

The Importance of Collaboration Between Family and School as a Gateway to Children's Academic Success

أهمية التعاون بين الأسرة والمدرسة كمدخل للنجاح الدراسي للأطفال
صغير جميلة،*

Dr. SEGHIER Djamilia – Yahia Fares University . Medea

seghier.djamila@univ-medea.dz

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Abstract:

This study aims to address the pivotal role of the family-school relationship in fostering healthy child development and academic success. This nexus is intricately intertwined with family culture, economic status, and strategies employed within the gamut of available choices. It relies on communicative mechanisms inherent in the school's structure and educational practices, accentuating education's role in meeting specific expectations. The student is perceived as a project to either maintain or elevate their social standing. These mechanisms manifest diversely, encompassing formal and informal channels, including parent-teacher associations as platforms for comprehending education's impact. Furthermore, they materialize through parental visits, one-on-one interviews with educational institutions, and active parental participation in school activities, including private tutoring.

Keywords: Academic Success, Family, School, Communication, Family Strategies.

ملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تناول أهمية العلاقة بين الأسرة والمدرسة في الوصول إلى تدرّس سليم للأطفال ونجاحهم الدراسي والذي يرتبط بطبيعة الثقافة الأسرية والمستوى الاقتصادي، والاستراتيجيات التي تبنيها الأسرة من خلال مجموعة من الخيارات المتاحة أمامها، بالاستناد إلى آليات اتصالية تتيحها بنية المدرسة والفعل التربوي والتي تتجسد من خلال ممارسات تعبر عن مكانة التعليم ودوره في تحقيق انتظارات وتوقعات معينة، باعتبار التلميذ مشروعاً مستقبلياً للحفاظ

على مواقع في التراتبية الاجتماعية أو لتحسينها. وتظهر تلك الآليات في شكل مؤسس ورسمي أو غير ذلك ومنها جمعيات أولياء التلاميذ كفضاء للتعرف على الشأن المدرسي وانعكاساته على مسار التلميذ، أو من خلال الزيارات والمقابلات الشخصية للأولياء للمدرسة، أو من خلال مشاركتهم في النشاطات المدرسية، كما تظهر من خلال تعليم أصبح موازي للتعليم النظامي وهو الدروس الخصوصية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النجاح الدراسي، الأسرة، المدرسة، الاتصال الاستراتيجيات الأسرية.

1.Introduction:

Academic success, a key indicator of educational quality, has garnered significant attention in various disciplines, including sociology. Sociological perspectives have linked it to social and cultural factors, such as cultural and linguistic capital, and explored the influence of family economic circumstances.

Research findings have underscored the role of individual background and social capital in achieving academic success. Since the early 1980s, there has been a shift toward studying the interplay between family dynamics and academic achievement. This shift emphasizes the interdependence of educational and familial activities.

Schools, as primary institutions preparing students for the future, play a critical role in facilitating the school-family relationship. They provide mechanisms for communication and cooperation, enabling families to strategize for their children's success.

Recognizing the importance of education in social mobility, Algeria has prioritized educational equal opportunity principles. This has led to increased access to education, particularly at the university level, aligning with economic reforms and competitiveness in the job market.

Academic success is influenced by the collaboration between families and schools, expressed through practices like academic monitoring, assistance with assignments, and private tutoring. Schools, as formal

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institutions, bear the responsibility of establishing mechanisms for collaboration, including communication networks.

The paper addresses the following elements:

- Sociological exploration of the relationship between families and schools.
- The importance of family involvement in students' school life and the types of practices families employ regarding their children's education.
- Mechanisms schools provide to enhance their relationship with families, which families can utilize as strategies for their children's academic success.

2- Sociology and the Emergence of the Relationship Between Family and School

In the early stages of its development, sociology focused on studying the relationship between the family and the school through the lens of social origin and reproduction. Cultural heritage was seen as something passed down from one generation to another, eventually transforming into educational capital that each individual would internalize. However, as societal changes began to affect both family and school institutions, especially in the wake of the industrial revolution, the ripple effects reached various other societies in gradual stages.

These changes brought about shifts in the structure and functions of both family and school institutions, as well as the intricate interactions occurring within them. These transformations became evident in the altering roles of women, who entered the realms of education and employment with force. Consequently, this led to changes in their traditional roles within the family structure.

