

# Cooperation Between Parents and Schools – The Role of Family Background

Nele McElvany

Max Planck Institute for Human Development  
Center for Educational Research

# Introduction I

- Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin, Germany
- Center for Educational Research (Director: Prof. Dr. Jürgen Baumert)
  - Researchers from various disciplines
  - Institutionalized learning environments – development of students
  - Own research interests:
    - Development of reading comprehension
    - Role of family background
    - Teacher competencies
    - Transition from elementary to secondary school

# Introduction II

- Two main contexts of socialization:  
families and schools  
(e.g., Hess & Holloway, 1984)
- Cooperation: Reasons, goals, links, influences
- Focus: Relation between social features of families and their involvement in the children's education

# Outline of the Presentation

1. Theoretical Background / Research Results
2. Empirical Data
  - Research Questions: Family Background
  - Methods
  - Results
  - Summary
3. Concluding/Overall Comments

# 1. Theoretical Background

# Reasons for Family Involvement

- Legal framework
- Sociomoralistic thoughts (Krumm, 2001)
- Relationship between family background and academic achievement / participation in the education system (Sirin, 2005)
- Teachers' need for information
- Schools requiring support from parents
- Indications of increased achievement and improved attitudes towards learning (Caplan, Hall, Lubin, & Fleming, 1997; Henderson & Mapp, 2002)
- ...

# Some Evidence

When parents are involved...

- Higher grades/test scores, higher-level programs
- Grade promotion, passing classes, credits
- Regular school attendance
- Better social skills, improved behavior and adaptation to school
- Graduation, post-secondary education

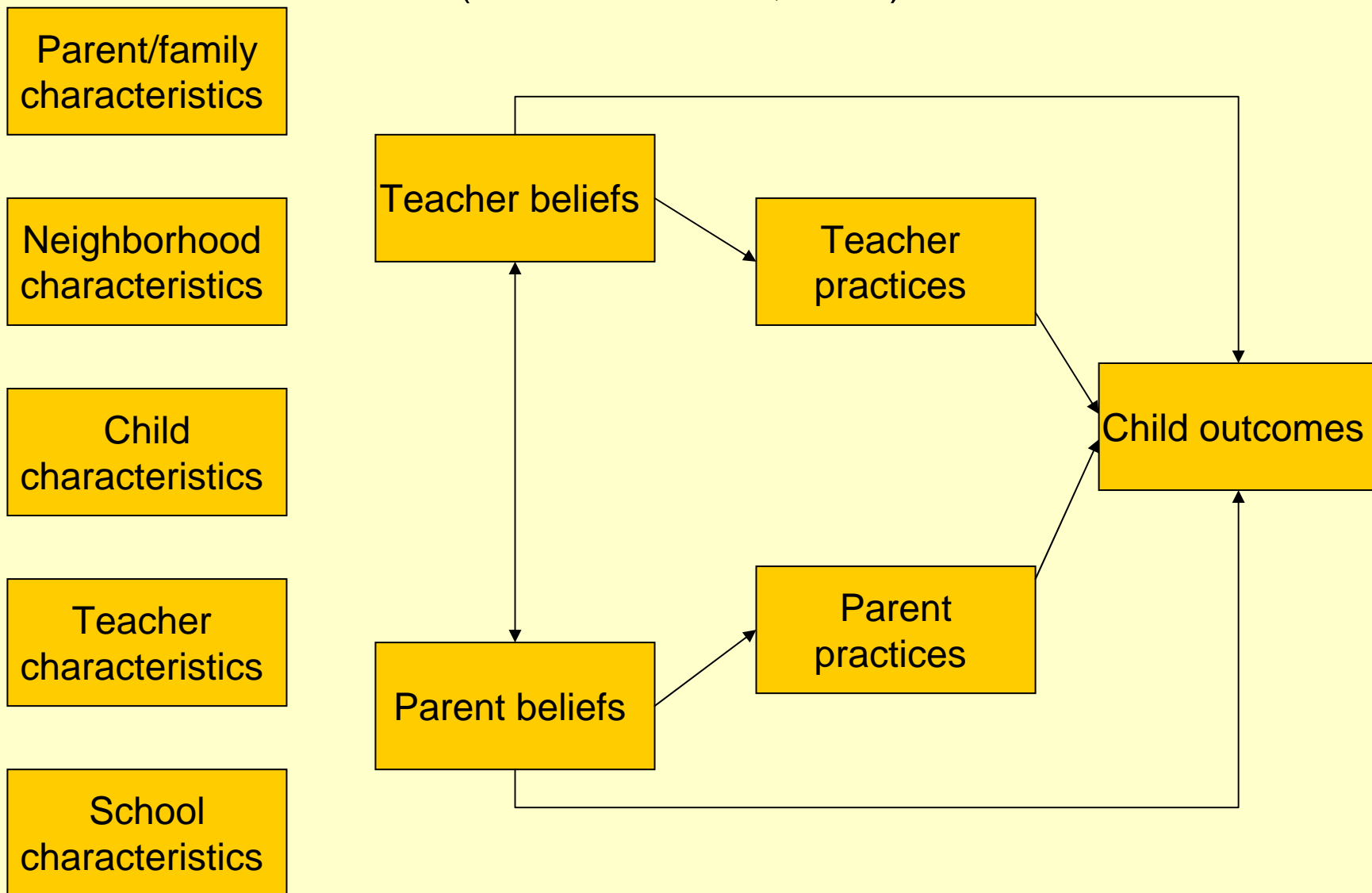
(Review of recent research; Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2002)

