



Parental Involvement in Mathematics Learning in Multicultural School Communities in Australia

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Parental involvement in children's mathematics learning is often recognised through what schools can readily see, such as attendance at parent-teacher interviews, participation in school events, communication with teachers, or help with homework. However, much of the work families do to support mathematics learning happens beyond the school gates and may remain less visible to teachers.

This study explored how parents in multicultural primary school communities described their involvement in their children's mathematics learning in and across home and school spaces. Four focus groups were conducted with 12 parents of Year 5 students across two culturally and linguistically diverse primary schools in Melbourne. The study focused on what parents actually did, how they made decisions about supporting their children, and how their involvement changed according to their circumstances.

Parents described their involvement as active, flexible, and responsive. At home, mathematics was often incorporated into everyday family life rather than taught through formal lessons. Parents described using cooking to explore measurement, shopping to practise calculations and change, games such as UNO and Monopoly, and short periods of regular mathematics practice. Parents who felt less confident with mathematics still supported learning through encouragement, repetition, organisation, and opportunities for practice.

Parents also wanted greater visibility of what their children were learning at school. Many relied on reports and parent-teacher interviews but knew relatively little about day-to-day mathematics learning. Some wanted brief information about current topics or the strategies being taught so they could better align their support at home with classroom learning.

Parents also made careful decisions about when to intervene and when to step back. When children became frustrated, rejected a parent's method, or preferred the approach taught at school, some parents reduced direct instruction. Others drew on older siblings, extended family members, or tutors when they lacked time, confidence, or familiarity with particular mathematical approaches. Rather than indicating disengagement, these decisions show how families distribute support across different people and learning spaces.

For teachers, the findings suggest that parental involvement may be substantial even when it is not highly visible at school. Brief updates about current mathematics topics, examples of classroom strategies, or suggestions for everyday mathematical activities could help families connect their existing support with classroom learning without expecting them to reproduce classroom teaching at home.

Rather than asking, "*How can we get parents more involved?*", teachers and schools might instead ask, "*How are families already supporting mathematics learning, and how can we make stronger connections with that support?*"