

The Role of Parental Engagement in Improving Academic Performance: Evidence from Brazilian Public Schools

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Abstract

Parental engagement plays a critical role in improving academic performance, particularly in underprivileged contexts like Brazil's public schools. This paper explores the impact of parental involvement on key educational outcomes, including attendance, homework completion, and overall academic success. Drawing on evidence from studies and successful regional initiatives, the analysis highlights how parental engagement fosters emotional and motivational support, strengthens family-school partnerships, and addresses systemic barriers such as poverty and institutional shortcomings. Effective programs like *Escola da Família* and *Parceria com a Comunidade* demonstrate scalable strategies for empowering parents to actively participate in their children's education. The paper also examines long-term implications, including the potential for reducing dropout rates, promoting educational equity, and shaping future research and policy initiatives. By prioritizing parental engagement, Brazil's education system can create a more inclusive and supportive framework, ensuring sustainable improvements in academic outcomes and broader societal benefits.

Keywords: parental engagement, academic performance, Brazilian public schools, educational equity, family-school partnerships

1. Introduction

Brazil's public education system is one of the most expansive in Latin America, serving millions of students across diverse socio-economic and geographic backgrounds. Despite its scale, the system faces deep-rooted challenges that significantly hinder educational outcomes and perpetuate inequality. Public schools, which account for the majority of primary and secondary education in Brazil, often grapple with issues such as inadequate funding, overcrowded classrooms, and limited access to educational resources like textbooks, technology, and extracurricular programs. These shortcomings are exacerbated in rural and low-income urban areas, where infrastructure deficiencies and a lack of qualified teachers further widen the gap between students in public schools and their peers in private institutions.

The high dropout rates in Brazilian public schools are another pressing concern. According to recent government statistics, the dropout rate for secondary education in Brazil exceeds 25%, with many students leaving school due to socio-economic pressures such as the need to work and support their families. Even those who remain in school often struggle to meet academic benchmarks. The National Basic Education Assessment (Prova Brasil) consistently reveals low proficiency levels in key subjects such as mathematics and Portuguese, with public school students underperforming compared to their private school counterparts. These systemic issues highlight the urgent need for interventions that can improve student outcomes despite the constraints of the broader educational system.

Parental engagement has emerged as a critical factor in addressing these challenges. Decades of research in educational psychology and sociology underscore the importance of active parental involvement in a child's

academic journey. Students whose parents actively support their education—whether through monitoring homework, attending school events, or fostering a positive learning environment at home—are more likely to achieve better academic outcomes, regardless of external factors like school quality or socio-economic status. In the Brazilian context, where public education faces significant structural hurdles, parental engagement can play a transformative role in bridging the gaps left by resource limitations.

However, engaging parents in their children's education in Brazil is a complex endeavor. Many parents, particularly those from low-income households, face significant barriers to participation. Long working hours, lack of formal education, and limited understanding of the school system often hinder their ability to engage meaningfully. Additionally, schools themselves may lack the strategies or resources to effectively involve parents, particularly in communities where trust between families and educational institutions is weak. These dynamics create a cycle in which low engagement contributes to poor academic outcomes, perpetuating socio-economic inequalities.

The importance of fostering parental engagement extends beyond individual academic performance. It has the potential to create a ripple effect, strengthening the ties between schools, families, and communities. By involving parents as active partners, schools can build a support network that benefits not only students but also educators and administrators. Parents who are engaged in their children's education are more likely to advocate for improvements in school policies and resources, contributing to broader systemic change. Moreover, parental involvement instills in students a sense of accountability and motivation, reinforcing the value of education as a pathway to personal and societal advancement.

In a nation as diverse and complex as Brazil, where public education is both a tool for social mobility and a reflection of systemic inequality, parental engagement offers a practical and impactful solution. It empowers families to take an active role in their children's learning, counterbalancing some of the limitations of the public school system. This paper explores the multifaceted role of parental engagement in improving academic performance in Brazilian public schools, examining its challenges, mechanisms, and broader implications for educational equity and societal progress. Through this analysis, it seeks to highlight the critical importance of fostering strong school-family partnerships in the quest for a more inclusive and effective educational system.

