



9

Parental involvement, student performance and satisfaction with life

This chapter examines how parents' interest in their child's life, certain parent-child activities, and parents' participation in school-related activities are associated with students' performance and students' satisfaction with their own life. The chapter also discusses the factors that parents cite as obstacles to participation in their child's school activities.



Few relationships in life are as significant and enduring as the relationship between children and their parents or the adults who raised them. Families are the first social unit in which children learn and develop. Good parenting can take different forms and be shaped by various social and cultural forces, but it invariably involves providing children with the support, care, love, guidance and protection that set the conditions for healthy physical, mental and social development. It is not surprising, then, that interactions with parents have consistently been shown to influence students' achievement, expectations, attitudes and psychological health (Fan and Williams, 2010; Hill and Tyson, 2009; Juang and Silbereisen, 2002; Kaplan, 2013). The activities parents and children do together, parents' expectations for their children's future, and the behaviours and attitudes parents model for their children are all associated with children's psychological well-being (Marchant, Paulson and Rothlisberg, 2001; OECD, 2012; Parker et al., 1999; Shumow and Lomax, 2002). Parents are also key players in helping their children succeed at school; after all, they are their children's first and longest-serving teachers.

As children grow, the connection with their parents also evolves. The relationship between parents and their 15-year-old children often reflects the greater autonomy and desire for independence that come with adolescence (Catsambis, 2002; Hartras, 2015; Seginer, 2006). Activities that parents and their young children once shared, such as reading together or helping with homework, often give way to adolescent children exploring their own interests by themselves, and to more mature interactions with their parents, involving discussion and negotiation (Seginer, 2006; Smetana, 2011).

This chapter explores how some forms of parental involvement, such as interest in their child's life, the activities they engage in together, and parents' participation in school-related activities, are associated with how well students do in school and how satisfied they are with their own life. It concludes with a discussion of factors that parents regard as obstacles hindering their participation in their child's school activities.

What the data tell us

- On average across 18 countries and economies, 82% of parents reported that they eat the main meal with their child around a table, 70% reported that they spend time just talking to their child, and 52% reported that they discuss how well their child is doing at school every day or almost every day. Students whose parents engage in these activities at least once a week score higher in the PISA science test and are more likely to report high levels of life satisfaction.
- "Spending time just talking" is the parent-child activity most strongly associated with students' life satisfaction.
- Most students in PISA-participating countries and economies reported that their parents are interested in their life at school. Students' positive perceptions about their parents' interest in their life at school are associated with higher scores in the PISA science test, and in particular, with a lower risk of low performance.
- Parents cited the inability to get time off from work (cited by 36% of parents), the inconvenience of school meeting times (cited by 33% of parents) and the lack of knowledge about how to participate in school activities (cited by 17% of parents) as among the most common barriers to their participation in school activities.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AT HOME AND SCHOOL

Over the past 30 years, the number of single-income families has dropped significantly in many OECD countries, giving rise to increasing numbers of two-income households (OECD, 2012). More than ever, parents struggle to find a balance between their professional and private lives; very often, their interactions with their children are squeezed into the few "free" hours of busy days. At the same time, their adolescent children are beginning to have their own social lives; and the realities of various family configurations – such as parents who live apart or single parents who work long hours – may add to the difficulties that parents face in finding "quality time" to spend with their children and in getting involved in their education. In spite of all this, PISA data paint a positive picture of how parents and children spend time together.

PISA asked parents how often they engage in certain activities at home with their child, and whether in the previous academic year they had interacted with their child's teacher in school (Figure III.9.1). Across the 18 countries and economies that distributed the parent questionnaire, eating the main meal together is by far the most common activity reported by parents. On average, 82% of parents reported that they eat the main meal with their child around a table, followed by 70% who reported that they spend time just talking to their child, and 52% who reported that they discuss how well their child is doing at school every day or almost every day. In Belgium (Flemish community), France, Italy, Portugal and Spain, more than 90% of parents eat a meal with their child daily or nearly every day.



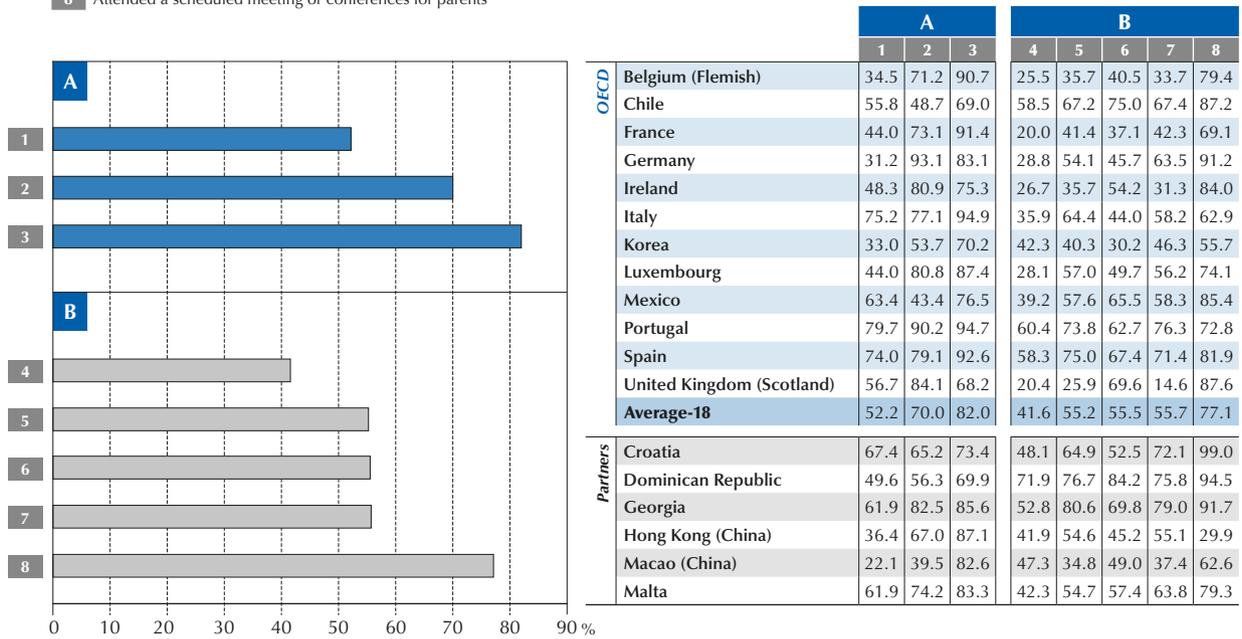
Figure III.9.1 ■ **Parents' activities with their child and at their child's school**
 Percentage of parents who reported engaging in home-based activities routinely and who had participated in school-related activities during the previous academic year (average for 18 countries/economies)

A Percentage of parents who reported that they engage in the following activities "every day or almost every day"

- 1 Discuss how well my child is doing at school
- 2 Spend time just talking to my child
- 3 Eat <the main meal> with my child around a table

B Percentage of parents who reported that they had participated in the following school-related activities in the previous academic year

- 4 Exchanged ideas on parenting, family support, or the child's development with my child's teacher
- 5 Discussed my child's progress with a teacher on my own initiative
- 6 Talked about how to support learning at home and homework with my child's teachers
- 7 Discussed my child's behaviour with a teacher on my own initiative
- 8 Attended a scheduled meeting or conferences for parents



Source: OECD, PISA 2015 Database, Table III.9.1.
 StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933472181>

Spending time just talking, while relatively less frequent, is also practiced routinely by most parents in 18 countries with available data. Overall, the share of parents who reported that they talk with their child about how he or she is doing at school is both smaller and more variable than that of parents who eat a meal with their child or spend time just talking to their child on a daily or nearly daily basis (Table III.9.1). Nonetheless, in Italy, Portugal and Spain, about 75% of parents reported that they discuss how well their child is doing at school at least almost every day. Such discussions are much less frequent in some high-performing Asian countries and economies. In Hong-Kong (China) and Korea, for example, slightly more than one in three parents reported that they talk with their child about school daily or nearly every day; in Macao (China), only around one in five parents so reported. These differences between Asian countries and other countries might partly reflect the higher response rates to the parent questionnaire in Asian countries (Box III.9.1).

The responses provided by parents in 2015 closely follow the pattern observed in 2012 with a slight upward trend in some activities. The most frequent home-based activity in 2012 was eating the main meal together (which increased by 2.6 percentage points in 2015), followed by spending time just talking to the child (which increased by 0.8 percentage point in 2015) and discussing with the child how well he or she is doing at school daily or almost every day (no significant changes observed compared to 2012). Trend data are available for 10 countries and show no dramatic change at the country level for most of them. The largest increase in the level of parental engagement in these activities (between 4.7 and 10.4 percentage points) was observed in Korea (Table III.9.3).