Additionally, variations in the education system itself became apparent, including the length of time students spent in school. Opportunities for educational attainment increased across all levels, starting from primary education, which became more widely accessible and

democratically provided, all the way up to university education. With the growing number of students enrolling in higher education, the importance of education and its economic and social roles began to gain prominence.

As a result, research in sociology began to center around the complex relationship between family and school as a primary issue for understanding and interpreting the scholastic life of students. It became evident that a student's academic journey was inseparable from their family life and the various influences that family exerted on their academic performance.

Furthermore, this increased focus on the family-school relationship can be traced back to the influential report by American sociologist James Coleman on educational opportunity equality. Coleman's report shed light on the impact of social disparities on educational achievement, marking a turning point in the study of this crucial interplay between two fundamental institutions: the family and the school.

In essence, this shift in sociological inquiry highlights the evolving dynamics between family and school, recognizing their interconnectedness and the profound influence each exerts on a student's educational trajectory.

James Coleman's study was rooted in a fundamental hypothesis: that the poor academic performance of students from disadvantaged racial or ethnic backgrounds is due to the financial constraints of their educational institutions which struggled to gather the necessary resources from their surrounding environment due to their inability to provide the required means. This deficiency stemmed from a multitude of economic, social, and organizational factors, reflecting a prevalent notion in society referred to as the common perception.

However, Coleman's report revealed paradoxical results, indicating "the insignificance of resource disparities between institutions compared to the influence of the social and cultural backgrounds of families on the academic trajectory of their children. In socially disadvantaged environments, parents find it challenging to accomplish what teachers

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expect, such as assisting their children with their schoolwork" (Noureddine Zemmam, p. 180). Coleman's report opened the doors for researchers to conduct in-depth studies on the significance of the relationship between family and school and the synergy between them, and according to that, various approaches emerged, ranging from a focus on the impact of the socialization process on academic success, which occurs under the influence of specific economic and social backgrounds, to an examination of the actor's relationship with the social structure within certain rational parameters. In essence, these studies aimed to investigate the nature of the relationship established between the family and the school.

These studies have consistently highlighted the importance of familial factors, which exert a more significant influence on students' trajectories compared to school-related factors. They can be categorized into two primary approaches, with each emphasizing specific factors as central and foundational in comparison to others deemed secondary in their impact on the educational process.

2-1. Socio-Economic Approaches:

Socio-economic approaches to understanding the relationship between family and school in the context of academic success are grounded in a fundamental idea. This idea posits that every social phenomenon is primarily a result of individual actions rather than the social structures that exert minimal influence on individuals' choices. In the realm of academic success, educational and career choices are indeed influenced by the economic status of the family.

Students hailing from economically advantaged families generally tend to excel in their studies and opt for long-term educational paths leading to prestigious professions and esteemed social positions. Conversely, students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds often choose shorter educational paths due to their inability to meet the financial demands of longer durations of education or face academic challenges. As a

result, individual educational choices are often shaped by one's socio-economic background, with the family playing a crucial role in this regard.

Raymond Boudon, a prominent figure in this approach, criticized comprehensive theories in their interpretation of social phenomena. He challenged the functionalist perspective, the concept of social justice, and the educational heritage that promoted the principle of equal educational opportunities. Boudon asserted that social inequality originates in the school and extends to society. He argued that schools perpetuate social structures, maintaining and legitimizing the dominance of the ruling class over subordinate classes. Boudon believed that individuals' perceptions of education and academic success, their expectations, and their anticipations varied based on their social status.

According to Boudon, individuals rationally choose their educational paths, aiming to achieve prestigious social positions through a cost-benefit analysis. These choices are intricately linked to the social and familial background of individuals, as well as their personal goals and aspirations. As such, individuals construct specific strategies for academic success based on their representations, making them primarily responsible for their own success or failure.

2-2. The Cultural Approach:

The cultural approach emphasizes the significance of cultural factors within families and their influence on the academic performance of children. It contends that the school's culture is essentially the culture of the dominant class, a factor that positively affects the children of this class and tips the scale of success in their favor. The school, according to this perspective, fulfills “a selective function that legitimizes social differences and inequalities, perpetuating ideological and economic dominance of the prevailing system” (Anthony Giddens, 2005, p. 561). The prominent figures in this approach include Pierre Bourdieu, Claude Passeron, Basil Bernstein, Christian Baudelot and Roger Establet.