BUT: e.g., Hill et al. (2004)

**BUT: methodological constraints** (mostly correlational, no clear interpretation of cause and effect possible)

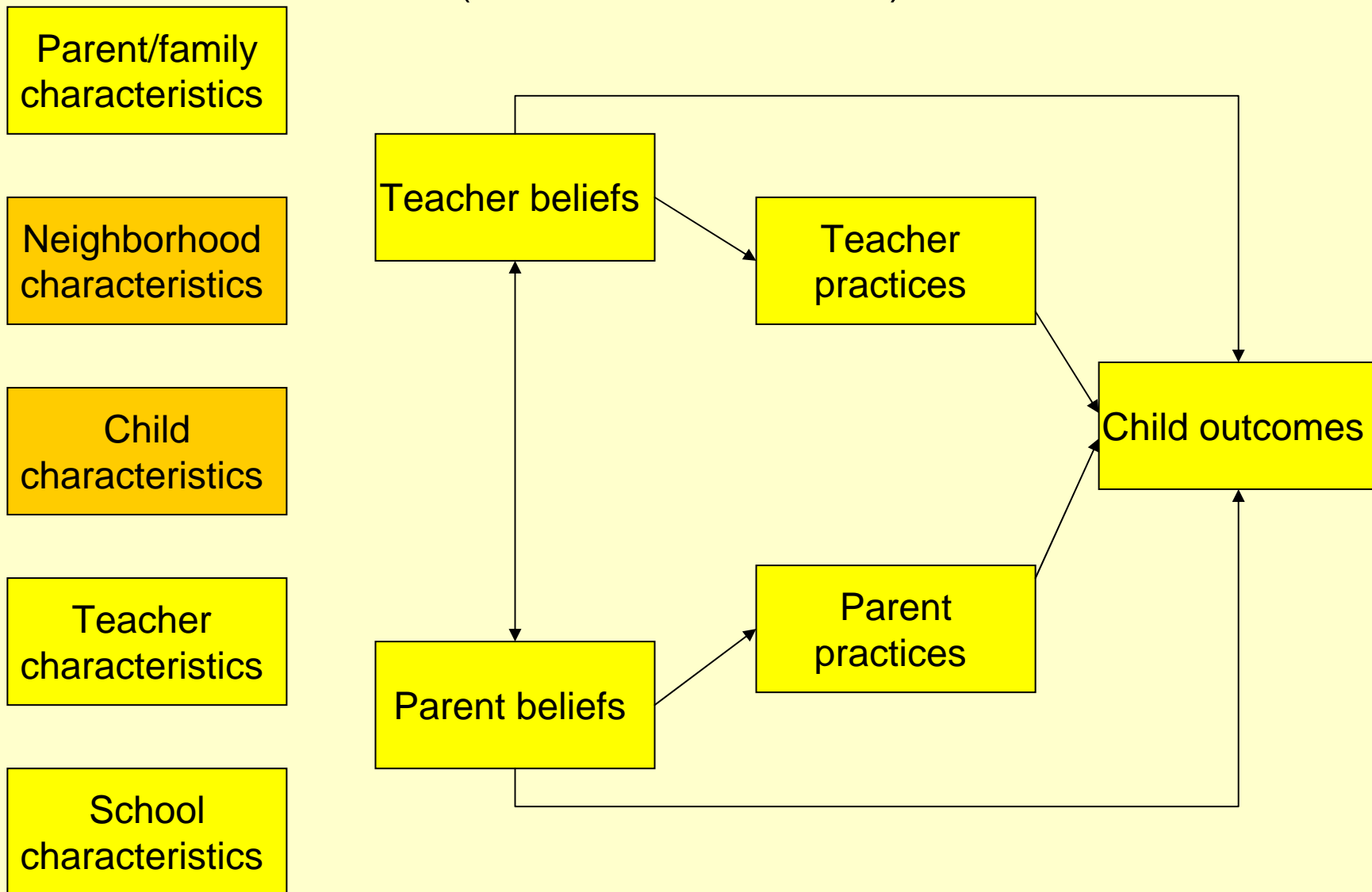
# Model of the Influences on and Consequences of Parental Involvement in Schools