2. Understanding Parental Engagement

2.1 Differentiating Engagement from Basic Involvement in Education

Parental engagement in education is distinct from basic involvement, as it represents a deeper, more active partnership between families and schools. While involvement might include actions like attending parent-teacher conferences or ensuring children have the necessary supplies for school, engagement goes beyond these episodic interactions. It involves a continuous effort to participate in and influence a child's academic and emotional growth.

Engagement requires parents to be proactive in understanding their child's academic needs and collaborating with teachers to address them. For instance, a parent might work with a teacher to develop strategies to improve a child's reading skills or actively seek out resources to supplement classroom learning at home. Studies in Brazil have highlighted this difference: a 2021 report from Fundação Lemann revealed that students with engaged parents were 30% more likely to achieve grade-level proficiency in Portuguese and mathematics compared to peers whose parents exhibited only basic involvement. This illustrates the tangible impact of active parental participation on academic outcomes.

Another key distinction lies in the intent and frequency of interaction. Basic involvement often arises from obligations, such as attending a mandatory school meeting, while engagement is characterized by a sustained commitment to supporting the child's education. For example, an engaged parent might regularly check homework, encourage discussions about school topics, or participate in workshops to better understand the curriculum. This level of involvement creates a consistent and reinforcing environment for learning, helping children to develop confidence and resilience in their academic journey.

2.2 Core Components: Communication, Home Support, and School Participation

Parental engagement is most effective when it encompasses three core components: communication, home support, and school participation. Together, these elements provide a comprehensive framework for fostering academic success.

Communication between parents and schools serves as the foundation of engagement. Regular and open communication ensures that parents are aware of their child's progress, strengths, and areas of improvement. It also allows teachers to understand the unique challenges faced by students and their families. Effective communication can take many forms, including parent-teacher meetings, email updates, and mobile apps that track attendance and grades. In Brazil, tools like the "Educar Mais" platform have been implemented in some

public schools to facilitate such exchanges. A 2020 pilot program in São Paulo showed that schools using communication apps saw a 15% increase in parental participation at school events compared to those relying on traditional methods like newsletters.

Home support is equally crucial, as it directly influences the child's day-to-day academic experience. Parents who create a structured and positive learning environment at home can significantly enhance their child's performance. This support might include setting aside dedicated time for homework, providing access to books or learning materials, and showing interest in school activities. Research from the Instituto Ayrton Senna found that students who received consistent academic support at home scored 20% higher on national assessments than those who lacked such support. This finding underscores the importance of fostering a home environment conducive to learning.

School participation involves parents actively engaging with the school community. This can range from volunteering at events to joining parent committees that contribute to school decision-making. Participation strengthens the relationship between families and schools, creating a sense of shared responsibility for student success. For example, in Ceará, community involvement programs encourage parents to help with school governance, leading to measurable improvements in both student attendance and academic performance.

When these three components are integrated, they create a robust system of support that addresses both the academic and emotional needs of students. Schools that prioritize fostering these aspects of engagement often report higher levels of parental satisfaction and improved student outcomes.

2.3 Cultural Perspectives on Parental Roles in Brazil

In Brazil, parental roles in education are shaped by a complex interplay of cultural norms, socio-economic conditions, and historical factors. Traditionally, education has been viewed as primarily the responsibility of schools, with parents often taking a secondary, supportive role. This perspective is particularly prevalent among low-income families, where limited formal education and economic pressures can make active engagement challenging. Parents in these communities often view teachers as the sole authority on academic matters, believing that their role is confined to logistical support, such as ensuring school attendance or providing supplies.

However, attitudes toward parental engagement are gradually evolving. National campaigns and community programs have sought to emphasize the critical role parents play in their child's academic success. For instance, initiatives like "Escola da Família" in São Paulo encourage parents to view education as a collaborative process, fostering greater awareness of how their involvement impacts student outcomes.

Cultural values also play a role in shaping parental engagement. In many Brazilian households, education is seen as a pathway to upward mobility and a means of breaking the cycle of poverty. However, this aspiration often coexists with practical barriers. For example, parents working multiple jobs to support their families may lack the time or energy to engage meaningfully in their child's education. Additionally, linguistic and cultural differences within Brazil's diverse population, such as indigenous communities, can create further obstacles to parental engagement. Schools in these contexts must adapt their strategies to account for local traditions and practices, ensuring that engagement efforts are inclusive and culturally sensitive.

