

Family Involvement in School and Low-Income Children's Literacy:

Longitudinal Associations Between and Within Families

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Research Questions

1. Is family involvement in the school environment between kindergarten and fifth grade associated with children's literacy *within* the context of low family income?
2. Do *within-family* changes in involvement matter for low-income children? Specifically, do increases in involvement predict improvements in children's literacy skills?
3. Does involvement matter more for low-income children with the added risk of low parent education than it does for low-income children whose parents have relatively moderate or high levels of education?

Study Sample

Children and their families (N = 281) who participated in an impact evaluation of the Comprehensive Child Development Program (CCDP) and the School Transition Study (STS).

- The average annual family income was slightly more than \$2000 per person (e.g., approximately \$8000/yr for a family of four).
- Over 36% of children were African American and another 21% were Latino American.

Results

In multilevel growth models and latent growth models:

- Increased school involvement predicted improved child literacy performance between kindergarten and fifth grade.
- In addition, high levels of family involvement were more strongly associated with average literacy performance between kindergarten and fifth grade for children whose mothers had relatively low levels of education compared with children whose mothers had relatively high levels of education.

Conclusions and Implications

These results add to existing evidence on the value of family involvement in school for low-income children by demonstrating that increased involvement between kindergarten and fifth grade is associated with increased literacy performance and that high levels of school involvement may have added reward for low-income children with the added risk of low parent education. As such, these results support arguments that family involvement in school should be a central aim of practice and policy solutions to the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income children.