(Eccles & Harold, 1995)



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# Multiple Goals on the Student Side

**Academic** improvement  
and educated  
achievement-related  
choices

**Personal** development

- emotional and psychological stability
- social ability
- motivation

Education  
favouring goals,  
attitudes and  
**values**

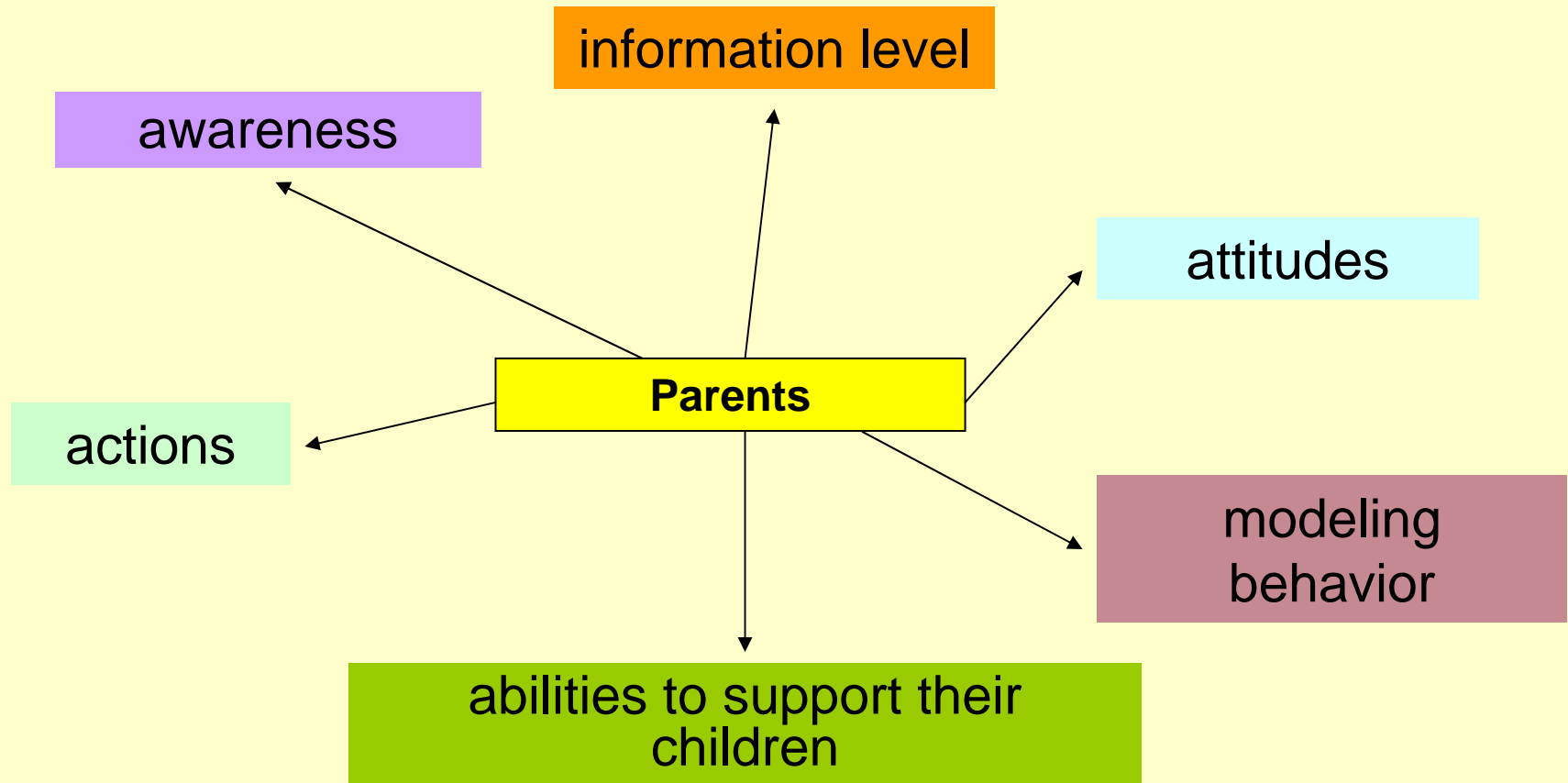
Intra-**family** relations

**Behaviour**,  
conduct,  
reduction of  
truancy

School **readiness**

Positive self-  
perceptions and  
efficacy **beliefs**

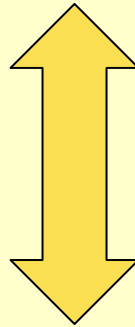
# Other (Intermediate) Goals



And the same for teachers...