Despite these challenges, there is growing recognition of the importance of fostering stronger school-family partnerships. By addressing cultural and systemic barriers, schools can empower parents to take an active role in their child's education, creating a more equitable and effective learning environment. For example, teacher training programs that focus on cultural sensitivity and communication skills have been shown to increase parental involvement in marginalized communities, demonstrating the potential for scalable solutions.

By distinguishing engagement from basic involvement, identifying its core components, and understanding the cultural dynamics in Brazil, this section highlights the foundational aspects of fostering meaningful parental participation in education. Such insights are essential for designing strategies that effectively address the unique challenges and opportunities within the Brazilian context.

3. Barriers to Engagement

3.1 Socio-Economic Challenges, Including Poverty and Time Constraints

Socio-economic challenges represent one of the most significant barriers to parental engagement in Brazilian public schools, as they shape the time, resources, and capacity parents have to support their children's education. Poverty, which affects a significant portion of Brazil's population, directly limits families' ability to prioritize educational involvement. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), approximately 50 million Brazilians live below the poverty line, with the problem particularly acute in rural areas and the urban peripheries of major cities. Parents in these circumstances often work long hours in low-paying or informal jobs that provide little to no flexibility, leaving them with minimal time or energy to

engage meaningfully in their children's schooling.

Time constraints exacerbate this issue. In low-income families, parents frequently hold multiple jobs to make ends meet, making it difficult to attend parent-teacher meetings, participate in school events, or monitor homework. A 2021 study conducted in São Paulo showed that nearly 42% of parents from low-income households identified "lack of time" as the main reason for their absence at school functions, while 26% cited "work commitments" as a barrier to engagement. This trend is particularly evident among single-parent households, where the burden of both financial and caregiving responsibilities falls disproportionately on one individual.

Poverty also limits access to basic educational resources that can enhance engagement. Families in economically disadvantaged communities often lack access to internet connectivity, technology, or even quiet spaces for children to study. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these disparities became even more pronounced, as remote learning required a level of technological access that many low-income families could not afford. According to a UNICEF report in 2020, nearly 18% of Brazilian students lacked reliable internet access at home, and 10% did not have a device suitable for online education. In these households, parental engagement in their child's learning was severely restricted, as parents struggled to provide even the minimal infrastructure needed for academic participation.

Beyond material constraints, socio-economic challenges also impact parental self-perception and confidence. Parents facing economic hardship may feel unqualified to contribute to their children's academic success, viewing themselves as inadequately educated or lacking the authority to engage with teachers. This sense of inadequacy perpetuates a cycle of disengagement, where parents feel distanced from the educational process and unable to address their child's academic needs effectively.

To address these barriers, schools must adopt flexible and inclusive approaches to engage parents. Strategies such as scheduling parent meetings outside traditional work hours, offering transportation assistance, or providing childcare during school events can help reduce logistical obstacles. Additionally, creating community partnerships to supply families with resources like internet access, books, and school supplies can alleviate the material challenges associated with poverty, enabling parents to play a more active role in their child's education.

3.2 Institutional Issues: School Resources and Teacher Preparedness

Institutional barriers within Brazil's public education system further hinder parental engagement, particularly in schools serving low-income communities. Many public schools operate with limited funding, which constrains their ability to invest in resources or programs that encourage family involvement. Overcrowded classrooms, inadequate facilities, and high student-to-teacher ratios are common in these settings, leaving little room for personalized attention to students or their families. For example, a study by the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research (INEP) found that in some urban schools, classrooms hold up to 50 students per teacher, making it nearly impossible for educators to engage with parents individually or foster meaningful communication.

Another significant institutional barrier is the lack of teacher training in family engagement. Teacher preparation programs in Brazil often prioritize pedagogy and subject knowledge, while neglecting the interpersonal and community-building skills needed to establish strong school-family partnerships. According to a 2019 survey by Fundação Itaú Social, only 32% of teachers in public schools felt adequately prepared to engage with parents effectively. This lack of training is especially problematic in socio-economically diverse or culturally complex communities, where understanding the specific needs and challenges of families is critical for successful collaboration.