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Pierre Bourdieu and Claude Passeron argue that schools tend to produce the culture of the dominant class, which children from marginalized or lower socioeconomic backgrounds lack. Children from the dominant class possess cultural capital and linguistic competence that aligns with the school's culture. Bourdieu and Passeron contend that a student's home environment significantly influences their academic trajectory.

Basil Bernstein introduced a linguistic approach to explain educational disparities among students. He posited that language use patterns are linked to cultural variations and social inequalities. Children develop different symbols, forms of expression, and linguistic styles throughout their lives, which later affect their school experiences.

In essence, “the language of middle and upper-class children is characterized by fluency, maturity, and specificity. Their speech aligns seamlessly with the immediate context, reflecting their ability to adapt to various situations. In contrast, children from lower-income and working-class backgrounds tend to use constrained language. Their speech is often non-logical, less mature, and incomplete. It emerges from narrow cultural contexts shaped by primary social relationships. In this context, language serves as a tool for communication and expressing social needs rather than as a means for broad thinking and extensive discourse” (Anthony Giddens, 2005, p. 558).

Christian Baudelot and Roger Establet argue that schools in France are not a uniform entity but rather arenas for class-based conflicts. They contend that within these educational institutions, a process of selection takes place that preserves the existing class structure. This process is masked as educational guidance but, beneath the surface, is simply a means of segregating students along social class lines. Working-class students typically follow a shorter, technical educational path that leads to employment in workshops and large capitalist factories. In contrast, bourgeois students enjoy a continuous educational journey from primary school to university. They possess a higher culture and a rich cultural

experience, making academic success a natural outcome of their cultural background.

Various cultural indicators define this cultural factor, including having a home library, encouraging children to read and explore literature, visiting museums and theaters, participating in artistic activities such as drawing and music, joining clubs, embarking on exploratory and recreational trips, and engaging in scientific and cultural activities. All of these factors contribute to broadening the intellectual horizons of bourgeois students and have a significant impact on their academic performance and compatibility with the educational system.

In essence, the cultural factor encompasses a wide range of activities and experiences that shape the intellectual and cultural development of students. Rooted in the cultural and social backgrounds of students, this factor plays a pivotal role in determining their educational success. Therefore, Baudelot and Establet's work underscores the importance of recognizing the influence of cultural capital in understanding the disparities in academic achievement among different social classes.

3- The Family and Its Impact on the Child's School Life

In the early 1980s, American sociologist James Coleman's research marked a turning point, shedding light on the pivotal connection between families and schools. His findings sparked a growing body of research emphasizing parental involvement's profound impact on a child's education. These studies revealed that education extends beyond classroom walls, weaving through various institutions, with the family standing as a cornerstone. They underscored the critical role of family-school collaboration in shaping a child's educational journey and surmounting potential obstacles.

The family serves as the crucible of personality, where behavior and inclinations take root. It ranks as the primary institution for socialization, laying the initial foundation for an individual's sense of belonging. The extent of its influence hinges on structural factors within its framework—

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social ties, cultural heritage, economic and educational backgrounds, family size, and more. In the optimal confluence of these factors, an ideal environment emerges for nurturing children.

Bert emphasizes the significance of these factors, highlighting that “the most significant threats to an individual's life often revolve around their family life during childhood” (Ahmed Ezzat Rajeh, *Psychology Origins*, The Egyptian Modern Library, Alexandria, 1970, p. 534). This underscores the critical role of the family in shaping an individual's future. As children move from the family to the school, a crucial phase in their socialization journey unfolds. The school becomes the cornerstone upon which society builds its civilizational system. The school's role extends beyond knowledge transmission; it encompasses the formation of individuals, the construction and reproduction of cultural heritage, and the fostering of social cohesion among various societal groups. In this regard, school functions not merely as a site for acquiring knowledge but as a platform for character development, societal integration, and intellectual growth. However, school success is contingent on the interactions between the family and the school. The family plays a pivotal role in creating strategies for their children's success. These strategies align with the family's expectations of academic achievement and, significantly, their children's educational and professional future.