# Two-Way Relationship

Family-school connection



School-family connection

# Possible School-Family Links

- Guiding home learning
- Providing information; creating awareness
- Teacher-parent conferences
- Requests for help
- Providing meaningful ways to be involved
- Giving individual feedback
- Supporting families in preparing children for school
- ...

# Possible Family-School Links

- Homework/learning difficulties; general monitoring and involvement
- Direct instruction; participation in learning programs
- Modeling positive attitudes and values

- Parents involved in school activities; volunteering
- Attending parent-teacher conferences
- Requesting information
- Participating in school governance
- Providing financial support for schools
- ...

# Some Evidence

- Outreach practices to parents, such as meeting face to face, sending learning materials home, and keeping parents informed of student progress → gains in reading and math achievement (Westat and Policy Studies Associates, 2001)
- Workshops for parents on how to support their children's learning at home → higher reading and math scores (Shaver & Walls, 1998)
- Schools with higher-rated partnership programs → greater gains on state tests (Epstein & Sanders, 2000)
- 5 studies with experimental randomized pre-post test design:

## Baker, Piotrkowski, & Brooks-Gunn (1998): HIPPY

- Long-term experimental study
  - Outcomes for 182 HIPPY program and control-group children in New York
  - Two cohorts, 2+1 years, till end of first grade
  - Books, activity package, biweekly visit
- Results mixed:
- Cohort I: positive gains in the HIPPY children's school performance both at the end of the program and in first grade, compared with the control group
  - Cohort II: no significant differences between the HIPPY and control children

*The Effects of the Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) on Children's School Performance at the End of the Program and One Year Later. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 13(4), 571–588.*

## Kagitcibasi, Sunar, & Bekman (2001): Preschool

- Long-term effects on 280 children of four different preschool settings in Istanbul, Turkey
  - Random:
    - Childcare program with no education
    - Educational nursery school
    - Home care where mothers received training and support (HIPPI)
    - Home care provided by mothers without support
- Home-based program longer-lasting and greater effects on achievement seven years later

*Long-Term Effects of Early Intervention: Turkish Low-Income Mothers and Children Applied Developmental Psychology, 22, 333–361.*

# Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., and Center for Children and Families at Teachers College, Columbia University (2001)

- Experimental study of Early Head Start (federal program, low-income families with infants and toddlers)
- 17 sites, about 3,000 children and families
- At age 2, children in the program scored higher on cognitive development scales, used more words, and spoke in more complex sentences than control-group children
- Positive effects on home environments

*Building Their Futures: How Early Head Start Programs Are Enhancing the Lives of Infants and Toddlers in Low-Income Families. Washington, DC: Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Department of Health and Human Services.*

## Balli, Demo, & Wedman (1998): Homework

- Mathematics homework intervention designed to increase family involvement in homework
- Three mathematics classes taught by same teacher, students similar in achievement level
- Promotion to involve family member in the homework
  - Families significantly more involved in homework than families who did not receive prompts
  - No significant differences in posttest achievement

*Family Involvement with Children's Homework: An Intervention in the Middle Grades. Family Relations, 47(2), 149–157.*