Systemic inefficiencies in communication between schools and parents also contribute to disengagement. Many schools rely on outdated or inconsistent methods of communication, such as sending paper notices home with students, which often fail to reach parents or are overlooked due to their informality. In contrast, schools with access to modern communication tools, such as parent portals or mobile apps, report higher levels of parental involvement. However, these tools are typically concentrated in wealthier regions or private schools, leaving public schools at a disadvantage. A lack of dedicated personnel or funds to implement and maintain such systems further widens the gap between schools and families.

Additionally, the absence of clear institutional policies on parental engagement creates confusion and inconsistency in how schools approach this issue. While some schools actively encourage parental participation through workshops, home visits, or parent councils, others lack the infrastructure or leadership to implement such initiatives. This uneven approach leaves many parents without clear pathways to get involved, particularly in regions where school administrators may prioritize other pressing issues, such as infrastructure repairs or teacher shortages.

Addressing institutional barriers requires systemic reforms. Increased investment in teacher training, particularly

in the areas of communication and cultural sensitivity, is critical to equipping educators with the skills needed to build relationships with families. Schools should also allocate resources to develop communication infrastructure, ensuring that parents receive timely and accessible updates about their child's education. Finally, establishing clear policies and accountability mechanisms for parental engagement can create a consistent framework for fostering collaboration between schools and families.

3.3 Influence of Parents' Educational Backgrounds

Parents' educational attainment is a critical factor that influences their ability to engage in their children's education. In Brazil, over one-third of adults have not completed secondary education (OECD, 2021), and many parents lack the confidence or knowledge needed to support academic tasks effectively. This lack of education often results in parents feeling intimidated or unqualified to participate in school activities or communicate with teachers. For example, a parent who struggles with literacy may avoid attending school meetings or reviewing their child's homework, fearing judgment or misunderstanding.

These challenges are particularly pronounced in rural areas and among indigenous populations, where educational attainment rates are significantly lower than the national average. In these communities, cultural norms may also play a role in discouraging parental engagement. Traditional views often position teachers as sole authorities on education, while parents are expected to focus on providing material support, such as ensuring school attendance or buying supplies. This mindset limits opportunities for collaborative relationships between families and schools.

The implications of parents' educational backgrounds extend to their children's academic outcomes. A 2020 study conducted in Recife revealed that students whose parents had completed secondary education were 40% more likely to achieve grade-level proficiency in mathematics compared to those whose parents had not. These findings underscore the importance of parental educational attainment in shaping children's academic success and highlight the need for interventions that empower parents regardless of their schooling levels.

Schools can play a key role in bridging this gap by offering accessible and inclusive resources to parents. For instance, workshops on basic literacy, numeracy, or study skills can help parents build the confidence needed to support their children's learning. Providing materials in simple, non-technical language or using visuals can also make information more accessible to parents with limited education. Additionally, creating safe spaces where parents feel valued and respected can foster trust and encourage greater participation in their child's academic journey.

The barriers to parental engagement in Brazil's public schools are deeply interconnected, rooted in socio-economic disparities, institutional challenges, and educational inequities. Overcoming these obstacles requires a multi-pronged approach that addresses both systemic reforms and localized interventions. By recognizing and mitigating these barriers, schools can create an inclusive environment that empowers all families to play an active role in their children's education, ultimately contributing to better academic outcomes and greater educational equity.

4. Pathways to Academic Improvement

4.1 How Parental Engagement Fosters Better Attendance and Homework Completion

Parental engagement plays a pivotal role in improving students' attendance and ensuring consistent completion of homework, both of which are critical factors in academic success. When parents actively monitor their children's school activities and maintain regular communication with teachers, they create an environment of accountability and support that encourages students to take their education seriously. Studies in Brazil have shown that students whose parents are engaged in their education are significantly less likely to have unexcused absences compared to their peers. For example, a 2021 survey conducted in São Paulo found that parental engagement reduced absenteeism rates by 22% in participating schools, particularly among students from low-income families.

Parents who emphasize the importance of regular attendance send a clear message about the value of education. This consistent reinforcement helps students internalize the idea that attending school is a priority and a pathway to long-term success. Parents can also address barriers to attendance, such as transportation or health issues, by working collaboratively with schools to find solutions. For example, community programs in rural areas of Brazil, where transportation to schools can be a significant obstacle, have successfully engaged parents in organizing shared transportation systems, reducing absenteeism rates substantially.

