

# What Can You Do to Help Your Middle School and/or High School Student Succeed?

## **Research Findings**

Several of the parent involvement factors measured when the adolescents were in eighth grade had significant and lasting effects on the academic achievement in later grades in high school, as well as on post-secondary attainment. Some of the paths influencing both academic achievement in high school and post-secondary attainment involve parent expectations and include the following:

### **Parent Expectations → Achievement**

The further in school parents believed their adolescents would go, the higher the adolescents' academic achievement.

### **Parent Expectations → Perception of Parent Expectations → Student Expectations → Achievement**

The further in school parents believed their adolescents would go, the clearer the adolescents' perception of such expectations, the higher their own academic expectations, the higher their academic achievement.

### **Parent Expectations → Perception of Parent Expectations → Time Spent on Homework → Achievement**

The further in school parents believed their adolescents would go, the clearer the adolescents' perception of such expectations, the more time they spent on homework, the higher their academic achievement.

In agreement with findings from other studies (Catsambis, 2001), high educational expectations constitute a powerful way through which parents can encourage continuously the educational attainments of their adolescents in high school and beyond.

## **Implications for Teacher Preparation and School Practice**

The long-lasting effects that parent involvement variables have on the academic achievement of adolescents and young adults indicate that parent involvement during high school and beyond still remains an important source of guidance and support for the developing individual.

Often, both parents and school personnel misinterpret the adolescents' desire for autonomy as a developmental barrier to family involvement. However, studies have indicated that such a desire for autonomy serves as a moderator of preferences for certain types of involvement over others, rather than as a barrier to any type of parent involvement (Xu, 2002). Secondary education students believe that they can do better at school if they know that their families are interested in their schoolwork and expect them to succeed, thus challenging the prevalent view that adolescents do not want their parents involved at all.

Also, parent involvement should not be viewed and defined in too narrow terms, such as direct involvement in homework completion, because the increasingly complex demands of the high school curriculum would prohibit many parents from being involved in that way. However, findings reported in this digest indicate a strong form of parent involvement is expectations. Parents who hold high expectations for their teens, communicate them clearly and encourage their adolescents to work hard in order to attain them, can make a difference in students' success.