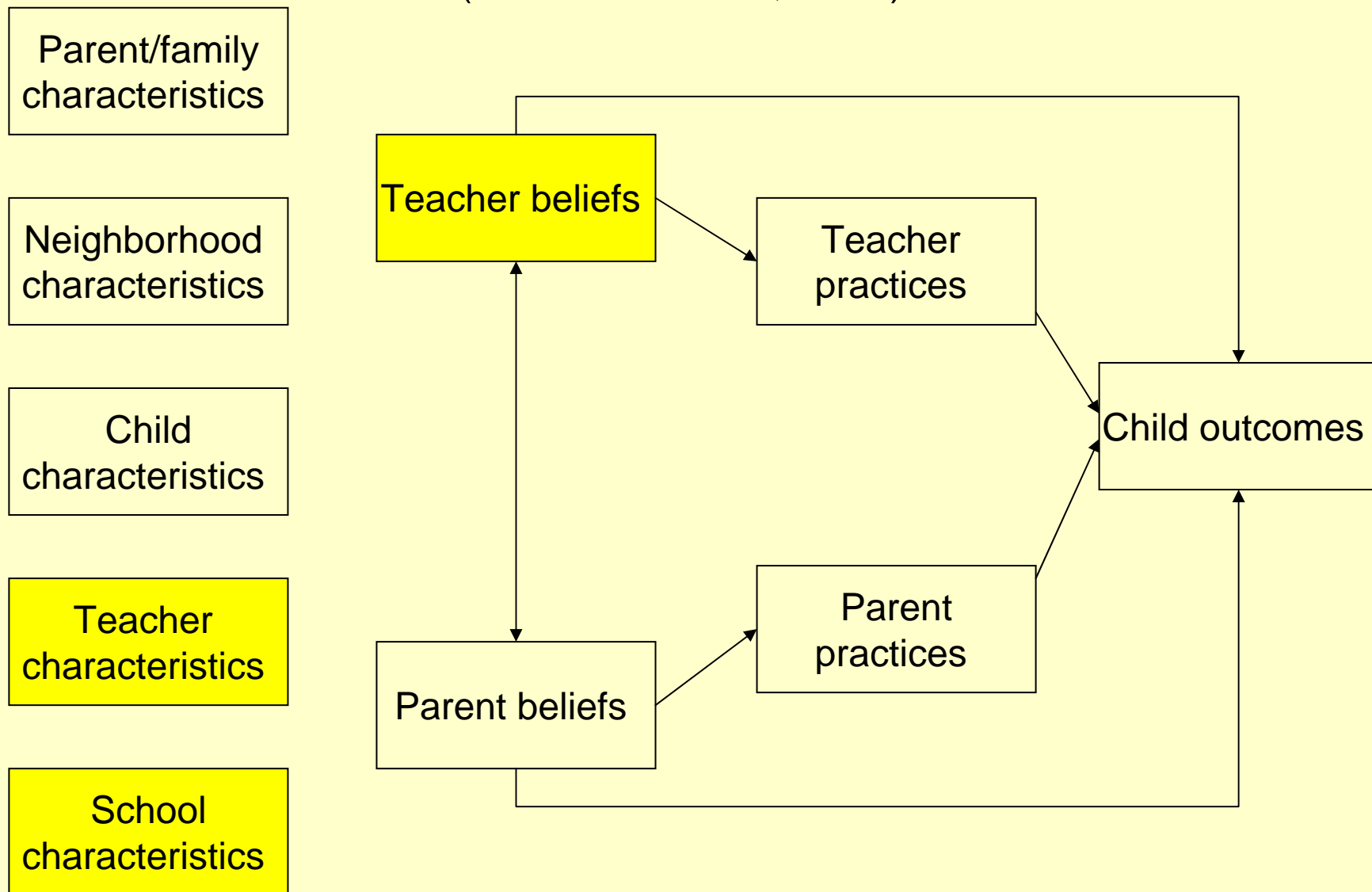
## Starkey & Klein (2000)

- Two experimental studies of a four-month program
- 30 families to develop math skills in Head Start (preK) children
- 30 families in two control groups
- San Francisco area, 2 sites: African-American and Latino
- Staff gave classes for mothers and children and loaned math activity kits for use at home
- Parents were willing and able to work with their children on math when given training and materials
- Program children developed greater math knowledge and skills than the control-group children

*Fostering Parental Support for Children's Mathematical Development: An Intervention with Head Start Families. Early Education and Development, 11(5), 659–680.*

# Model of the Influences on and Consequences of Parental Involvement in Schools

(Eccles & Harold, 1995)



# Influences on the School Side I

## Teacher beliefs:

### General

- Proper role of parents
- General self-efficacies
- Stereotypes
- Values
- Knowledge of techniques