Homework completion is another area where parental engagement has a direct impact. Parents who create structured routines, designate a quiet study space, and monitor homework progress provide their children with the tools and discipline necessary to succeed academically. This involvement not only improves homework completion rates but also enhances the quality of the work submitted. Research from the Instituto Ayrton Senna

revealed that students with consistent parental support for homework were 35% more likely to achieve grade-level proficiency in math and reading compared to those without such support. These findings highlight how parental involvement helps instill discipline and time management skills in students, laying a strong foundation for their academic success.

4.2 Emotional and Motivational Benefits for Students

Parental engagement also offers profound emotional and motivational benefits that contribute to improved academic performance. When parents show genuine interest in their children's education, they provide a sense of emotional security and validation that boosts students' confidence and self-esteem. This emotional support is particularly important for students facing challenges such as bullying, learning difficulties, or socio-economic hardships. Knowing that their parents are invested in their success fosters a sense of belonging and resilience, which can help students overcome obstacles and stay focused on their goals.

A study conducted by Fundação Itaú Social in 2019 found that students with actively engaged parents reported higher levels of self-confidence and academic motivation compared to their peers. The study also noted that these students were more likely to participate in classroom discussions and extracurricular activities, indicating a stronger connection to their school environment. By consistently encouraging their children and celebrating their achievements, parents help build a positive feedback loop that reinforces the value of effort and persistence.

Parental engagement also creates opportunities for students to share their concerns and seek guidance in a safe and supportive environment. This open line of communication allows parents to address challenges early, whether it involves academic struggles or personal issues. For example, students who feel overwhelmed by their workload are more likely to seek help from engaged parents, who can then work with teachers to create manageable study plans. This proactive approach helps students feel supported and reduces the likelihood of disengagement or burnout.

4.3 Building Stronger School-Family Partnerships

Parental engagement strengthens the bond between schools and families, fostering a collaborative environment that benefits both students and educators. When parents and schools work together, they create a unified support system that reinforces shared goals and expectations. This partnership allows for better communication, more effective problem-solving, and a greater sense of community ownership in the educational process.

One of the key ways parental engagement builds stronger school-family partnerships is by increasing trust and mutual understanding. Schools that actively involve parents in decision-making processes, such as participating in parent councils or committees, give families a voice in shaping policies and programs. For example, a community initiative in Ceará involved parents in developing school governance strategies, resulting in improved attendance rates and higher test scores. Such initiatives demonstrate how empowering parents fosters a sense of responsibility and commitment to the school's success.

Teachers also benefit from stronger school-family partnerships, as engaged parents provide valuable insights into their children's needs, strengths, and challenges. This collaboration enables educators to tailor their teaching approaches and interventions more effectively. For instance, a teacher working with an engaged parent might design personalized strategies to support a student struggling with reading comprehension, ensuring that progress is tracked both at school and at home.

In addition to academic benefits, school-family partnerships help create a more inclusive and supportive school culture. Engaged parents often serve as role models for other families, inspiring broader participation and fostering a sense of community among diverse groups. Schools that prioritize these partnerships report higher levels of parental involvement in activities such as volunteer programs, school events, and workshops. This collective engagement not only enhances students' experiences but also strengthens the school's role as a hub for community development.

By fostering better attendance and homework completion, providing emotional and motivational support, and building stronger school-family partnerships, parental engagement emerges as a cornerstone of academic improvement. Its multifaceted impact underscores the importance of creating inclusive strategies that empower parents to actively participate in their children's education, thereby enhancing both individual outcomes and the broader school community.

5. Evidence from Brazil

5.1 Studies Linking Parental Involvement to Academic Performance

Research in Brazil consistently highlights the significant role of parental involvement in improving students' academic performance. Studies conducted across various regions demonstrate that when parents actively participate in their children's education, there are measurable gains in attendance, homework completion, test scores, and overall academic outcomes.

A landmark study by Fundação Itaú Social in 2019 examined the relationship between parental engagement and academic achievement in São Paulo's public schools. The findings revealed that students whose parents regularly attended school meetings, communicated with teachers, and monitored homework were 35% more likely to achieve grade-level proficiency in mathematics and literacy compared to their peers whose parents were less involved. This study also highlighted the correlation between parental engagement and non-academic benefits, such as improved behavior and higher levels of self-esteem among students.