Box III.9.1 PISA 2015 parent questionnaire

PISA has assessed parental involvement in education since 2006 when the parent questionnaire was distributed for the first time, directly addressing the parents of the PISA students. For PISA 2015, specific aspects of parental involvement were added to the school questionnaire (on parent-school communication and collaboration), and to the student questionnaire (on parental support in learning). In particular, four items focusing on parental support appear in both the student and parent questionnaires so that students' and their parents' perceptions can be compared.

Analysis of the 2009 round of the PISA parent questionnaire has shown that some forms of parental involvement are more strongly related to cognitive and non-cognitive student outcomes than others (Borgonovi and Montt, 2012). These include reading to children when they are young, engaging in discussions that promote critical thinking and setting a good example.

In 2015, 18 countries and economies distributed the parent questionnaire to students who sat the PISA test. Parents were asked to complete the questionnaire at home. The parent questionnaire seeks information about the activities parents engage in with their child and the science-related activities the child used to participate in when they were 10 years old; parents' perceptions of their child's school, the criteria they value in choosing a school for their child, and their participation in school activities; the education their child might have benefitted from during early childhood, including attendance at pre-primary school and other types of care arrangements; parents' views on science and the environment; and parents' country of birth, income and expenditure on education.

Since students are asked to take the questionnaire home to their parents and return it to school the next day, response rates may decrease if students forget to bring the questionnaire home, forget to show it to their parents and/or forget to bring it to school once the questionnaire has been completed. Lower response rates may introduce bias in the estimates if certain kinds of students (those with more involved parents, higher achievers, etc.) are more likely to return the answered questionnaire than others (Borgonovi and Montt, 2012).

In every country and economy, the response rate for the parent questionnaire tends to be lower than that of the PISA student questionnaire. Some countries have significantly higher rates of non-response than others. For example, the parents of less than 5% of the students in the Dominican Republic, Georgia, Hong Kong (China) and Macao (China), and the parents of more than 40% of students in Germany and Scotland (United Kingdom) did not provide a response to the question: "How often do you or someone else in your home discuss how well [my] child is doing at school?" (see Table A1.8c in Annex A1). Some questions are more sensitive than others, and thus have higher rates of non-response. The most sensitive question concerns parents' income. Only in the Dominican Republic, Hong Kong (China) and Korea was the non-response rate lower than 10%, while it was higher than 50% in Germany and Scotland (United Kingdom). A comparison of the characteristics of students with complete responses and those with missing responses in the parent questionnaire shows that, in most countries/economies, the former group of students is more socio-economically advantaged and performs better in science than the latter group of students, even if there are variations in these differences across countries.

Among the school-based activities shown in Figure III.9.1, the activity most frequently reported by parents is attending a scheduled meeting or conferences for parents in their child's school. Some 77% of parents, on average, reported having done so during the previous academic year. Slightly more than half of the parents reported that they had "discussed my child's behaviour with a teacher on my own initiative", "discussed my child's progress with a teacher on my own initiative" or "talked about how to support learning at home and homework with my child's teachers". Compared to most other countries, smaller shares of parents (between 15% and 37%) in Belgium (Flemish community), Ireland, Macao (China) and Scotland (United Kingdom) reported that they had conversed with their child's teacher at their own initiative. In Chile, Hong Kong (China), Korea, Macao (China) and Mexico, there was an increase of between 2.3 and 13.5 percentage points since 2012 in the proportion of parents who reported that they discussed their child's progress with the teacher. These countries and economies, in addition to Croatia and Italy, also show a significant increase (ranging from 2.4 to 11 percentage points) since 2012 in the proportion of parents who discussed their child's behaviour with the teacher (Table III.9.3).



On average, parents reported that they had “exchanged ideas on parenting, family support, or the child’s development with my child’s teacher” less often than the activities mentioned above. Around 42% of parents reported that they had done so during the previous academic year. This could reflect a perception among some parents that these topics are more private than school-related in nature. Smaller proportions of parents reported that they had engaged in other school-related activities, such as participating in local school government (e.g. parent council or school-management committee; 19%), volunteering in physical or extracurricular activities (15%), and volunteering to support school activities (12%) (Table III.9.1).

In Asian countries and economies, parents reported fewer interactions with their children at home and less participation in school-based activities compared to the other countries with available data. The findings on home-based activities may reflect social and cultural differences in parents’ style of communication; how parents balance the fine line between encouraging their children and pressuring them to do well in school; or larger societal expectations related to high academic achievement. In cultures where every student is expected to excel in school, parents may rely more strongly on school and peer influences to help keep their children on track academically. The differences in school-based activities may suggest cultural differences in forms and frequencies of parental involvement, in the relationship between families and schools, or both. Some degree of social desirability bias may also be at play here. Social desirability is the tendency of survey respondents to answer certain questions in ways that they believe are more socially acceptable or desirable (Edwards, 1953). Parents in different cultures may vary in how sensitive they are to this type of survey bias.

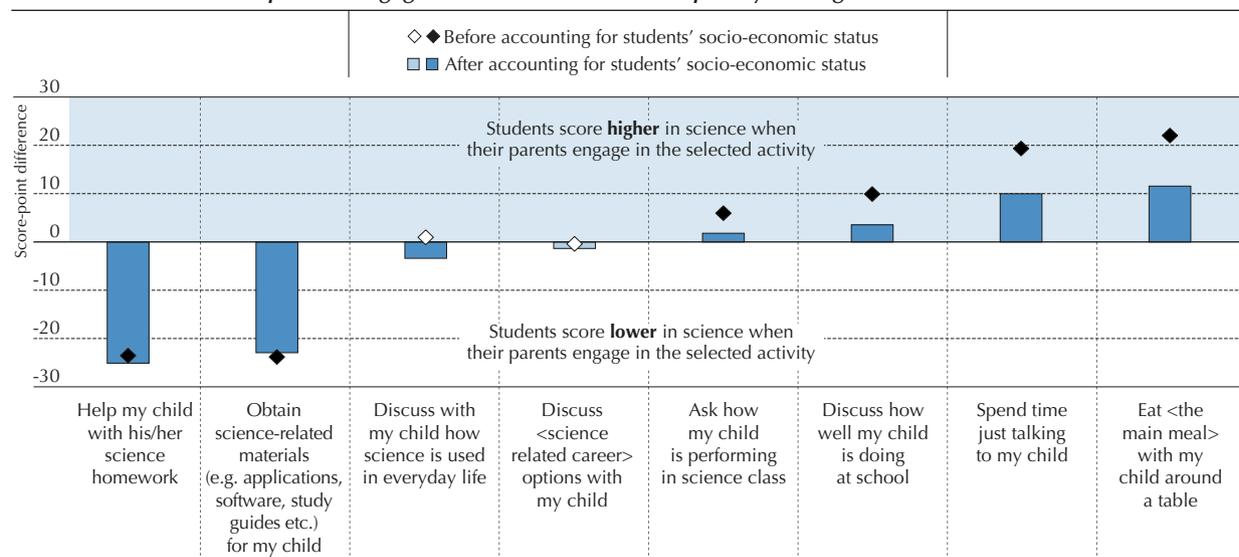
Overall, these results are an encouraging indication that most parents in participating countries and economies have been able to find some time to be with their children and that they have cultivated the habit of routinely talking with their children, eating with them, and participating in their school life. Such simple daily or weekly family interactions can provide students with the structure, regularity and support they need to thrive on their own.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND STUDENTS’ PERFORMANCE IN PISA

The literature consistently documents positive associations between a range of home- and school-based parental activities and children’s educational achievement, measured either as school marks or standardised test scores. This positive relationship holds in various disciplines, across ethnic groups, gender and over time (Bogenschneider, 1997; Catsambis, 2002; Fan and Williams, 2010; Kaplan and Seginer, 2015; Keith et al., 1998; Marjoribanks, 1996; Rodriguez, 2002; Shumow and Lomax, 2002). However, not every type of shared activity between parents and their child has been demonstrated to have a positive link to learning. Figure III.9.2 shows how parental engagement in a set of selected activities is associated with differences in students’ performance in science.

Figure III.9.2 ■ Parents’ activities and students’ science performance

Difference in science performance between students whose parents engage in selected activities at least once a week and those whose parents engage in such activities less frequently (average for 18 countries/economies)



Note: Statistically significant values are marked in a darker tone (see Annex A3).