### Child-specific

- Efficacy
- Goals
- Affective relationship

## Teacher characteristics:

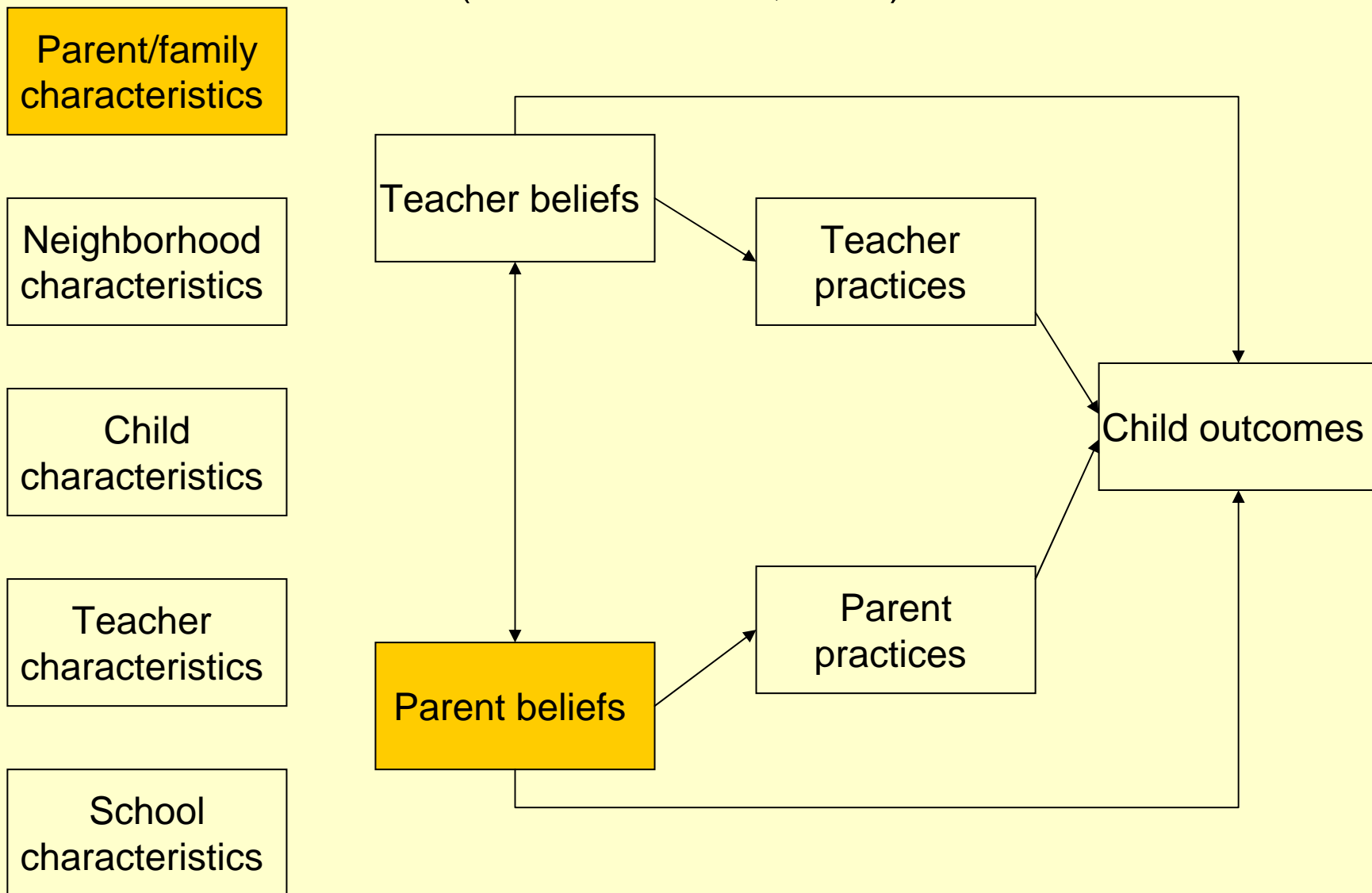
Age, sex, ethnicity, social class  
Years of teaching

# Influences on the School Side II

- **Type** (private > public)
- **Level** (elementary > secondary)
- **Resources**
- **Size** (smaller > larger)
- **Climate**
- **Support for parent involvement**

# Model of the Influences on and Consequences of Parental Involvement in Schools

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# Influences on the Parents' Side I

## Parent/Family characteristics:

- Education
- Income, financial resources
- Sex, age, ethnicity
- Number of children
- Marital status
- Employment status
- Psychological resources

# Influences on the Parents' Side II

## Parental beliefs:

### General

- Proper role of parents
- Personal efficacies
- Values
- Knowledge of techniques
- View of schools' receptivity

### Child-specific

- Achievement expectations
- Perception of child's abilities and interests
- Value of various skills
- Socialization goals
- Affective relationship
- Efficacy

## 2. Empirical Data

# Research Topic

- Relationship between family background and parental involvement in school-related **matters** (until now: mostly US American data)
- Focus: the **presence** of family constructs that are related to achievement and learning, and the **participation** of families in training programs (more detailed empirical evidence beyond homework support)

# Research Questions

- 1. Frequency and intercorrelation** of various aspects of family-school involvement?
- 2. Relation** between routine family-school involvement and families' socioeconomic and educational background?
- 3. Selective participation** in parent-child home training programs based on family background?

# Methods

## Berlin Longitudinal Reading Study (LESEN 3-6)

Grade	Time	Parents (students)
3 (end)	June 2003	588 (618)
4 (beginning)	August 2003	392 (618)
6 (end)	May 2006	393 (588)

- Student and parent questionnaires
- Sub-sample: parent-child reading program (43 sessions; 30 minutes each)

# Family Involvement in School-Related Matters

- (1) Direct parental involvement in the school
- (2) Parental appreciation of the child's school
- (3) Parents' sense of their own responsibility regarding their child's education
- (4) Parents' self-concept of their own ability to support their children in various school subjects
- (5) Regular activities at home supporting educational development
- (6) Reading-related support at home during summer break
- (7) Intellectual/Education-related conversations with children during summer break