Another study by the Instituto Ayrton Senna focused on schools in Brazil's northeastern region, where socio-economic challenges are particularly acute. The research demonstrated that schools implementing parental engagement initiatives saw a 20% improvement in student attendance and a 15% increase in standardized test scores over three years. The study emphasized that even small-scale interventions, such as hosting parent workshops or facilitating better communication between schools and families, had a substantial impact on student outcomes.

National data from INEP (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais) also support these findings. Their 2021 report on educational performance in Brazil highlighted that schools with higher levels of parental involvement consistently outperformed others on the Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica (IDEB), Brazil's national educational performance index. This pattern was observed across various socio-economic contexts, reinforcing the idea that parental engagement is a critical factor in achieving academic success.

5.2 Regional Examples Showcasing Successful Parental Engagement Strategies

Several regional initiatives in Brazil provide compelling examples of how targeted strategies can successfully foster parental engagement and improve academic outcomes. These examples illustrate the adaptability and effectiveness of such approaches across diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts.

One notable example is the “Escola da Família” program in São Paulo. This initiative transforms public schools into community hubs on weekends, offering workshops, sports activities, and cultural events that encourage parents to visit schools with their children. By creating a welcoming and inclusive environment, the program strengthens the relationship between families and schools. A 2020 evaluation of the program found that participating schools experienced a 25% increase in parental attendance at school meetings and a 30% improvement in student retention rates. Parents reported feeling more connected to their child's education and more confident in supporting their academic journey.

In Ceará, a state known for its progressive educational reforms, the “Parceria com a Comunidade” initiative has been particularly impactful. This program trains teachers to engage with parents in low-income communities through home visits, workshops, and neighborhood events. By addressing the specific needs and challenges of these families, the program fosters trust and collaboration between parents and schools. Schools participating in this initiative have reported a 20% increase in student attendance and a notable improvement in IDEB scores, demonstrating the program's success in bridging gaps between schools and families.

Another example comes from Pernambuco, where the “Projeto Comunidade Presente” focuses on building parent-teacher partnerships in urban schools. This program emphasizes collaborative goal-setting, where parents and teachers work together to develop personalized learning plans for students. The initiative has been particularly effective in improving outcomes for at-risk students, reducing dropout rates by 15% in participating schools over a two-year period.

In rural areas, such as the Amazon region, innovative strategies have emerged to overcome geographical and logistical barriers to parental engagement. For instance, mobile education units equipped with internet access and educational materials visit remote villages, allowing parents to engage with teachers and participate in workshops. These efforts have led to improved literacy rates and stronger community involvement in education, showcasing the potential for creative solutions in challenging environments.

The evidence from Brazil demonstrates that parental engagement is not only a key driver of academic success but also a powerful tool for addressing broader challenges within the education system. By analyzing these studies and regional examples, it becomes clear that fostering parental involvement requires targeted strategies that account for local needs and contexts. The success of these initiatives highlights the importance of collaboration, inclusivity, and innovation in creating meaningful partnerships between schools and families.

6. Effective Programs

6.1 Notable Brazilian Initiatives Promoting Parental Participation

Several initiatives across Brazil have successfully demonstrated the value of promoting parental participation in education. These programs focus on building stronger relationships between schools and families, leveraging community resources, and addressing barriers that hinder parental engagement. One of the most prominent examples is the *Escola da Família* program in São Paulo. Launched in 2003, this initiative transforms public

schools into community centers on weekends, offering activities such as sports, cultural events, and workshops for parents and students. The program creates a welcoming environment where families feel comfortable engaging with educators and participating in school life. A 2021 study revealed that schools participating in *Escola da Família* saw a 30% increase in parental attendance at school meetings and a significant improvement in student retention rates.

Another noteworthy initiative is the *Projeto Comunidade Presente* in Pernambuco. This program emphasizes collaboration between parents and teachers to set academic and behavioral goals for students. Through regular home visits and community-based events, educators build trust and establish open lines of communication with families. The program has been particularly effective in reducing dropout rates among at-risk students, with participating schools reporting a 15% decrease in dropout rates over two years.

