

# **Parent Proficiencies Questionnaire (PPQ-AA)**

## *Identifying Effective Parenting Practices Among Low-income African-American Parents of Primary School Children*

### **Overview of the PPQ-AA**

The PPQ-AA is a diagnostic tool developed to assist parents, specifically low-income African American parents, by identifying those parenting skills that are correlates for student academic success. The researchers conducted quantitative analyses of items extracted from the parent interview schedule of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten cohort (ECLS-K), a nationally representative dataset provided by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). These items were analyzed using SPSS (v.14) to determine which items were associated with academic achievement and the constructs that these items formed. It is the aim of the PPQ-AA to provide mental health professionals with a tool that can acknowledge and encourage existing capabilities to aid parents in strengthening those parenting behaviors and attitudes that correlate with positive academic outcomes for their children.

### **PPQ-AA Constructs**

Primary constructs were initially identified through a review of the literature on parenting/African American parenting, parent-child relations, and parent involvement/academic achievement. Based on the literature review, specific items from the ECLS-K parent interview schedule were selected for analysis. Subsequently, three constructs were found to significantly predict academic achievement for African American primary school children: (a) parent involvement, (b) home environment, and (c) discipline/support. A current limitation of these constructs is that they are bound by the existing items in the ECLS-K parent interview, which may have been constructed from traditional view of parenting. Moreover, the researchers acknowledge the Western overtones in these construct definitions and have begun a qualitative exploration of culturally bound parenting behaviors. In moving toward a more culturally specific instrument, only those items that were predictive for African American parents were included in constructing the initial version PPQ-AA-AA.

#### ***Parent involvement***

This refers to the parent-school interactions that encompass communication with the child's school personnel and solicited as well as unsolicited visits to the classroom or school community (Epstein, 1990). It also includes scheduled events, such as open house, parent night, and holiday or special event activities (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Also included are remedial and individualized assessment meetings, such as IEP's, as well as disciplinary related meetings. PTO/PTA meetings and talking with other parents on a regular basis are also conceptualized within this definition of parent involvement.

### ***Home environment***

Parent proficiencies in the home environment can be characterized as behavioral and cognitive activities a parent/caretaker undertakes to support and facilitate their child's academic achievement (Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostleris, 1997). Specific behavioral activities include assisting with homework or finding someone who can, providing educational resources in the home or outside, and supporting school-wide events. Additional behaviors that have been identified are: (a) setting limits on non-academic activities and structuring academic behaviors, such as establishing study time and location, (b) providing study materials, and (c) structuring home rituals such as eating, sleeping, and recreation times. Cognitive activities have included scheduling cultural trips in the community and beyond to expose the child to stimulating books and exhibits (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

### ***Discipline/support***

Contemporary parenting research suggests that poor conceptualization of cultural nuances may have contextualized prior investigations of African American parenting. Previous interpretations of corporal punishment did not include a culturally informed analysis. Such a perspective might consider ways in which African American parents prepare their children to cope with racism and other institutional forms of bias. It is an authoritative style of parenting (firm discipline coupled with warm and caring) that is more reflective of African American parenting (Mandara, 2006). This construct is defined by parent behaviors that establish limits and exert immediate disciplinary actions that are coupled with affection and demonstrative caring.