The impact of the school is interwoven with the family's practices and strategic planning. It can either enhance a student's success or pose an obstacle, depending on the congruence or incongruence between three systems: the family system with all its elements and determinants, the school system with its components and interactions, and the personal system of the child, encompassing cognitive and emotional facets. In this context, researchers like Philippe Gombert underline “the explicit relationship between social class affiliation and the development of strategies toward the school. Some social classes invest in pedagogical activities for their children, leveraging their cultural capital and knowledge

about the educational system to enhance their children's chances of success” (Gombert Philippe, 2008, p. 9-10).

The family-school relationship is marked by intricate contradictions. These disparities encompass practices, meanings, and roles. A child's family experience contrasts starkly with their school life. In the family, they receive tailored attention to their unique needs. Conversely, within the school's communal environment, they embrace roles molded by educational philosophies rooted in societal norms. These standards often diverge from family values. Furthermore, schools necessitate a distinct linguistic framework, separate from family communication, to fulfill the institution's need for standardized interactions.

The existing contradictions between these two institutions necessitate the imperative of cooperation and the establishment of bridges for communication between them. This can be achieved through specific practices, including parental encouragement and praise for their children, engaging in dialogue and discussions with them regarding their academic projects and future prospects, setting high performance standards, instilling values of commitment, discipline, and perseverance, and emphasizing the importance of knowledge and the social status that academic success brings. It also involves actively monitoring their academic performance and maintaining parental involvement by communicating with the school, especially with the teachers. In this context, McClelland highlights the role of parents in defining the standards and values of excellence and success for their children. Furthermore, Marie Duru-Bellat and Agnès Van Zanten suggest that “as families rise in the social hierarchy, they become better equipped to develop ambitious educational projects. This is made possible by their exceptional access to crucial information and their ability to exert various forms of influence and pressure on teachers and school administrations. Additionally, their capacity to establish a significant presence within the educational institution allows them to contribute to social reproduction from within the system”(Marie Duru-Bellat et Agnès Van Zanten, 2000, p. 45).

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Researcher Boulahcen identifies “four different forms of parental engagement in their children's success. First, there is motivational engagement, which is well-known among economically disadvantaged families or those unable to provide daily academic support for their children. Second, there is individual student engagement, which is primarily based on the strong determination of both the child and the parents for academic success. However, it can also result from the parents' absence in helping with homework, often attributed to their lack of knowledge. Third, there is engagement through daily monitoring of homework and lessons, a common practice among educated parents. Fourth, there is engagement through social and cultural environments, including sports (A. Boulahcen, 2002, p. 156). This demonstrates the importance of parents' involvement in their children's educational paths, which can vary depending on the child's environment and the circumstances imposed by it. These practices range from simple encouragement and motivation to direct monitoring of the student's work and duties, as well as participation in various community institutions such as school councils, scientific and cultural clubs, and engagement in sports and recreational activities. All of these strategies reflect the family's efforts to achieve academic success for their children and facilitate their integration into the school environment.

4- Mechanisms for communication between family and school as strategies for academic success

Academic success is one of the most complex educational concepts due to its connection to a range of economic, cultural, educational, and personal variables related to the student and their environment. Academic success refers to "the attainment of educational goals associated with mastering specific knowledge. It is linked to achieving the learning objectives for each educational stage. A successful student is one who acquires the information and skills included in the curriculum within the specified time frame according to the educational plan." Furthermore, it involves “the student acquiring knowledge, values, attitudes, and behaviors that enable them to

socially integrate and fully participate in societal changes” (Bouchard et St-Amant, 1996, p. 04).

- **Personal Determinants:** These relate to the individual characteristics of the student, as they are at the core of the educational process. Factors such as cognitive abilities, intelligence, memory, critical thinking, and analytical skills play a significant role in academic success.
- **School-Related Determinants:** These are connected to the school environment and its elements. The interactions within the school can create a scholastic atmosphere that either contributes to or hinders academic success. Key components of the school include teachers, who are the primary guides for students and content delivery; school administration responsible for educational management; and parent-teacher associations that facilitate communication between families and schools. Additionally, curriculum content and educational relationships within the school are important factors.
- **Social Determinants:** These reflect the influences between the school and society. Societal factors, such as social belonging, class membership, and social origin, have a substantial impact on a student's academic achievement. These factors encompass economic, cultural, and linguistic variables that shape the student's educational and professional future

Children's academic success is not an isolated achievement but rather the product of various influencing factors, with the relationship between the family and the school standing out as one of the most crucial determinants. Academic performance is intricately tied to the dynamics within the family and related variables. Extensive research has consistently shown that family engagement in school-related activities, active guidance, and direct participation in their children's educational journey significantly impact their academic achievements.