In the northeastern state of Ceará, the *Parceria com a Comunidade* program trains educators to work closely with parents in low-income communities. By addressing the unique challenges faced by these families, such as economic hardship or lack of transportation, the program fosters a sense of shared responsibility for students' success. Schools involved in this initiative have reported higher levels of parental engagement and significant gains in student performance on the Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica (IDEB).

6.2 Community-Focused and School-Led Approaches

Effective parental engagement programs often combine community-focused strategies with school-led initiatives, recognizing the importance of addressing local needs while maintaining a clear educational focus. Community-focused approaches prioritize the active involvement of local organizations, religious institutions, and businesses to create a supportive network around schools. For example, in rural Amazonas, mobile education units equipped with internet access and educational resources bring schools to remote communities, enabling parents to participate in workshops and engage with teachers. This approach has successfully bridged the gap for families in isolated areas, improving literacy rates and fostering stronger ties between schools and communities.

School-led initiatives focus on empowering educators and administrators to actively involve parents in decision-making processes and academic activities. The *Gestão Democrática* program in Brasília encourages parents to join school councils and participate in governance, ensuring their voices are heard in shaping school policies. By involving parents in key decisions, schools create a sense of ownership and accountability that motivates families to stay engaged. Additionally, schools implementing regular parent-teacher conferences, such as those supported by the *Educar Mais* platform, have reported better communication and higher satisfaction levels among families.

Blending these approaches creates a holistic model where community resources complement school-driven strategies. For instance, collaborative workshops where parents and teachers co-develop learning plans for students allow both parties to align their efforts, ensuring consistency in expectations and support. Schools that implement such blended models report improved attendance, higher test scores, and stronger relationships between families and educators.

6.3 Lessons from Scalable Intervention Programs

Scalable intervention programs in Brazil offer valuable lessons for designing and implementing parental engagement strategies in diverse contexts. One key lesson is the importance of tailoring programs to meet the specific needs of local communities. Successful initiatives like *Parceria com a Comunidade* and *Escola da Família* have demonstrated that programs must account for socio-economic and cultural factors to be effective. For instance, by providing flexible scheduling for parent-teacher meetings and offering activities that align with local interests, these programs reduce barriers to participation and encourage greater involvement.

Another lesson is the critical role of teacher training in fostering parental engagement. Programs that equip educators with the skills to build relationships with families, such as *Projeto Comunidade Presente*, have shown significant success. Teachers trained in communication, cultural sensitivity, and collaborative problem-solving are better prepared to engage with parents, particularly those from marginalized or disadvantaged backgrounds.

The use of technology has also emerged as a key factor in scalability. Platforms like *Educar Mais* enable schools to communicate with parents more effectively, providing real-time updates on student performance and facilitating virtual meetings. These tools have proven particularly valuable during the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring that parents remain connected to schools despite physical distancing measures. Expanding access to such technology, especially in underserved areas, is critical for scaling parental engagement programs across Brazil.

Finally, partnerships between schools, local governments, and community organizations are essential for sustaining and expanding successful initiatives. Programs that leverage these partnerships, such as those in Ceará

and Pernambuco, benefit from shared resources, expertise, and funding, allowing them to reach more families and achieve broader impact.

By examining these programs, it becomes clear that parental engagement is most effective when it integrates community-focused strategies, school-led initiatives, and scalable practices tailored to local contexts. These lessons provide a roadmap for expanding successful interventions, ensuring that schools across Brazil can empower parents to play an active and impactful role in their children's education.

7. Strategies and Recommendations

To enhance parental engagement in Brazilian public schools, especially in underprivileged areas, a multi-faceted approach is essential. Effective strategies must address the socio-economic, institutional, and cultural barriers that prevent families from fully participating in their children's education. Policymakers, educators, and communities all have a role to play in creating an environment that fosters collaboration between schools and families, ultimately benefiting students and strengthening the education system.

A key policy recommendation is to prioritize parental engagement as a fundamental component of educational reform. Governments at the federal, state, and municipal levels should allocate resources specifically for initiatives that support family involvement in schools. For example, funding could be directed toward programs that provide transportation for parents in rural areas, ensuring they can attend school meetings and events. Additionally, implementing policies that mandate flexible scheduling for parent-teacher interactions would accommodate working parents, particularly those with non-traditional or demanding work hours. Community-based programs, such as weekend workshops or neighborhood learning hubs, could also provide opportunities for parents to engage with schools outside of standard hours.