# Measures

Construct	Example item(s)	Number of items	Measured in grade... <sup>1</sup>
Direct involvement	How often do you personally help out at your child's school if support is requested? / How often do you attend parent-teacher conferences?	5	3 (P)
Appreciation of the child's school	My child's school is a good place for my child. / The teachers don't support my child enough.	6 (4+, 2-)	3 (P)
Sense of own responsibility	I should help my child to learn to read at home by providing additional reading material such as books, magazines etc. / Reading at home is part of learning to read at school.	4	3 (P)
Self-concept of ability	parents' perceived ability to help their child with the subjects of German, mathematics and science	3	6 (P)
Regular activities	My parents take me to the library.	7	3 (S)
Reading-related support	Did you read together with your child during the summer break?	3	4 (P)
Education-related conversations	asking parents if they discussed, for example, books or "scientific, technical topics" with the child	6	4 (P)

<sup>1</sup> P = parent questionnaire; S = student questionnaire

# Family Background

- **Education:** Length of parental highest educational (CASMIN)  
→ School and professional education  
(Blossfeld, 1993; König, Lüttinger, & Müller, 1988)
- **Socioeconomic:** Highest socioeconomic background (HISEI)  
→ Parents' profession  
(ISCO-88; ILO, 1990 / ISEI; Ganzeboom et al., 1992)

# Analyses/Interpretation

- **Means** of items/scale (M) → **Level**
- Standard deviation (SD) → Dispersion
- **Correlation** (r) → **Relation**

Correlation:

$r = .10 - 29 \rightarrow$  small

$r = .30 - 49 \rightarrow$  medium

$r > .50 \rightarrow$  large

Significance → Probability of error (p)

# Results: Frequency

<i>Construct of parental involvement</i>		Theoretical range	<i>N</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>
1	Parental involvement in the school	1-5	550	<u>3.79</u> (.60)
2	Parental appreciation of child's school	1-4	543	3.26 (.53)
3	Parents' sense of own responsibility	1-4	547	<u>3.60</u> (.46)
4	Parents' self-concept of their own ability to support their child	1-4	381	3.22 (.60)
5	Regular activities at home supporting educational development	1-5	606	<u>2.93</u> (.70)
6	Reading related support at home during summer break	1-5	375	<u>2.30</u> (1.14)
7	Intellectual conversations with child during summer break	1-5	383	2.87 (.99)

# Results: Intercorrelations

<i>Construct of parental involvement</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Parental involvement in the school	-						
2 Parental appreciation of child's school	<b>.15***</b>	-					
3 Parents' sense of own responsibility	<b>.21***</b>	<b>.13**</b>	-				
4 Parents' self-concept of their own ability to support their child	.06	-.06	.04	-			
5 Regular activities at home supporting educational development	<b>.17***</b>	.01	.06	-.04	-		
6 Reading related support at home during summer break	<b>.21***</b>	-.10	<b>.17**</b>	.04	<b>.24***</b>	-	
7 Intellectual conversations with child during summer break	<b>.18***</b>	-.11	<b>.22***</b>	.12	<b>.26**</b>	<b>.56***</b>	-

Note: \*:  $p < .05$ ; \*\*:  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*:  $p < .001$ .

# Correlations with Family Background

<i>Construct of parental involvement</i>		<i>N</i>	Socioeconomic background	Educational background
1	Parental involvement in the school	503/511	.17***	.15***
2	Parental appreciation of child's school	497/506	-.12**	-.07
3	Parents' sense of own responsibility	501/509	.15**	.23***
4	Parents' self-concept of their own ability to support their child	265/369	.17**	.28***
5	Regular activities at home supporting educational development	299/383	.08	.24***
6	Reading related support at home during summer break	326/318	.20***	.26**
7	Intellectual conversations with child during summer break	331/322	.25***	.27**

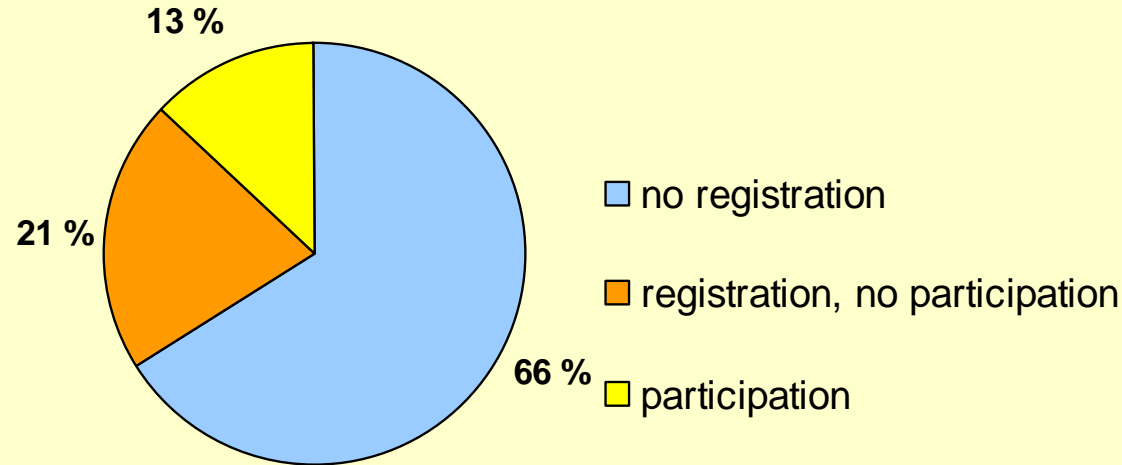
Note: The first number given in column N refers to the correlation with socioeconomic background and the second number to educational background. \*:  $p < .05$ ; \*\*:  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*:  $p < .001$ .