Source: OECD, PISA 2015 Database, Table III.9.4.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933472199>



Parents' activities that typically take place at home or in the context of the family, namely "discussing how well my child is doing at school", "eating the main meal with my child around a table" and "spending time just talking to my child" are all positively related to the child's science performance in PISA 2015. An activity as simple as eating a meal together at least once a week is associated with an increase of at least 12 score points in science, on average, after accounting for students' socio-economic status. While there is no theoretical reason to expect a direct connection between students' performance in school and routinely eating a meal with their parents, the observed relationship may be capturing underlying traits of families that nurture this habit, traits that are more closely related to children's performance at school. For example, parents may use meal time as an occasion to encourage their children, monitor their progress in school and show support. These families may also be able to maintain an orderly, structured environment for their children at home with less stress and greater stability. This relationship is positive and significant in 7 out of 18 countries and economies, including Hong Kong (China), where the score difference is 18 points, and Macao (China), where the score difference is 30 points – two economies where relatively small shares of parents reported that they routinely eat a meal together with their child. The relationship is negative in only one country, Croatia, with a score difference of 16 points after accounting for socio-economic status (Table III.9.4).

Similarly, students whose parents "spend time just talking" to them at least once a week score 10 points higher, on average, than students of similar socio-economic status whose parents do so less frequently. This relationship is positive and significant in Georgia, Hong Kong (China), Korea and Portugal. Another possible explanation for the positive relationship between parent-child discussions and performance is that parents might find it easier to talk about school with children who perform relatively well and are engaged at school.

Conversely, most activities that reflect parents' direct involvement in their child's science education have a negative relationship with the student's science score. Students whose parents reported that they "help my child with his/her science homework" or "obtain science-related materials (e.g. applications, software, study guides, etc.) for my child" at least once a week, score over 20 points lower in science, on average, than students whose parents engage in these activities less frequently (Figure III.9.2). Poor performance in science may be the reason why parents are more directly involved in their child's school work.

PISA results are also consistent with research findings showing a negative relationship between parental help with homework and student performance in early adolescence and beyond (Fan, 2001; Hill and Tyson, 2009; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). While help with homework might have been effective in the early years of school, during adolescence, students may respond better to other forms of parental support that respect their growing need for autonomy. This is illustrated by the positive associations found between students' performance in science and parents reporting that they "discuss how well my child is doing at school" or "spend time just talking to my child".

As Figure III.9.2 shows, parents' involvement in science homework or in monitoring their child's progress in science education is not strongly related to socio-economic status. This suggests that while advantaged and disadvantaged parents may differ widely in how they interact with their children at home, parents from all socio-economic groups try to help their children when they are struggling in school.

Box III.9.2 **Nurturing young scientists**

Science is not only the domain of scientists. Everyone needs to be able to "think like a scientist" to some extent. From reading food labels about nutrition facts, to understanding doctors' treatment options for a disease, to deciding to act in ways that are less harmful to the environment, contemporary society is full of opportunities for making use of scientific thinking. This means weighing evidence, coming to evidence-based conclusions, and understanding that scientific "truth" may change over time as new discoveries are made (OECD, 2016). Learning and reasoning scientifically are the result of a cumulative process that unfolds both at school and at home, and most children show an interest in science from an early age. Parents who value their children's education could stimulate their interests further by engaging in activities that increase their capacity to learn or by encouraging them to do so.

PISA asked parents whether their children, when they were 10 years old, used to spend time in various activities that signalled an interest in science. According to parents, the most popular activity was playing with construction games (e.g. plastic building bricks) (47% of parents reported that their children used to do this regularly or very often), followed by watching TV programmes about science (22% of parents reported this). Around 11% of parents reported that their children used to experiment with a science kit or visit websites about science topics; only 3% of parents reported that their child had attended a science club when he or she was 10 years old (Table III.9.6).

...



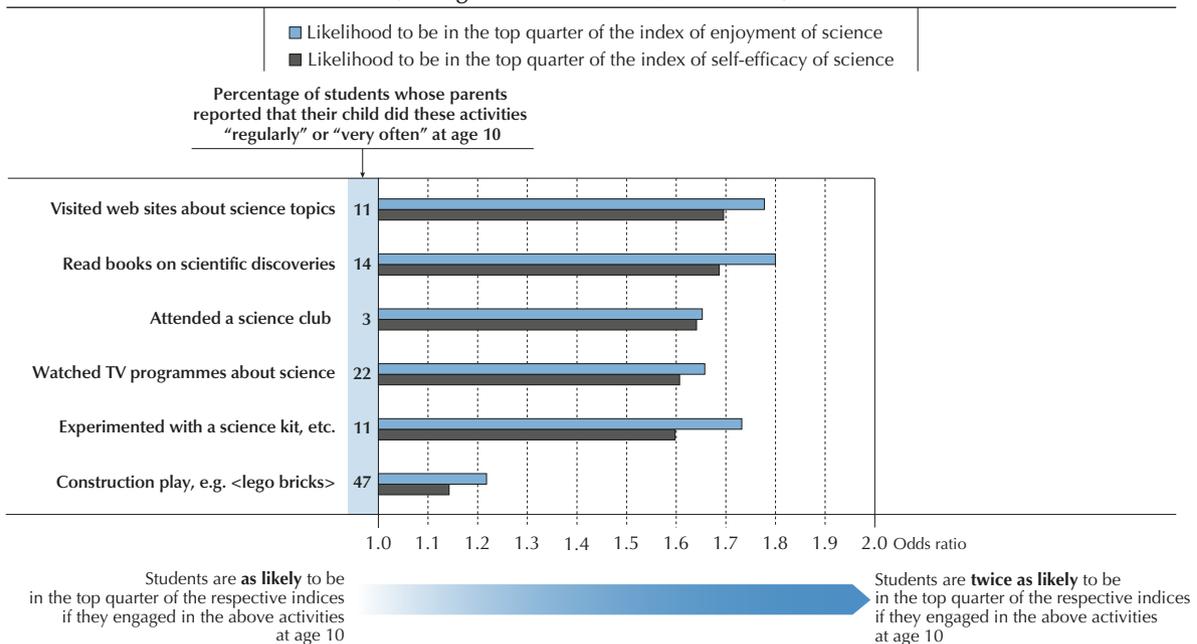
Some of these activities are associated with higher performance in science and with students' expectation to pursue a career in science later on (Tables III.9.9 and III.9.15; OECD, 2008). But not all parents value these activities to the same degree or can afford to offer them. Providing a telescope or a science kit for kids to play with may be far down the list of priorities for many parents. On average across 18 countries and economies, 14% of children with tertiary-educated parents did experiments with a science kit or used a telescope when they were 10 years old, compared to 9% of children whose parents are not tertiary-educated. Differences related to parents' education vary from country to country and are largest (in favour of parents with a tertiary education) in Korea, Malta and Portugal (Table III.9.7).

Watching the sky with a telescope or playing with a chemistry kit could nurture children's interest in science and strengthen their confidence about their own abilities in science. Students' engagement in science is shaped by two forces: how students think about themselves – what they think they are good at and what they think is good for them – and students' attitudes towards science and towards science-related activities – that is, whether they perceive these activities as important, enjoyable and useful (OECD, 2016).

Figure III.9.3 shows that among students who perform similarly in science and who are of similar socio-economic status, those who used to visit websites about science topics when they were 10 were more likely to be among the top quarter of students in their country in the level of enjoyment of science (by 78%) and in science self-efficacy (by 70%), as measured by PISA. Reading books on scientific discoveries, watching TV programmes about science and experimenting with a science kit were also associated with high levels of enjoyment of and self-efficacy in science. These associations do not show any causal link, but they reveal a close relationship between an early engagement in science activities and attitudes towards science at age 15. These students might have engaged in such activities more often than others because they were more interested in science to begin with. But it is also possible that engaging in these activities led to a deeper enjoyment of science and made these students more confident about learning science. As is the case with so much of what happens in learning, activities and interests may have a mutually reinforcing role, one that attentive parents can observe and foster to the benefit of their child.

Figure III.9.3 ■ **Science-related activities at age 10, and students' enjoyment of and self-efficacy in science**

Students' likelihood of being in the top quarter of the indices of enjoyment of science and science self-efficacy in their own country/economy if they engaged in science-related activities at age 10 (average for 18 countries/economies)



Note: Statistically significant values are marked in a darker tone (see Annex A3).