The collaboration between families and schools relies on a well-established network of communication. Through this network, families strengthen their involvement in the educational process and the broader

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education system. It provides families with the means to closely monitor the school, its educational processes, and all associated components, including teachers, curricula, and educational interactions. Furthermore, it empowers families to comprehend their child's position within this intricate framework. This robust communication network equips families with valuable insights into the educational process, offers an understanding of their child's immediate educational progress, and provides them with effective tools for guiding their child's future academic journey.

Given that schools are official institutions governed by specific rules and regulations, they bear the primary responsibility for establishing effective channels of communication with families. To fulfill this role, schools employ diverse mechanisms that families can utilize to monitor and support their children's education. Family practices in this regard are a result of carefully considered choices tailored to individual circumstances. Among the most noteworthy mechanisms are:

4-1. Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs):

Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) represent a formal channel through which schools connect with the community. Their mission is to bolster communication between families and schools, acquainting parents with all aspects of the school environment. PTAs create forums for dialogue and discussions, fostering the exchange of ideas and perspectives on matters related to students' education. These associations serve as a platform for parents and teachers to collaborate, enabling them to identify students' strengths and weaknesses. Together, they work towards surmounting academic challenges.

As part of the ongoing reforms in Algerian schools and the institution's collective management approach, PTAs play a pivotal role in shaping school activities and contributing to the school's pedagogical vision. This role finds recognition in Education Directive Law No. 08-04, issued on January 23, 2008, which underscores the significance and

function of PTAs in school decision-making. Article 26 of the Directive Law empowers “PTAs, established under existing legislation, to propose initiatives to the Minister responsible for National Education and the education directorates of the states”.

However, an examination of the reality of PTAs reveals limitations in their work and participation in school affairs. Notably, not all schools boast active PTAs. This deficiency stems from parents' lack of awareness regarding PTA-related laws, along with their corresponding responsibilities and rights. Additionally, some parents consciously evade taking on these responsibilities or are reluctant to pay required membership fees. These observations emerge from our interactions with parents, school staff, and community relationships. In some cases, school staff, including administration and teachers, may resist PTA involvement, perceiving it as intrusive to school matters, potentially hindering the educational process.

4-2. Visits and Personal Meetings:

Personal meetings, a crucial form of educational communication, facilitate direct interaction between parents and teachers or school administration. These meetings provide parents with the opportunity to discuss their children's learning challenges and address any obstacles hindering their academic progress. Such face-to-face interactions serve as a window into the children's school experiences and family backgrounds. Moreover, they play a pivotal role in strengthening the bond between parents and teachers, conveying to students that their education is valued and supported. Consequently, students are motivated to invest more effort in their academic pursuits.

To ensure the effectiveness of personal meetings, careful planning and organization are essential, ideally at the outset of each academic term and according to a predetermined schedule. This schedule should allocate specific times for teacher-parent meetings, taking into account the teachers' availability. However, within the context of Algerian schools, there is a noticeable hesitancy among parents when it comes to visiting the school and engaging with teachers. Typically, such interactions occur only in

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response to specific issues or when parents are formally requested to meet with teachers or the school board.

While some parents do make periodic visits to monitor their children's progress, these visits are often infrequent. Both parents may participate, although mothers tend to exhibit greater interest. Several factors contribute to this pattern. Mothers, often homemakers, may have more available time and jobs in sectors that enable closer involvement with the school. Additionally, mothers tend to exhibit a stronger interest in their children's academic affairs, as children are often seen as the family's future project. In the wake of societal changes in Algerian society post-independence, including women's increased participation in education and the workforce, they have managed to allocate time for various responsibilities, including active engagement with educational stakeholders and close monitoring of their children's education.

