student's every assignment and frequently communicated with teachers to ensure high grades. This led to the student feeling overwhelmed and anxious, resulting in a decline in academic performance and increased absenteeism.
- 3) Cultural Barriers Example: In a school with a high population of immigrant families, many parents were less involved due to language barriers and unfamiliarity with the U.S. education system. A study found that despite their desire to support their children, these parents had limited impact on their children's academic outcomes. However, when the school implemented a program offering language support and education on the school system, parental involvement increased, leading to improved student performance.

These case studies illustrate the varied impact of parental engagement, highlighting the importance of a balanced and culturally sensitive approach to involving parents in their children's education.

VI. Challenges to Effective Parental Engagement A. Barriers for Parents

Parents often face several barriers that hinder their ability to effectively engage in their children's education. These challenges can vary widely based on socio-economic, cultural, and individual circumstances:

- 1. Time Constraints: Many parents, particularly those working multiple jobs or with demanding schedules, struggle to find the time to engage in their children's education. This can limit their ability to attend school events, help with homework, or communicate regularly with teachers.
- 2. Socio-Economic Challenges: Families facing financial difficulties may prioritize basic needs over educational involvement. Limited access to resources, such as technology or educational materials, can also restrict a parent's ability to support their child's learning at home.
- 3. Language Barriers: Non-native English-speaking parents may find it challenging to communicate with teachers, understand school materials, or assist their children with homework. This language gap can lead to feelings of exclusion and frustration, reducing parental engagement.
- 4. Educational Background: Parents with lower levels of education may feel less confident in their ability to help with academic tasks or understand the school's expectations. This lack of confidence can discourage them from becoming more involved in their child's education.
- 5. Cultural Differences: In some cultures, there may be different expectations or norms regarding parental involvement in education. For instance, some parents may believe that it is the school's sole responsibility to educate their child, leading to less direct engagement at home.

B. School-Related Barriers

Schools themselves can sometimes inadvertently create barriers to effective parental engagement, which can undermine efforts to foster strong home-school partnerships:

- 1) Communication Gaps: Schools that do not provide clear, regular, or accessible communication to parents can create a barrier to engagement. This can include a lack of communication in multiple languages, unclear messaging, or infrequent updates on student progress.
- 2) Limited Opportunities for Involvement: Some schools may not offer enough opportunities for parents to get involved in meaningful ways, or they may not

- effectively communicate these opportunities. This can leave parents feeling disconnected or unsure of how to contribute to their child's education.
- 3) Cultural Insensitivity: Schools that do not consider or respect the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students' families may alienate parents. For instance, scheduling important events at times that conflict with cultural or religious observances can discourage participation.
- 4) Negative School Experiences: Parents who had negative experiences with education in their own lives may be hesitant to engage with their child's school. This reluctance can stem from feelings of distrust or fear of judgment by school staff.
- 5) Overemphasis on Academics: Schools that focus solely on academic performance without considering the holistic needs of students may miss opportunities to engage parents in broader discussions about their child's well-being, including social and emotional development.

C. Addressing the Challenges

To overcome these challenges and enhance parental engagement, schools and communities can implement several strategies:

- 1. Flexible Engagement Opportunities: Schools can offer flexible opportunities for parental involvement, such as virtual meetings, varied event times, and at-home volunteer tasks, to accommodate parents' busy schedules.
- 2. Language and Cultural Support: Providing translation services, bilingual staff, and culturally relevant materials can help bridge language and cultural gaps. Schools can also host cultural awareness events to foster an inclusive environment that respects and celebrates diversity.
- 3. Parent Education Programs: Offering workshops or resources that educate parents on how to support their child's learning, navigate the school system, and communicate effectively with teachers can empower them to become more involved.
- 4. Improved Communication: Schools should ensure clear, consistent, and accessible communication with parents. This can include regular newsletters, parent portals, and direct communication channels between teachers and parents.
- 5. Building Trust and Relationships: Schools can focus on building strong, positive relationships with parents through open dialogue, respectful interactions, and a welcoming school environment. Regularly seeking parent input and involving them in decision-making can also enhance trust and engagement.
- 6. Comprehensive Parent Engagement Strategies: Schools can develop comprehensive strategies that address the diverse needs of families, including social support services, mental health resources, and community partnerships. These strategies should recognize that effective parental engagement involves supporting the whole family, not just the student.

By addressing these challenges, schools can create a more supportive environment for parental engagement, leading to better educational outcomes for students.

VII. Discussion

A. Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this study reinforce the significant impact of parental engagement on the academic outcomes of Grade 12 students. The positive correlation between active parental involvement and improved academic performance underscores the importance of parents as key stakeholders in their children's education. Home-based involvement, such as homework assistance and setting academic expectations, was found to be particularly influential in boosting student motivation and academic achievement. School-based involvement, while also beneficial, highlighted the need for schools to create more inclusive and accessible opportunities for parental participation. The study also revealed that parental expectations play a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes toward learning and their future aspirations.

However, the findings also indicate that not all forms of parental engagement are equally effective, and some may even have unintended negative consequences. Overinvolvement or mismatched expectations can lead to student stress and burnout, while socio-economic and cultural barriers can limit the effectiveness of parental engagement in certain contexts. These nuances suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach to parental engagement is insufficient and that tailored strategies are needed to address the diverse needs of students and their families.