Source: OECD, PISA 2015 Database, Tables III.9.6, III.9.11 and III.9.13.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933472200>



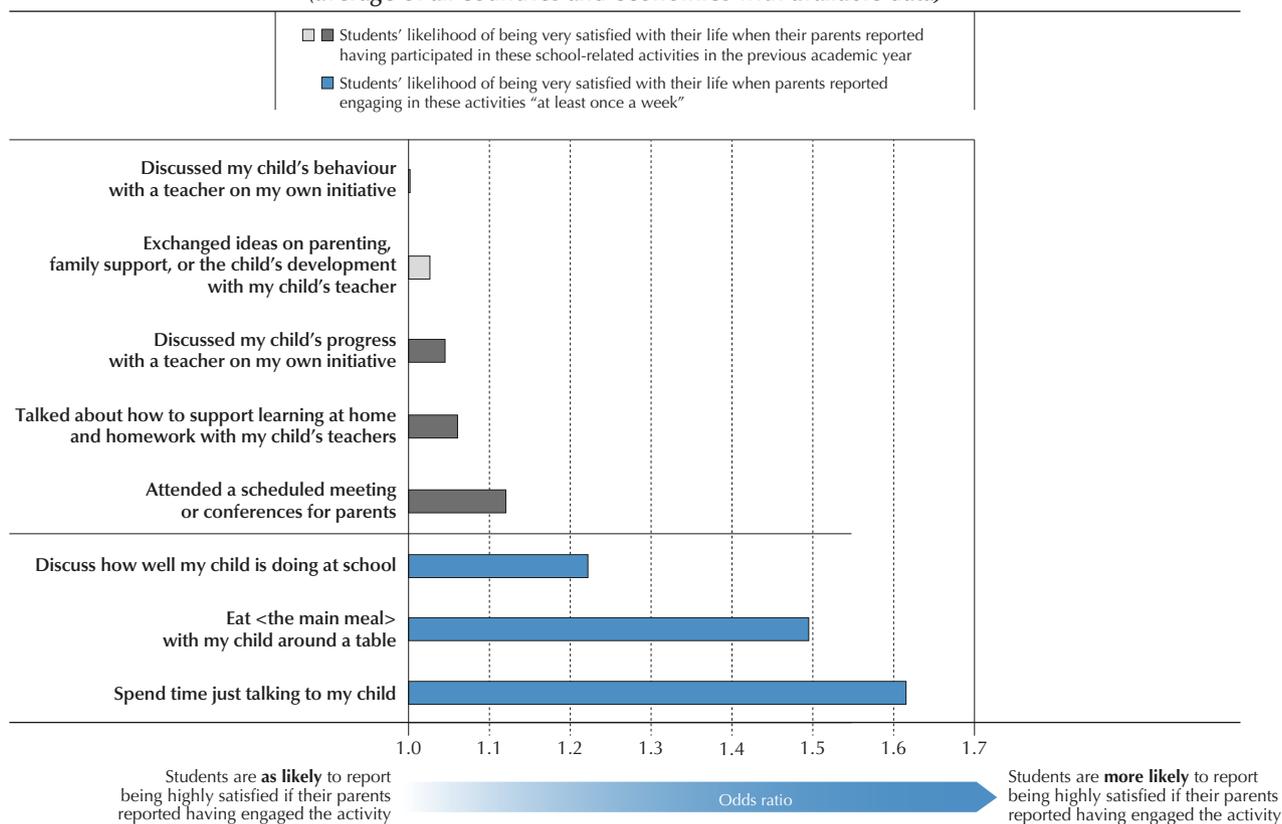
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND STUDENTS' SATISFACTION WITH LIFE

PISA data show that certain types of parental activities are positively related not only to students' performance, but also to other areas of their life, such as how satisfied students are with their own life. Students whose parents reported "spending time just talking to my child", "eating the main meal with my child around a table" or "discussing how well my child is doing at school" at least once a week were between 22% and 62% more likely to report high levels of life satisfaction (i.e. their responses put them at the equivalent of 9 or 10 on a scale of 0 to 10) than students whose parents reported engaging in these activities less frequently (Figure III.9.4). Some school-related forms of parental involvement, such as having attended a school meeting or conferences for parents in the previous academic year or having interacted with their child's teacher, are also positively related to students' satisfaction with life, but the strength of these associations is considerably weaker. Parents of students who are struggling in school, and perhaps less satisfied with their life, may be more likely to interact with their child's teachers and school more often, which could partially explain these weaker associations.

Countries vary in which parental activities are most strongly related to students' life satisfaction. In Croatia, France, Hong Kong (China) and Portugal, for example, students were approximately twice as likely to report being very satisfied with their life if their parents reported eating the main meal with them; but they were less than 60% as likely to report being very satisfied with their life when their parents reported spending time just talking to them. In Mexico, by contrast, students were almost 80% more likely to report being very satisfied with their life when their parents reported spending time just talking to them, but less than 60% as likely to report being very satisfied with life if their parents reported eating with them frequently (Table III.9.5).

Figure III.9.4 ■ **Parents' activities and students' life satisfaction**

Students' likelihood of reporting being highly satisfied¹ with their life when their parents reported having engaged in the selected activities, after accounting for students' socio-economic status (average of all countries and economies with available data)



1. A student is classified as "very satisfied" with life if he or she reported 9 or 10 on the life-satisfaction scale. The life-satisfaction scale ranges from 0 to 10.

Notes: Statistically significant values are marked in a darker tone (see Annex A3). All values regarding activities parents reported engaging in "at least once a week" are statistically significant.

Source: OECD, PISA 2015 Database, Table III.9.5.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933472215>



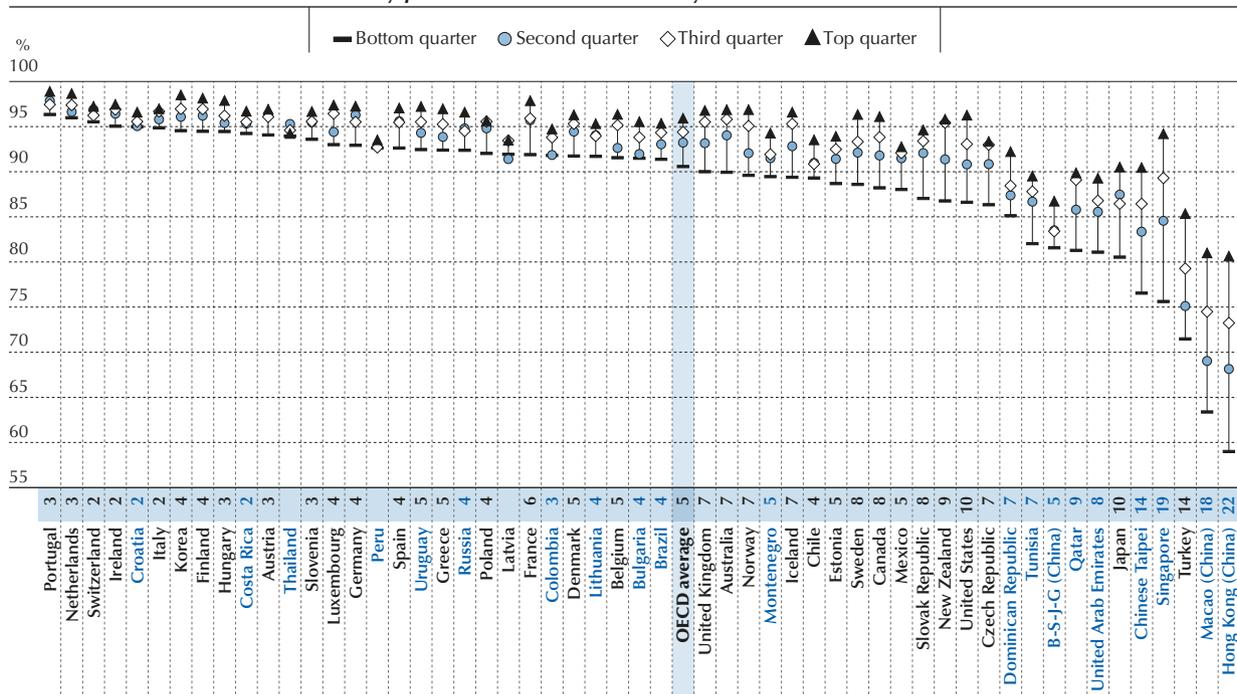
In spite of these differences, “spending time just talking” is the parental activity most frequently and most strongly associated with students’ life satisfaction across all countries with available data. Only in Germany, Italy and Korea is this activity not significantly related to students’ life satisfaction. In 12 countries, students were more likely to report being very satisfied with their lives when their parents reported engaging in at least one of these home-based activities at least once a week.