4-3. Participation in School Activities:

School activities are considered one of the mechanisms that schools use to engage with the community. These activities encompass a wide range of areas, including scientific, sports, cultural, and recreational activities. They contribute to expanding students' interests, opening the school to the community, and discovering and nurturing students' talents. Students can join various school clubs and participate in scientific competitions organized either within their classrooms or among educational institutions. Parents can also directly or indirectly participate in these activities by attending events, contributing to their organization, or providing financial support. Through such involvement, parents can gain a closer understanding of the school's functions, which extend beyond the educational process to encompass character development and the formation of well-rounded individuals. These various activities teach students time management, teamwork, and enhance their knowledge and awareness, all of which contribute to their academic success. Therefore, it is essential for parents to encourage their children to participate in these activities and become

involved themselves, demonstrating their interest in their children's education, thereby motivating them to excel academically.

Despite the significance of school activities, it is observed that they are often limited and sometimes rare in some educational institutions. Some schools lack scientific or cultural clubs, and sports activities are often limited to physical education classes.

4-4. Private Tutoring:

Private tutoring, a practice rooted in ancient societies, initially served the elite and rulers as a means of educating their children. Over time, it evolved alongside widening social disparities, driven by a desire to maintain social status and avoid mingling with the general populace. However, with the advent of formal education and the principle of equal educational opportunities endorsed by modern schools, private tutoring underwent a transformation. It became a supplementary resource for students seeking to enhance their academic proficiency.

The emergence of private tutoring in Algerian society during the 1980s was closely linked to educational reforms that reshaped the education and training system. These reforms coincided with changes in the economic system, institutional management, and the rise of social strata aiming to differentiate themselves through education. These transformations gave rise to various phenomena, including private tutoring, which, initially limited in scope and levels, expanded significantly with recent educational reforms and the adoption of competency-based teaching approaches in the 21st century.

Private tutoring has evolved into a parallel institution, gradually competing with the official education system, drawing students away from it. Originally, it was a practice used by high school students to achieve better academic results and obtain the highly-regarded baccalaureate certificate. However, the prevalence of private tutoring expanded across all levels and years of education. It now reflects the acknowledgment that the formal education system may not effectively fulfill its role.

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Families now allocate fixed sums for private tutoring, adding financial strain, particularly with the declining purchasing power of Algerian citizens. Private tutoring is driven by desires to enhance academic performance, achieve excellence, and secure placements in prestigious fields. It also stems from perceived weaknesses in teachers, limited instructional effectiveness, curriculum density, and overcrowded classrooms. These factors often reveal students' comprehension gaps in the curriculum.

Private tutoring serves as a refuge for families, although sometimes without careful consideration of students' academic needs. It is offered in various settings, with varying conditions and student-to-teacher ratios. The lack of regulations governing private tutoring poses challenges, as it operates outside the school's purview.

In recent years, new trends have emerged, with students opting for last-minute revision sessions before exams. This trend suggests a focus on achieving high scores and progression, sometimes at the expense of comprehensive understanding. Private tutoring has also become an income-generating strategy for educators, reflecting a utilitarian relationship with knowledge and learning. As Raymond Boudon points out, individuals operate within institutional frameworks and social contexts, but their actions are based on data used in the decision-making process.

5. Conclusion:

This study has emphasized the vital role of collaboration between families and schools in shaping the academic trajectory of children. This underscores the necessity of building bridges of communication between these two essential entities, considering the influence of sociological approaches. One approach focused on the socioeconomic impact of families, where their circumstances compelled rational decisions regarding their children's educational paths. The second approach centered on the cultural background of families, highlighting the influence of cultural and

linguistic capital on educational performance and, subsequently, academic success. Since the early 1980s, increasing attention has been placed on family involvement in students' academic lives, encompassing concepts such as participation, monitoring, and parental support. However, despite schools providing mechanisms for this, real-world response from families has been somewhat limited. Hence, we propose the following actions:

- Activate the roles of parental associations and encourage parental engagement.
- Establish a dedicated public relations entity within the school's organizational structure to connect the school with its external community.
- Raise awareness among parents regarding the importance of active involvement and monitoring of their children's education through seminars and school days where parents are invited to participate.
- Integrate parents into academic activities through joint initiatives with students at home.
- Invite parents to school events and gatherings to familiarize them with the school's educational environment more closely.

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