



## Achieving Academic Success for Your Student Through Family School Partnerships: A TAPP Research Brief

Samantha R. Angell, Henry P. Bass, Rachel E. Meisinger, Micheale J. Marcus, & Susan M. Sheridan



Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools

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# What is TAPP?

## Bridging the Gap between Home and School

Parents and teachers have unique knowledge, information, experiences, and perspectives about their children and students. Unfortunately, this information is not always shared effectively between homes and schools. Two-way sharing between teachers and parents is important for all children, but *essential* for students whose learning and achievement are at risk due to challenges with behavior, social-emotional functioning, or learning skills. Teachers and Parents as Partners, or TAPP (previously known as Conjoint Behavioral Consultation; CBC), creates a bridge between home and school to promote successful outcomes for students with academic and behavioral concerns. Through TAPP, parents and teachers (led by a consultant) come together, engage in problem-solving strategies, and create a plan of action that addresses the needs of students at home and school, thereby setting them on a positive course.

## What it Looks Like

The TAPP consultant, a teacher, and parent(s) meet three to four times over approximately eight weeks. At these meetings, the teacher and parent discuss goals for the student, the students' strengths, needs, and the behaviors in need of change. They select and develop methods for promoting positive student change, implement new strategies at home and school, and monitor whether the student is making desired progress in achieving his or her goal. Throughout the process, teachers and parents learn new strategies to manage challenging situations and promote students' positive skill development. Between meetings, teachers and parents use the plan to promote student success, monitor the progress of the student as they work toward achieving their goal, and communicate using two-way systems to ensure consistent sharing across school and home.

The table below provides an in-depth look at the TAPP meeting process.

TAPP Meeting	What Happens?
Building on Strengths	Talk about students' strengths, needs, and goals Identify a behavior in need of change Create a plan to keep track of the behavior
Planning for Success	Review behavior information Determine why the behavior is occurring Create an individually tailored plan to address problem behavior
Checking and Reconnecting	Decide if the plan worked Decide to keep the plan, change it, or end it

## Better Outcomes for Students, Parents, and Teachers

Federally and locally funded studies examining TAPP outcomes have been conducted using state of the art methods, rigorous research procedures, and reliable measures. The effectiveness of TAPP has been explored across a range of students (i.e., preschool, elementary, and middle school students) as well as a range of student concerns (i.e., academic behaviors, disruptive behavior problems, and social skills). TAPP has even been used to address and minimize issues regarding the relationships between teachers and parents.

Over the past two decades, research has consistently shown that TAPP *helps students* decrease their problem behaviors and learn positive skills at home and school. Participating in TAPP also *helps parents and teachers* use effective strategies, while building strong and positive relationships, to create intervention plans tailored to their specific student's academic needs. In addition, parents and teachers report that they like and prefer TAPP as an acceptable way to change behaviors for their student.

## Academic Success

Success in school is the product of many converging things, including knowledge of relevant information, problem solving abilities, and well-developed academic behaviors that enable learning to occur. General classroom instruction typically covers the first two, however some students struggle significantly with *academic behaviors* both at home and at school. Examples of academic behaviors – those behaviors that support and enable learning –

include paying attention, staying on task, completing work and homework, and doing work accurately. It is important to address these needs early on because academic behaviors and academic success are related to positive outcomes later in life. Without strong competencies in these important academic behaviors, students fall behind their peers and are at a greater risk for underachievement, or school drop out, later in life. Academic underachievement may also negatively impact an individual's relationships and emotional well-being. Research has shown that TAPP can be a useful strategy for improving student academic behaviors and avoiding a negative academic trajectory.

During TAPP meetings, common plans developed for use at school and home often include:

1. A school-home note system to communicate academic and behavioral progress
2. Having a designated work space at home
3. Weekly/Daily rewards for completing assigned homework
4. Writing down homework assignments in planners

## Homework Completion

Homework completion has both immediate and long-term benefits for students' academic achievement and learning. Research has shown that TAPP leads to significant increases in work completion for both elementary and middle school students<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>. TAPP has also produced beneficial outcomes for improving homework completion generally<sup>2,4</sup> as well as for specific targeted subjects, including social studies<sup>5</sup>, math<sup>1,3</sup>, and language arts<sup>6</sup>. In addition, this home-school partnership has increased homework completion with students who have ADHD<sup>2,5</sup>. In one study, a structured homework routine coupled with the use of self-management strategies was implemented within the context of TAPP; students receiving this intervention package demonstrated immediate and substantial improvements in homework productivity and completion<sup>5</sup>. Another study demonstrated that elementary students with ADHD who received an intervention called Family-School Success, which includes TAPP as a main component, were significantly less likely to avoid homework and subsequently pay more attention while working on homework<sup>8</sup>.