It is not possible from these results to determine the direction of the relationship between communication within the family and students’ life satisfaction. Parents may be more likely to engage in these activities if their children are, in general, more satisfied with their life, which makes them more open to communicating and sharing a closer interaction with their parents and others. How adolescents perceive their parents’ attempts to communicate with them can also play a role. Research shows that parental behaviour perceived as supportive is associated with a lower incidence of depression in their adolescent children; but if that behaviour is perceived as controlling, it is associated with a higher incidence of depression and antisocial behaviour (Barber, Stolz and Olsen, 2005; McNeely and Barber, 2010). It is also possible that by engaging in conversation and keeping a regular meal routine at home, parents are modelling social behaviours that help their children develop their own communication and social skills, which builds their self-confidence and makes them more satisfied with their life (Bandura, 1977).

STUDENTS’ REPORTS OF THEIR PARENTS’ INTEREST IN THEIR LIFE AT SCHOOL

Through the activities they engage in at home and at school, parents manifest their values as well as the aspirations and concerns they have for their child’s life, in general, and for his or her success in school, in particular. But what parents tell their children, how they show affection and interest in them and how they support their academic achievement are ultimately subject to their children’s interpretation. When asked about their perceptions regarding their parents’ interest in their school life, 94% of PISA-participating students across OECD countries reported that they “agree” or “strongly agree” that “my parents are interested in my school activities” (Table III.9.18).

Figure III.9.5 ■ **Parents’ interest in their child’s activities at school, by socio-economic status**
 Percentage of students who reported “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement
 “My parents are interested in my school activities”



Note: Statistically significant differences in the percentage of students who reported that their parents are interested in their school activities, between students in the top and bottom quarters of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status, are shown next to the country/economy name (see Annex A3). Countries and economies are ranked in descending order of the percentage of students in the bottom quarter of the ESCS index who reported that their parents are interested in their school activities.

Source: OECD, PISA 2015 Database, Table III.9.20.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933472221>



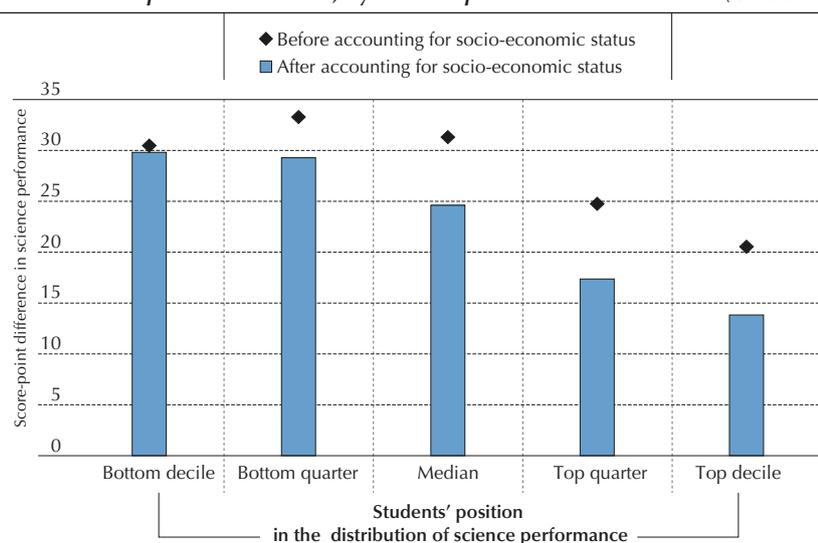
In most countries where this proportion is above the OECD average, there is little variation in students' responses related to socio-economic status (Table III.9.19 and Figure III.9.5). However, in countries where this proportion is below the OECD average, the share of students who "agree" or "strongly agree" that their parents are interested in their school activities is significantly smaller among disadvantaged students. The difference in this proportion between students in the bottom quarter of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status and those in the top quarter of that index is between 10 and 15 percentage points in Japan, Chinese Taipei, Turkey and the United States. The largest gaps are observed in Hong Kong (China) (a gap of 22 percentage points), Macao (China) (a gap of 18 percentage points) and Singapore (a gap of 19 percentage points).

PARENTS' INTEREST IN SCHOOL, AND STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN PISA AND LIFE SATISFACTION

Students' perceptions of how interested their parents are in them and in their school life can influence their own views on the value of education, the goals they set for themselves and how much effort they put into learning – all of which may affect their performance and their motivation to do well in school (d'Ailly, 2003; Grolnick and Slowiaczek, 1994; Grolnick et al., 1991). These perceptions may also be related to students' feelings and beliefs about their parents' appreciation, care and love in general (McNeely and Barber, 2010), which may be linked to how satisfied they are with their own life.

Indeed, students who reported that their parents are interested in their school activities perform better in PISA than students who reported a lack of interest from their parents. This is true at all levels of performance in science, although this association is stronger among low-performing students (Figure III.9.6). This may indicate that parental interest acts as a protective factor against low performance, without necessarily being an equally powerful catalyst for high performance.

Figure III.9.6 ■ **Parents' interest in their child's activities at school and science performance**
Score-point difference between students who reported that their parents are interested in their school activities¹ and those who reported otherwise, by student performance in science (OECD average)



1. Students who reported "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statement "My parents are interested in my school activities".

Note: All values are statistically significant (see Annex A3).

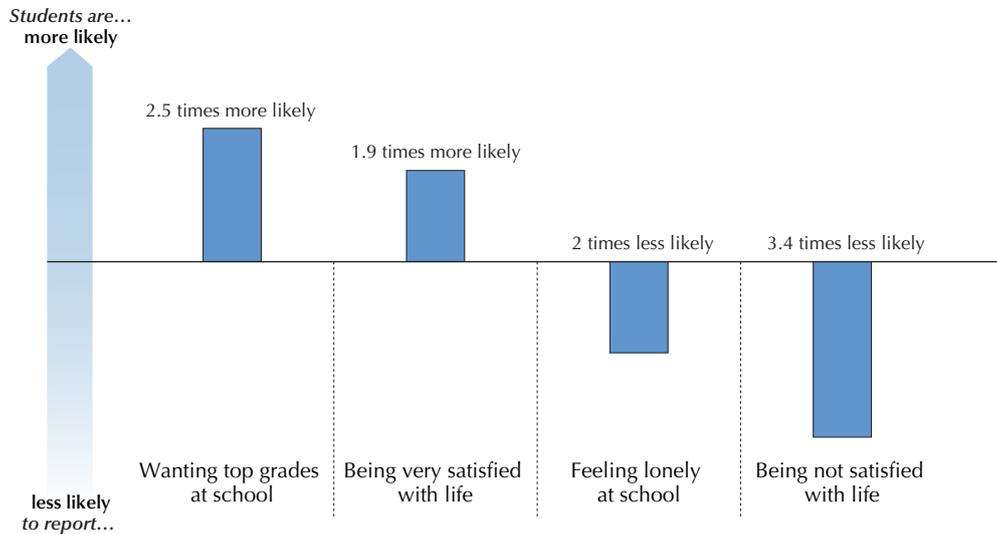
Source: OECD, PISA 2015 Database, Table III.9.22.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933472232>

In fact, students who "agree" or "strongly agree" that their parents are interested in their school activities are also more motivated to do well in school. Across OECD countries, these students were 2.5 times more likely to report that they "want top grades in school", on average (Figure III.9.7). Likewise, students who hold these perceptions of their parents' interest were almost twice as likely to report being highly satisfied with their life (reporting 9 or 10 on a scale from 0 to 10 of life satisfaction) than students who do not hold those perceptions. Students' positive views of their parents' interest in their school activities may signal some underlying protective effect in supportive parent-child relationships, as these students were also less likely to report feeling lonely at school and to report low satisfaction with life.



Figure III.9.7 ■ **Parents' interest in their child's activities at school and well-being**
Increased likelihood of students to report the following measures of well-being¹ if they agree or strongly agree that their parents are interested in their school activities, after accounting for students' socio-economic status (OECD average)



1. Students want top grades at school or feel lonely at school if they agree or strongly agree to related statements in the questionnaire. Students who are very (not) satisfied with life are those with self-reported values of 9 or 10 (between 0 and 4) on the life satisfaction scale, which ranges from 0 to 10 points. **Notes:** The figure reports a logarithmic transformation of the odds ratios of the outcome (e.g. wanting top grades at school) related to parents' interest. The logarithm transformation makes the values of odds ratios below one and above one comparable in the graph. The label at the end of each bar displays the corresponding odds ratios (change in the likelihood of the outcome).

