READING PASSAGE 2

*You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 14-26**, which are based on Reading Passage 2 below.*

Parental Involvement in Children's Education

At the most fundamental level, education is a human undertaking. It requires people and real human interaction. When we think of a child's education, the first people who come to mind are schoolteachers, and the importance of their role cannot be overstated. But what of the role of parents in children's education? At home, parental involvement can include everything from general encouragement to actively tutoring children. Furthermore, parents can also lend their support to schools in many ways, such as attending school functions, helping with school activities or serving as school governors or administrators. Does this parental involvement have a measurable effect on student outcomes? If so, what are the results of their involvement?

Extensive research has clearly demonstrated the positive benefit of parental involvement when it comes to academic achievement. Students of parents who engage directly with their children in the early years of childhood education show especially strong results (Cotton and Wikelund, 1989). In other words, the earlier parental involvement occurs, the more likely children are to have tremendous academic success. In the US, the National Head Start Impact Study collected detailed data on 5,000 children from kindergarten to 3rd grade. The Head Start programme provided comprehensive early childhood development services to low-income families, and actively encouraged parental involvement. The study collected student data measuring school readiness, language use and literacy, as well as cognition and general knowledge. Over the course of three years, the data definitively established a strong correlation between parental monitoring of school-related assignments, parental involvement in school activities, and academic performance. Though the long-term effectiveness of such programmes has been called into question, even critics such as psychologist Todd Wisley have noted that continued parental involvement is crucial for children's success.

Similarly, the connection between the extent of parental engagement and a child's attitude and behaviour in school was highlighted as early as 1973 when child development psychologist Walter Emmerlich posited that constructive parent interaction enhances their children's attitudes toward learning and gives them a more positive outlook on life. Since then, researchers have conducted in-depth analyses of such criteria as classroom behaviour, peer interactions, self-concept, motivation, and general socio-emotional functioning. Unlike academic achievement, however, in which parental help with studies and instruction was clearly the primary factor, there is no obvious form of involvement that stands out as contributing to improvements in attitude and behaviour. Thus, it seems that all forms of involvement contribute equally, and it is no surprise that schools which offer the greatest variety of opportunities for parental involvement see the most positive impact in this regard.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Even though parental involvement is widely encouraged both in school systems and in literature produced by education experts, it is not without controversy. Some educational professionals question whether it can go too far, and this sentiment is particularly common when it comes to parental involvement in school governance and administration. David Hart, the general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers in the UK, has suggested that governing bodies in Britain are overloaded with parents, many of whom are unqualified for the job. Hart declared that parents were often too focused on the needs of their own children to think of the greater good when it came to governance. Nevertheless, polls consistently show that many parents would like to play a more active role in school affairs - whether it is through becoming a school governor or a member of a parental advisory committee or school improvement council.

In contrast, school administrators and teachers tend to support Hart's negative opinion of parents taking an active role; they continually demonstrate great reluctance to allow parents to get involved with goal setting, personnel decisions, assessment, and how to allocate funding. They point out that parents generally lack the training and capability to make decisions related to school administration and governance. Educational literature sometimes supports their view: some mainstream studies claim that parental involvement in school governance has no obvious correlation with increased academic achievement or improvements in student attitude and behaviour. Karen Reed Wikelund has pointed out that in half a dozen studies that addressed the link between parental involvement in school decision making, none could conclusively prove a causal relationship between it and student achievement. And Marylin Bruckman has argued that many early childhood educators have negative views of parental involvement in general, implying that some educators may have an adverse impact on family involvement.

Still, exceptions exist. In New Haven, Connecticut, the School Development Programme (SDP) started by James Comer of Yale University revealed that parents could provide meaningful contributions at all levels - whether it be at home, in the classroom, or school administration. He sought to 'change the ecology' of education by instituting a programme of electing parents to school planning and management teams, where they made substantial decisions along with teachers, the principal, and support staff. The SDP helped radically transform two of the worst-performing inner-city schools in Connecticut, and as many as 120 other inner-city schools have subsequently followed suit using his model. Comer's example proves that parents can play a constructive role within schools if an appropriate framework exists, which allows parents and teachers to work together constructively in getting the best for children.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Questions 14-17

Look at the following statements and the list of researchers below.

Match each statement with the correct researcher, ***A-E****.*

Write the correct letter, ***A-E****, in boxes 14-17 on your answer sheet.*

14 claimed that parents in administration tend to put the needs of their own children before others

15 proposed a connection between parental encouragement and children's views on education

16 argued that there was no evidence linking parental involvement in school decisions and student success

17 instituted a programme of parental participation in school decision making

List of Researchers

A Karen Reed Wikelund
B Walter Emmerlich
C James Comer
D Marylin Bruckman
E David Hart

Questions 18-21

Complete the sentences below.

Choose ***NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS*** *from the passage for each answer.*

Write your answers in boxes 18-21 on your answer sheet.

18 Parents can support schools by becoming school ..... and serving on administrative committees.

19 Early parental involvement increases the likelihood of great ..... among children.

20 The most beneficial approach is for schools to provide diverse ..... for parents to participate.

21 A decision school administrators do not want parents to get involved in is the allocation of .....

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 2?

In boxes 22-26 on your answer sheet, write

TRUE	*if the statement agrees with the information*
FALSE	*if the statement contradicts the information*
NOT GIVEN	*if there is no information on this*

22 Parental involvement tends to have more of an effect on older students than younger students.

23 Different types of parental involvement produce different results in attitude and behaviour.

24 Polls show that mothers are generally more likely to play a part in school affairs than fathers.

25 Research suggests that educators may have a negative effect on parental participation in schools.

26 The School Development Programme helped to revolutionise some urban schools.

LIVEWORKSHEETS