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# Participation in Training Program



Group that participated in the training program relative to control group:

**higher socioeconomic status**

( $t(390) = 4.83, p < .001$ )

and

**higher education**

( $t(413) = 5.77, p < .001$ )

# Summary

- Parental involvement in school matters: intermediate and varies across families
- Significant intercorrelations
- Relationship between parental involvement and family background significant, but rather low
- Selective participation in training

## **Critical points:**

e.g., binary correlations rather than complex model

Self-report data, selective participation?

### 3. Concluding/General Comments

# Concluding/General Comments I

## **Families:**

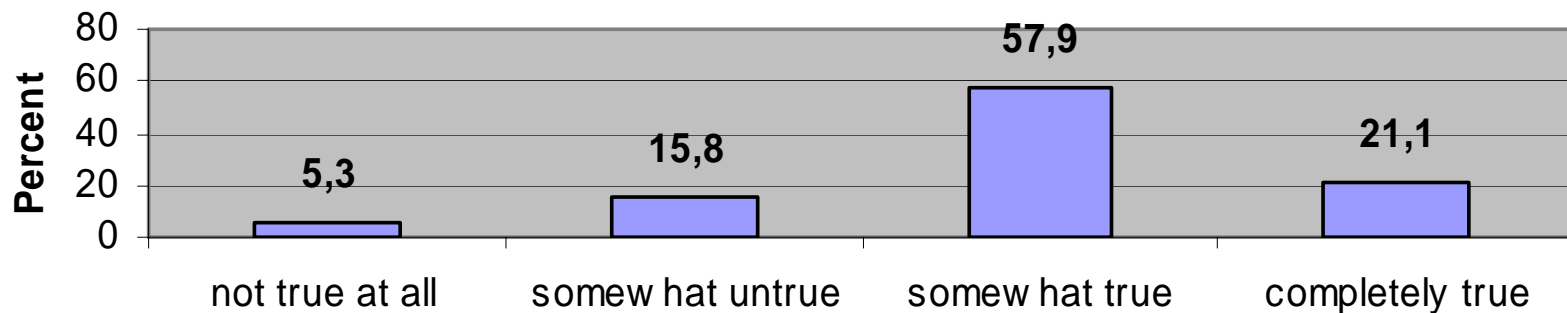
- Diverse family background (SES, education, cultural...)  
→ efforts must be target-group specific
- Work against downward trend with grade level
- Extend efforts beyond elementary school
- Involvement of fathers
- Awareness that parental activities seem to vary depending on children's gender (see Eccles & Harold, 1995)
- Extend efforts beyond encouraging home support to conducting at-school activities (e.g., information/communication)

# Concluding/General Comments II

## Teachers:

- Awareness
- Attitudes
- Knowledge and tools
- Supportive and cooperative school environment
- Incorporating family involvement within preservice teacher and administrator training

**I know how I can encourage the development of reading literacy  
in students' homes.**



**Answers (N = 20 teachers; 6th grade)**

# Concluding/General Comments III

## Research:

- Studying the resulting effects of family-school involvement
- Identifying the most effective approaches with respect to various goals
- Learning under which conditions (child, parent, teacher, school, community, legal system) families are effectively involved

# Selected Literature

## Overview

Henderson, A.T., & Mapp, K.L. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Westat and Policy Studies Associates. (2001). *The longitudinal evaluation of school change and performance in Title I schools*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Deputy Secretary, Planning and Evaluation Service.

## Online Resources

Isenhour, M.G. (2004). *Parent involvement: An annotated bibliography of online resources*. <http://www.inpathways.net/involvement.pdf>

## Parent-child reading program

McElvany, N., & Artelt, C. (2008). Systematic reading training in the family: Development, implementation, and initial evaluation of the Berlin Parent Child Reading Program. *Learning and Instruction*.

**Thank you  
for your attention!**

Contact:

Nele McElvany

[mcelvany@mpib-berlin.mpg.de](mailto:mcelvany@mpib-berlin.mpg.de)



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