All values are statistically significant (see Annex A3).

Source: OECD, PISA 2015 Database, Table III.9.24.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933472242>

OBSTACLES TO PARENTS' PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Schools have not always been interested in encouraging parents to participate in their activities. Parents, especially those from disadvantaged and immigrant groups, were regarded by many teachers, school leaders and policy makers as obstacles to the creation of a society based on dominant values and ideology (Bowles and Gintis, 2000; Johnson, 1976; Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche, 2006; Seginer, 2006). Recently, a growing understanding that parents and teachers can be effective partners in helping children succeed in school has led policy makers and school leaders in many countries to take deliberate actions to increase parents' participation in school life (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; D'Agostino et al., 2001; Epstein, 2001; Raikes and Love, 2002). Policies and school-level practices to increase parental participation have been shown to facilitate students' positive behaviours and attitudes at school (Avvisati et al., 2014; Berlinski et al. 2016; Dizon-Ross, 2016). Parents' involvement not only provides additional support to their child's learning, but it also brings greater accountability to education systems. Thus, one meaningful way for school leaders to help parents engage more often and more effectively with their child's school is to help remove the barriers that hinder their regular participation in school activities.

Some of these barriers may be related to factors external to school, for example, when meetings and other school activities conflict with parents' work schedule, when parents are unable to participate due to transportation problems or childcare needs, or when parents and teachers do not speak the same language. Others may be related to a lack of familiarity with the institution, a lack of information about opportunities for parental involvement, or intimidation related to language or cultural distance – all barriers that schools can help remove.

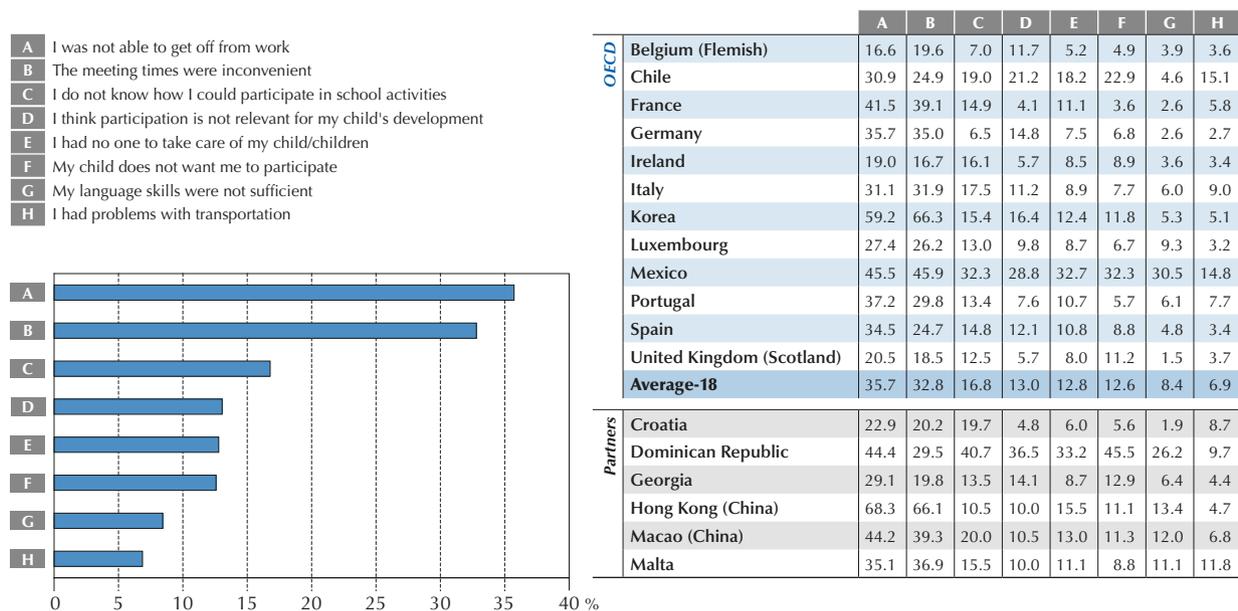
PISA asked parents whether these kinds of factors have hindered their participation in activities at their child's school during the previous academic year. Considering factors external to school, 36% of parents reported that "I was not able to get off from work", 33% reported that "the meeting times were inconvenient", and 13% of parents selected "I had no one to take care of my child/children", on average across 18 countries (Figure III.9.8). Considering barriers



related to communication, 17% reported that “I do not know how I could participate in school activities”. Some 13% of parents selected the following reasons as obstacles: “I think participation is not relevant for my child’s development” and “My child does not want me to participate”. Some 8% of parents cited language barriers, and 7% mentioned problems with transportation.

Parents often face several of these obstacles at once. These barriers can be related to the neighbourhoods in which families live, the work arrangements they may have, the infrastructure and other human and social services available in their area, and the demographics of the region. In most countries and economies, relatively more parents reported that meeting times at school were inconvenient or that they were not able to get off from work than reported other reasons for not participating (Table III.9.26 and Figure III.9.8). In Hong Kong (China), 68% of parents reported that they are unable to get off from work and 66% reported that meeting times are inconvenient. These two reasons can overlap, as parents may have reported that meeting times are inconvenient because they cannot get time off from work to participate. Meeting times are also a serious impediment for around 66% of Korean parents. In these countries and economies, work constraints and inflexible schedules seem to be the major barriers to participation.

Figure III.9.8 ■ **Obstacles to parents’ participation in their child’s school activities**
Percentage of parents who agreed or strongly agreed that the following factors hindered their participation in their child’s school activities in the previous year (average for 18 countries/economies)



Source: OECD, PISA 2015 Database, Table III.9.26.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933472257>

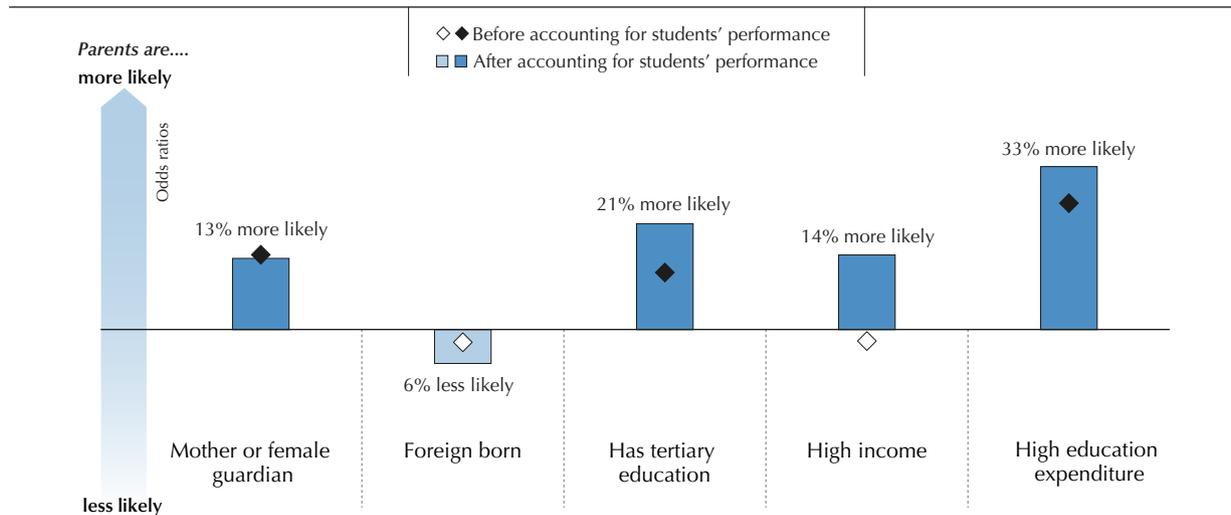
In Latin American countries, such as Chile, the Dominican Republic and Mexico, in addition to scheduling times and inflexible work schedules, parents frequently reported a lack of childcare services and problems with transportation (Figure III.9.8). These countries also show some of the largest shares of parents who reported that they do not know how they can participate in school activities, who think that their participation is not relevant for their child’s development, or who reported that their child does not want them to participate. Between 29% and 46% of parents in the Dominican Republic and Mexico reported at least one of these reasons as obstacles to participation. Schools and teachers can reach out to parents and help educate them about the value of their involvement in their child’s education, and about the many ways of getting involved in school activities while respecting their child’s need for autonomy.