Teachers play a critical role in bridging the gap between schools and families, and targeted professional development can equip them with the tools needed to foster inclusivity and communication. Training programs should focus on building educators' cultural sensitivity, communication skills, and ability to engage with parents from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Teachers can learn strategies to make parents feel valued and respected, such as personalized communication, regular updates on student progress, and collaborative problem-solving. Creating a welcoming and inclusive school environment is equally important. Schools should organize activities that celebrate cultural diversity and invite parents to share their experiences and perspectives, reinforcing their role as vital contributors to the educational community.

Technology offers significant potential for bridging the school-family divide, particularly in underprivileged areas where traditional communication methods may be ineffective. Mobile apps and online platforms, such as *Educar Mais*, can enable real-time updates on student attendance, grades, and assignments, allowing parents to stay informed and engaged. Virtual parent-teacher conferences and digital workshops can also overcome logistical challenges, such as transportation and time constraints. However, to ensure equity, it is essential to expand access to these technologies by providing affordable internet access and devices to low-income families. Partnerships between schools, local governments, and private sector organizations can help fund and implement these initiatives, reducing the digital divide and ensuring all families have the tools needed to participate in their children's education.

These strategies, when combined, can create a holistic framework for fostering parental engagement in Brazil's public schools. By addressing barriers at multiple levels, from policy and teacher training to technological innovation, schools can empower families to play an active role in their children's learning. This collaboration not only enhances academic outcomes but also strengthens the broader educational ecosystem, paving the way for a more equitable and effective system for all.

8. Long-Term Implications

Fostering stronger ties between families and schools has the potential to create lasting impacts that extend far beyond the immediate benefits of improved academic performance. By promoting parental engagement as a cornerstone of the educational experience, Brazil can move closer to achieving greater educational equity. Strong family-school relationships help level the playing field for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, as engaged parents can bridge the gaps left by underfunded schools or limited teacher resources. When parents actively participate in their children's education, they provide additional layers of support that mitigate the effects of socio-economic disparities, allowing all students an equal opportunity to succeed. This not only enhances individual outcomes but also contributes to reducing systemic inequalities in Brazil's public education system.

The broader societal benefits of parental engagement are equally significant. Improved parental involvement has been consistently linked to reduced dropout rates, particularly among at-risk students. In Brazil, where the secondary school dropout rate remains high, strengthening family-school partnerships can provide students with the motivation and resources needed to stay in school. Engaged parents help instill a sense of accountability and purpose in their children, reinforcing the value of education as a pathway to a better future. Over time, higher

retention and graduation rates contribute to a more educated workforce, fostering economic growth and reducing poverty levels. Additionally, students who experience supportive family-school dynamics are more likely to develop strong interpersonal skills, resilience, and civic engagement, which benefit society as a whole.

Parental engagement also opens new avenues for research and policy development. While existing studies underscore its importance, more in-depth research is needed to explore how engagement strategies can be tailored to diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts across Brazil. For example, understanding the unique challenges faced by rural families, indigenous communities, or urban peripheries can inform more effective and inclusive interventions. Similarly, longitudinal studies could examine the long-term impacts of parental involvement on students' academic trajectories, career outcomes, and overall well-being. Policymakers can use these insights to design evidence-based programs that address both immediate and structural barriers to engagement.

Looking ahead, there is also an opportunity to develop innovative policies that integrate technology and community-driven approaches to parental engagement. Expanding access to digital tools, creating incentives for schools to prioritize family involvement, and fostering public-private partnerships to fund engagement initiatives are all areas ripe for exploration. By embedding parental engagement into broader educational reforms, Brazil can create a sustainable model that not only benefits current students but also sets the foundation for generational change.

Ultimately, the long-term implications of strengthening family-school ties extend far beyond academic metrics. They represent a pathway toward a more equitable, cohesive, and prosperous society, where education serves as a bridge to opportunity for all. By investing in parental engagement now, Brazil can build a future where every student has the support and resources needed to thrive, ensuring that education fulfills its role as a powerful driver of social and economic transformation.

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