## Work Accuracy

During TAPP, students are found to do more than just turn in completed homework assignments – they also show substantial improvements in their accuracy, or number of questions answered correctly. Once parents and teachers work together to create an intervention plan for their student, the students' work accuracy becomes comparable to their academically successful classmates<sup>3,5,6</sup>. For example, one study found that elementary students receiving TAPP interventions achieved significantly improved accuracy scores on

in-class math assignments<sup>3</sup>. Before TAPP, these students demonstrated inconsistent, and often failing, patterns of performance on math assignments due to lack of work completion. Following TAPP, students' math performance was comparable to that of their peers who were considered by teachers to be good math students<sup>3</sup>.

### Academic Engagement (Staying On Task)

Academic engagement (staying on task) is important because it is associated with positive outcomes, including improved academic performance and increased adaptive functioning, such as working hard, behaving appropriately, and learning. In addition, academic engagement is often incompatible with many problem behaviors. Research has found that TAPP is effective at supporting increases in students' on-task behavior at both the elementary<sup>4,7</sup> and middle school<sup>4</sup> level. At the same time, noncompliant and disruptive behaviors that interfere with classroom learning notably decrease as a function of TAPP, across both settings. Studies revealed that both parents and teachers noticed a significant decrease in disruptive, noncompliant, and off-task behaviors after student individualized intervention plans were implemented<sup>4,7</sup>. In one study, direct observations revealed an average of a 60% increase in special education students' on-task behavior in the classroom after TAPP interventions were implemented<sup>7</sup>.

### Organizational Skills

Organizational skills are important contributors to academic success, and TAPP is an effective method to promote organization skills in elementary<sup>2,4</sup> and middle school students<sup>4</sup>. For example, a TAPP study that promoted the use of a Daily Report Card (DRC) as a parent-teacher communication tool resulted in students' increased organization skills, such as being prepared with needed materials.<sup>2</sup>

### Ability to Work Independently

TAPP can also be used to effectively foster students' ability to start and work on assignments independently, which are important skills that contribute to academic success. Research has found that TAPP interventions and collaboration between parents and teachers helps students follow instructions, initiate work with few reminders, and complete work on their own<sup>2,4</sup>. In one study, the use of a self-monitoring intervention within the TAPP framework for elementary students with ADHD resulted in students' increased academic productivity, including initiating work, working independently, and using class time well<sup>2</sup>.

## Difficulties with Learning

Sometimes students struggle in school because the work is too difficult for them. Students may have a hard time understanding the subject matter or may lack the necessary skills to be fully engaged in class. Research suggests that TAPP can be used to help students retain information and skills they are learning in school, such as reading fluency<sup>4</sup>. Although further research is necessary, this indicates that TAPP may be useful for improving student abilities in academic content areas.

## Moving Forward

Student academic behaviors have long-lasting effects on student success, even after the student has left school. Therefore, it is important to address difficulties with these behaviors early on through a proven method. Findings from many research studies suggest that TAPP is an effective way to address a variety of problems related to academic outcomes. If your child or student is struggling with academic skills or other behaviors, there are steps you can take to put them on the path to success:



### Know the Signs

Be aware of your children and students' actions! Struggling in school and demonstrating inappropriate or troubling behaviors are often signs of a problem that needs to be addressed.



### Address the Problem Immediately

The moment a student is showing signs of academic struggle, inform the school psychologist so that the problem may be addressed appropriately.



### Ask Your School Psychologist About TAPP

TAPP is relatively new in the world of consultation and school psychology. By discussing it with your school psychologist, you may be able to develop a better treatment plan more quickly and effectively.

# Tips to “Partnerize” Your School

## How to Make the Most of the TAPP Process and Create Healthy Parent-Teacher Relationships

### Form Relationships

- Get to know one another! Children benefit most when their caregivers and teachers know one another and have some basic information about “how things work” at home and school.
- Focus on strengths! One of the basic building blocks of a strong parent-teacher relationship is that teachers and parents stand united on helping children by focusing on their strengths, and the strengths of the partnership.

### Create Ways to Become and Stay Engaged

- To build a healthy partnership, parents and teachers can find ways to be engaged with each other and their student. Such engagement is essential to help children feel valued and important.
- Over time, efforts to remain connected – no matter how small -- will help create deep and meaningful consistency for the child at home and at school!

### Communicate Two Ways

- Share ideas! Both parents and teachers have important information to share when it comes to a child they both know well.
- Make sure that communication is frequent and clear, and that everyone has an equal chance to speak and to listen.

### Structure Consistent Opportunities for Learning and Behavior

- Look for similar ways to create structured learning opportunities across home and school, because these connections can help children be successful in both places.
- Reinforce children’s positive behaviors at home and school to help them experience consistent messages.

### Collaborate to Achieve Goals and Solve Problems

- Both parents and teachers have important information and ideas that can help when a student is having a problem. Children show more improvement when teachers and parents work together to create a plan, decide on strategies, and practice them at school and home.

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