The PISA question about barriers to parents’ participation in their child’s school activities reveals the concerns of parents whose interaction with the school is constrained in various ways. But what can one learn about parents who do participate in their child’s school life? Do these parents differ in any way from those who do not participate? PISA data show that parents’ or guardians’ levels of education, their income level, how much they spend on education, and their gender are all significant indicators of whether or not a parent takes the initiative to speak with his or her child’s teacher (Figure III.9.9).



In particular, parents with a tertiary education were 21% more likely to report that they had “discussed their child’s progress with the teacher at their own initiative” during the previous academic year, after accounting for students’ performance. High-earning parents were 14% more likely, and those who spend more on education were 33% more likely to report that they had done so. Mothers or female guardians were, on average, 13% more likely than fathers or male guardians to report that they had talked to their child’s teacher about his or her progress in school (survey respondents included only one of the two parents for each child); foreign-born parents were as likely as native-born parents to report that they had done so, after accounting for their child’s performance in PISA.

Figure III.9.9 ■ Parents who initiate talks with their child’s teacher, by parents’ socio-economic status, gender and immigration status
Parents’ likelihood of having discussed child’s progress with the teacher on their own initiative, by parent/guardian’s characteristics (average for 18 countries/economies)



Notes: The figure reports a logarithmic transformation of the odds ratios of initiating talks with the teacher related to parents’ characteristics. The logarithm transformation makes the values of odds ratios below one and above one comparable in the graph. The interpretation of the odds ratios (in terms of percentage change in the likelihood of the outcome), after accounting for students’ performance, is indicated at the end of each bar. The analysis excludes students whose two parents or guardians responded together to the parent questionnaire.

Students’ parents were asked to report their family income before taxes and their total expenditures in education. Their answers were coded in six income (expenditure) classes, defined independently by each country. Low (high)-income (expenditure) students are students in the bottom (top) two categories of family income (expenditures). See Table III.10.10 for the income values corresponding to the categories.

Statistically significant values are marked in a darker tone (see Annex A3).

Source: OECD, PISA 2015 Database, Table III.9.23.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933472263>

Language barriers and parents’ participation in school activities

It is reasonable to expect that language barriers to parents’ participation at school is more of a concern among immigrant parents, which might explain the relatively low percentage of parents who cite language as a reason for not participating in school activities (language barriers might also be related to the response rates to the parent questionnaire). But the reality is that there are large variations across countries in the proportion of parents who reported that their “language skills were not sufficient” (Table III.9.26). In 8 out of 18 countries, less than 5% of parents so reported; but in the Dominican Republic, 26% of parents reported that their “language skills were not sufficient” as did 31% of parents in Mexico. The wording of this question seems to capture not only parents who speak a language other than the official language(s) at school, but also native-born parents with less education who feel inhibited by their language skills when interacting with well-educated teachers and school staff. It is not possible to determine the extent to which these parents may be implying that the school environment is socially intimidating.

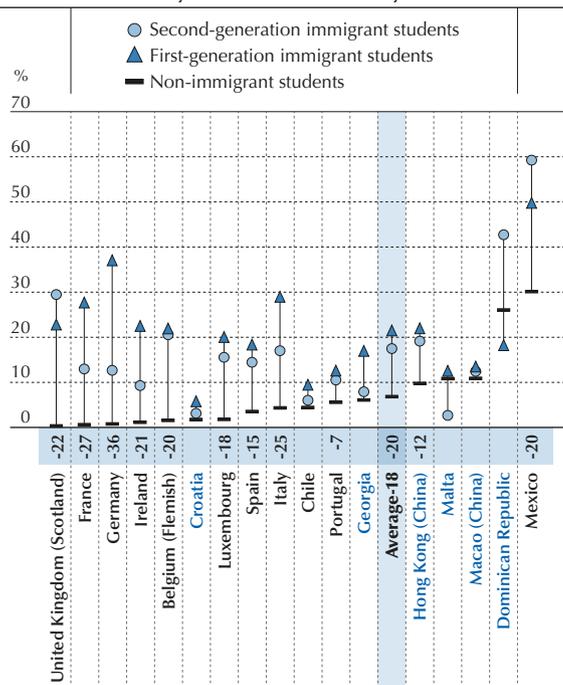
Some caution is advised in interpreting cross-country comparisons based on the immigrant background of students and their families, as observed differences are bound to be influenced by differences in immigrant populations in the countries and economies involved. That said, some patterns identified in the PISA data provide insights into how students’ immigrant background is linked to their parents’ inability to participate in school activities because of their language skills. The differences in parents’ responses related to their child’s immigrant background can also indicate which countries do a better job at integrating immigrant parents into their child’s school life.



Figure III.9.10 shows that, on average across 18 countries and economies, among non-immigrant students, 7% of parents reported that they do not participate in school activities due to language barriers; among first-generation immigrant students, 21% of parents so reported; and among second-generation immigrant students, 17% of parents so reported. In a number of European countries and economies, namely Belgium (Flemish Community), France, Germany, Ireland, Italy and Scotland (United Kingdom), the share of parents who reported insufficient language skills as a barrier to participation is at least 20 percentage points larger among first-generation immigrant students than among non-immigrant students. In Germany, 36% of first-generation immigrant students have parents who reported such difficulties compared to less than 1% of non-immigrant students.

Figure III.9.10 ■ **Immigrant background and language skills hindering parents' participation in school activities**

Percentage of students whose parents reported that participation in their child's school activities in the previous academic year was hindered by insufficient language skills



Note: Statistically significant differences between the percentage of non-immigrant students and the percentage of first-generation immigrant students whose parents reported that their language skills hindered participation in their child's school activities is shown next to the country/economy name (see Annex A3).

Countries and economies are ranked in ascending order of the percentage of non-immigrant students whose parents reported that insufficient language skills hindered participation in their child's school activities in the previous academic year.

Source: OECD, PISA 2015 Database, Table III.9.25.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933472270>

Immigrant families whose children were born in the host country (i.e. second-generation immigrant students) should, in principle, have had more time and opportunities to learn the host language and gradually feel more confident to participate in their child's school activities. But in several countries and economies, parents of second-generation students reported similar language constraints as parents of first-immigrant students (Table III.9.25). This pattern might be related to changes in the skills composition of immigrants over time, or to feelings of social exclusion shared by first- and second-generation immigrants. Policy makers should take a careful look at what aspects of their education, social, labour and immigration policies are keeping immigrant groups at the margin of their societies, and work across policy areas to encourage faster social and economic integration of these families.

Non-immigrant families can also face communication barriers. In Hong Kong (China), Macao (China) and Malta, the parents of around 10% of non-immigrant students reported insufficient language skills as a barrier to school participation (Figure III.9.10). In the Dominican Republic and Mexico, this proportion is remarkably large: nearly one in three non-immigrant students has a parent who cites insufficient language skills as an obstacle to participation. The problem might



be even more pervasive among socio-economically disadvantaged families. In Mexico, 44% of disadvantaged parents reported this problem compared with 15% of parents in advantaged families. In the Dominican Republic, 32% of disadvantaged parents so reported – nearly double the proportion observed among advantaged parents (Table III.9.27).

Linguistic diversity among non-immigrants, especially among indigenous populations, is one possible explanation for these findings. But factors other than parents' ability to speak the country's/economy's official language(s) might also be at play and might disproportionately affect less-educated, less-privileged parents. The school environment may seem unfriendly to them, teachers may hold stereotypical views about lack of parental interest in poor families, or the school may be using inefficient communication strategies, such as relying mostly on written instructions that may be difficult to follow by illiterate or less-educated parents. Schools need to consider how they can welcome parents from culturally, linguistically and socio-economically diverse backgrounds.

What these results imply for policy

- Parents can be encouraged to adopt simple and healthy routines – such as eating a meal together and talking together – that bring them closer to their child. Shared activities, adapted to various cultural contexts, need to respect adolescents' preferred modes of engagement and the growing need for autonomy that comes with adolescence.
- Schools can identify those parents who may be unable to participate in school activities for reasons other than a lack of interest. Building some flexibility in the ways in which parents can communicate with the school may encourage greater parental involvement. Scheduled phone or video calls may be as effective as some face-to-face meetings and may better fit the busy schedule of some parents.
- Teachers can be encouraged to welcome all parents as partners in education, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds whose children need their support the most to do well in school and in life. Through their engagement in their child's education, parents can help build a learning environment that encourages both high academic performance and the well-being of all students.
- Removing language barriers to parents' participation in school activities may require partnerships beyond the school. In countries with large immigrant populations, including many European countries, schools may need to seek collaboration with immigration and social services agencies, as these might offer useful services, including interpreters, that can help facilitate communication between the school and immigrant families.
- Governments can provide incentives to employers who adopt work-life balance policies so that parents have adequate time to attend to their children's needs. Healthy young people are more engaged and productive participants in society, so advancing policies that support parents' involvement in their children's lives is one way for governments to build more inclusive societies.