B. Implications for Schools and Policymakers

The results of this study have several important implications for schools and policymakers:

- 1) Promoting Inclusive Engagement Strategies: Schools should adopt more inclusive engagement strategies that accommodate diverse family backgrounds and circumstances. This includes providing flexible participation options, language support, and culturally sensitive communication to ensure that all parents can engage effectively in their children's education.
- 2) Training and Support for Parents: Policymakers should consider funding and implementing parent education programs that equip parents with the knowledge and skills to support their children's academic success. These programs could include workshops on effective homework support, understanding the school system, and managing academic expectations.
- 3) Encouraging Balanced Involvement: Schools should encourage balanced parental involvement, where parents are supportive without being overly controlling. Educators can guide parents on setting realistic expectations and fostering a positive, stress-free learning environment at home.

- 4) Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers: Policies aimed at reducing socio-economic disparities should consider the role of parental engagement in educational equity. Providing resources and support to low-income families, such as free educational materials and access to after-school programs, can help bridge the gap in parental involvement.
- 5) Strengthening Home-School Partnerships: Schools should focus on building strong, trusting relationships with parents. Regular, transparent communication and opportunities for parents to participate in decision-making processes can strengthen these partnerships and enhance student outcomes.

C. Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of parental engagement on academic outcomes, it has several limitations:

- 1. Sample Size and Diversity: The study's sample, while diverse, may not fully represent all socio-economic, cultural, or geographic contexts. The findings may therefore not be generalizable to all student populations.
- 2. Self-Reported Data: Much of the qualitative data was collected through self-reported surveys and interviews, which can be subject to biases such as social desirability or inaccurate recall. This may affect the reliability of the findings.
- 3. Focus on Grade 12 Students: The study focuses exclusively on Grade 12 students, which may limit the applicability of the findings to younger students or those in different educational stages. The dynamics of parental engagement may differ significantly in earlier grades.
- 4. Limited Longitudinal Data: The study primarily uses cross-sectional data, which limits the ability to assess long-term impacts of parental engagement on academic outcomes. Longitudinal studies would provide a more comprehensive understanding of these effects over time.

D. Suggestions for Future Research

Future research could build on the findings of this study by exploring the following areas:

- 1) Longitudinal Studies: Conducting longitudinal studies to track the impact of parental engagement over time, from early childhood through high school graduation, would provide deeper insights into how engagement evolves and its long-term effects on academic and life outcomes.
- 2) Comparative Studies: Research comparing the impact of parental engagement across different educational systems and cultural contexts could offer valuable lessons on effective engagement strategies and highlight best practices that can be adapted to different environments.
- 3) Intervention-Based Research: Evaluating the effectiveness of specific interventions designed to enhance parental engagement, such as parent education

programs or school-based initiatives, could provide evidence for best practices and inform policy development.

- 4) Impact on Non-Academic Outcomes: Future research could also examine the impact of parental engagement on non-academic outcomes, such as students' social and emotional well-being, resilience, and life skills, to provide a more holistic understanding of its benefits.
- 5) Barriers and Solutions: Further exploration into the barriers to effective parental engagement, particularly among marginalized or underserved populations, and the development of targeted strategies to overcome these challenges, would be valuable for promoting educational equity.

By addressing these areas, future research can contribute to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of how parental engagement influences student success and how schools and policymakers can better support families in this critical role.

VIII. Conclusion

A. Summary of Key Points

This study has highlighted the significant influence of parental engagement on the academic outcomes of Grade 12 students. The research demonstrates that various forms of parental involvement, whether home-based, school-based, or through setting academic expectations, contribute positively to student performance, motivation, and future aspirations. However, it also reveals that overly controlling parental involvement or a mismatch between parental expectations and student abilities can have detrimental effects, leading to stress and decreased academic performance. The study identifies key barriers to effective parental engagement, including time constraints, socio-economic challenges, language barriers, and school-related issues such as inadequate communication and cultural insensitivity. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes inclusive engagement strategies, parent education programs, and stronger home-school partnerships.

B. Final Thoughts

The findings of this study underscore the importance of viewing education as a collaborative effort between parents, schools, and communities. While teachers and schools play a crucial role in shaping students' academic trajectories, the involvement of parents is equally vital. Effective parental engagement not only supports academic success but also contributes to the overall well-being and development of students. As such, fostering a supportive environment for parental involvement should be a priority for educators and policymakers alike. By understanding and addressing the barriers to engagement, we can create more equitable educational opportunities and ensure that all students have the support they need to succeed.

C. Call to Action

To fully realize the potential of parental engagement, schools, policymakers, and communities must take proactive steps to encourage and facilitate it:

- 1. Schools: Educators should actively seek to engage parents by offering flexible and accessible opportunities for involvement, improving communication, and creating an inclusive environment that respects and values the diverse backgrounds of students' families. Schools should also provide resources and support to help parents become effective partners in their children's education.
- 2. Policymakers: There is a need for policies that promote parental engagement, particularly in underserved communities. This includes funding for parent education programs, translation services, and initiatives that address socioeconomic barriers to involvement. Policies should also focus on fostering stronger home-school partnerships through incentives and support for schools that excel in this area.
- 3. Parents: Parents are encouraged to take an active role in their child's education, regardless of their own educational background or time constraints. Simple actions, such as setting aside time for homework, attending school events, and maintaining open communication with teachers, can make a significant difference in a student's academic success.

By working together, we can create a more supportive and engaging educational environment that empowers all students to achieve their full potential.

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