References

- Avvisati, F. et al. (2014), "Getting parents involved: A field experiment in deprived schools", *The Review of Economic Studies*, Vol. 81/1, pp. 57-83, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/restud/rdt027>.
- Bandura, A. (1977), *Social Learning Theory*, General Learning Press, New York, NY.
- Barber, B., H. Stolz and J.O. Olsen (2005), "Parental support, psychological control, and behavioral control: Assessing relevance across time, culture, and method", *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, Vol. 70/4, pp. 1-147, www.jstor.org/stable/3701442.
- Berlinski, S. et al. (2016), "Reducing parent-school information gaps and improving education outcomes: Evidence from high frequency text messaging in Chile", J-PAL Working Paper, https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/publications/726_%20Reducing-Parent-School-information-gap_BBDM-Dec2016.pdf (accessed 4 April 2017).
- Bogenschneider, K. (1997). "Parental involvement in adolescent schooling: A proximal process with transcontextual validity", *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 59, pp. 718-733, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/353956>.
- Borgonovi, F. and G. Montt (2012), "Parental involvement in selected PISA countries and economies", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 73, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k990rk0jsjj-en>.
- Bowles, S. and Gintis, H. (2000), "The origins of mass public education", in R. Lowe (ed.), *History of Education: Vol. 2. Major Themes*, Routledge Falmer, London, UK, pp. 61-91.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1989), "Ecological systems theory", in R. Vasta (ed.), *Annals of Child Development: Vol. 6. Six Theories of Child Development: Revised Formulations and Current Issues*, JAI Press Greenwich, CT, pp. 187-249.
- Catsambis, S. (2002), "Expanding knowledge of parental involvement in children's secondary education: Connections with high seniors' academic success", *Social Psychology of Education*, Vol. 5/2, pp. 149-177. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1014478001512>.
- D'Agostino, J.V., Hedges, L. V. and Borman, G.D. (2001), "Title I parent involvement programs: Effects on parenting practices and student achievement", in G.D. Borman, S.C. Stringfield and R. Slavin (eds.), *Title I: Contemporary Education at the Crossroads* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc., Mahwah, NJ, pp. 117-136.
- d'Ailly, H. (2003), "Children's autonomy and perceived control in learning: A model of motivation and achievement in Taiwan", *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. 95/1, pp. 84-96, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.95.1.84>.
- Dizon-Ross, R. (2016), "Parents' beliefs and children's education: Experimental evidence from Malawi", Unpublished Manuscript, Booth School of Business, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL.
- Edwards, A.L. (1953), "The relationship between the judged desirability of a trait and the probability that the trait will be endorsed", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 37/2, pp. 90-93, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0058073>.
- Epstein, J.L. (2001), *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools*, Westview Press, Boulder, CO.
- Fan, X. (2001), "Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A growth modeling analysis", *The Journal of Experimental Education*, Vol. 70/1, pp. 27-61, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00220970109599497>.
- Fan, W. and C.M. Williams (2010), "The effects of parental involvement on students' academic self-efficacy, engagement and intrinsic motivation", *Educational Psychology*, Vol. 30/1, pp. 53-74, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01443410903353302>.
- Grolnick, W.S. and Slowiaczek, M.L. (1994), "Parents' involvement in children's schooling: A multidimensional conceptualization and motivational model", *Child Development*, Vol. 65/1, pp. 237-252, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.1994.tb00747.x>.
- Grolnick, W.S., R.M. Ryan and Deci, E.L. (1991), "Inner resources for school achievement: Motivational mediators of children perceptions of their parents", *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 83, pp. 508-517, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.83.4.508>.
- Hill, N.E. and Tyson, D.F. (2009), "Parental involvement in middle school: A meta-analytic assessment of the strategies that promote achievement", *Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 45, pp. 740-763, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0015362>.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K.V. et al. (2001), "Parental involvement in homework", *Educational Psychology*, Vol. 36/3, pp. 195-209, http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/S15326985EP3603_5.
- Johnson, R. (1976). "Notes on the schooling of the English working class 1780-1850", in R. Dale, G. Esland and M. Macdonald (eds.), *Schooling and Capitalism*, Routledge/Kegan Paul, London, UK, pp. 44-54.
- Juang, L.P. and R.K. Silbereisen (2002), "The relationship between adolescent academic capability beliefs, parenting and school grades", *Journal of Adolescence*, Vol. 25/1, pp. 3-18, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1006/jado.2001.0445>.
- Kaplan T.N. (2013), "The multiple dimensions of parental involvement and its links to young adolescent self-evaluation and academic achievement", *Psychology in the Schools*, Vol. 50/6, pp. 634-649, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/pits.21698>.



Kaplan T.N. and R. Seginer (2015), "Classroom climate, parental educational involvement, and student school functioning in early adolescence: A longitudinal study", *Social Psychology of Education*, Vol. 18/4, pp. 811-827, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11218-015-9316-8>.

Keith, T. Z. et al. (1998), "Longitudinal effects of parent involvement on high school grades: Similarities and differences across gender and ethnic groups", *Journal of School Psychology*, Vol. 36/3, pp. 335-363, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4405\(98\)00008-9](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4405(98)00008-9).

Marchant, G.J., S.E. Paulson and B.A. Rothlisberg (2001), "Relations of middle students' perceptions of family and school contexts with academic achievement", *Psychology in the Schools*, Vol. 38/6, pp. 505-519, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/pits.1039>.

Marjoribanks, K. (1996), "Ethnicity, proximal family environment, and young adolescents' cognitive performance", *Journal of Early Adolescence*, Vol. 16/3, pp. 340-359, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0272431696016003005>.

McNeely, C. and Barber, B. (2010), "How do parents make adolescents feel loved? Perspectives on supportive parenting from adolescents in 12 cultures", *Journal of Adolescent Research*, Vol. 25/4, pp. 601-631, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558409357235>.

Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche (2006), *La Place et le Rôle des Parents dans l'École*, Rapport – n° 2006-057, web document www.education.gouv.fr/archives/2012/refondonslecole/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/rapport_igen_igaenr_la_place_et_le_role_des_parents_dans_l_ecole_octobre_2006.pdf (accessed 4 April 2017).

OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en>.

OECD (2012), *The Future of Families to 2030*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264168367-en>.

OECD (2008), *Encouraging Student Interest in Science and Technology Studies*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264040892-en>.

Parker, F. L. et al. (1999), "Parent-child relationship, home learning environment, and school readiness", *Social Psychology Review*, Vol. 28/3, pp. 413-425.

Raikes, H.H. and J.M. Love (2002), "Early Head Start: A dynamic new program for infants and toddlers and their families", *Infant Mental Health Journal*, Vol. 23/1-2, pp. 1-13, <https://doi.org/10.1002/imhj.10000>.

Rodriguez, J.L. (2002), "Family environment and achievement among three generations of Mexican American high school students", *Applied Developmental Science*, Vol. 6/2, pp. 88-94, http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/S1532480XADS0602_4.

Seginer, R. (2006), "Parents' educational involvement: A developmental ecology perspective", *Parenting: Science and Practice*, Vol. 6/1, pp. 1-48, http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15327922par0601_1.

Shumow, L. and Lomax, R. (2002), "Parental efficacy: Predictor of parenting behavior and adolescent outcome", *Parenting: Science and Practice*, Vol. 2/2, pp. 127-150, http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/S15327922PAR0202_03.

Smetana, J.G. (2011), "Adolescents' social reasoning and relationships with parents: Conflicts and coordinations within and across domains", in E. Amsel and J.G. Smetana (eds.), *Adolescent Vulnerabilities and Opportunities: Constructivist and Developmental Perspectives*, Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, pp. 139-158.



From:
PISA 2015 Results (Volume III)
Students' Well-Being

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2017), "Parental involvement, student performance and satisfaction with life", in *PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-13-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document and any map included herein are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

You can copy, download or print OECD content for your own use, and you can include excerpts from OECD publications, databases and multimedia products in your own documents, presentations, blogs, websites and teaching materials, provided that suitable acknowledgment of OECD as source and copyright owner is given. All requests for public or commercial use and translation rights should be submitted to rights@oecd.org. Requests for permission to photocopy portions of this material for public or commercial use shall be addressed directly to the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) at info@copyright.com or the Centre français d'exploitation du droit de copie (CFC) at contact@cfcopies.com.