Getting parents involved
A field experiment in deprived schools

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Motivation

- Significant differences in parental involvement across families with different social status

- Any causal relationships between the relatively good performance at school of pupil from rich families and the relatively strong involvement of their parents?
Questions

✓ Is it really possible to improve parents’ involvement?
✓ Has increased parental involvement any effect on children?
✓ Does the effect on program participants spread out on other families?

► Specific importance of spillovers as only a minority of families volunteer to participate in such a program
A randomized evaluation

1. Identify volunteer parents in all the schools
2. Within each school, randomize half classes
3. Only volunteer parents in treated classes are invited to the meetings

► Ensures that families in treated and control classes are similar
► Significant differences by the end of the year are surely attributed to the intervention  
  Impact causal des débats
Protocol: Four groups

- **Treated Classes (randomized in)**
  - Volunteer
  - Non volunteers

- **Control classes (randomized out)**
  - Volunteer
  - Non volunteers

Compare

\[\text{TRADUIRE LA RECHERCHE EN ACTION}\]
Sample

- 37 middle schools, 200 classes, 5,000 6th grade pupils
- 20% volunteers (slightly higher social background)
- Among volunteers, actual take-up rate 57%
Data

- **Parents**: year-end survey (response rate 80%)
  
  *Individual appointments with teachers, participate in parental organization, understand local school, etc.*

- **Pupils**: Normalized tests beginning and end of year + school level information
Parental involvement

ONLY PARENTS WHO ATTENDED MEETINGS HAD MORE INTERACTIONS WITH SCHOOLS

source: Getting Parents Involved, September 2010, Table 8

Comparison classes

0.124

Selected classes

0.123

0.492

0.172

Non-volunteers
Volunteers
Parental involvement

- Increase about 10% to 30% of a standard-deviation
- Same order of magnitude as between white-collar and blue-collar families
- Effect on parents translates into significant improvement in pupils’ behavior
Pupils’ behavior

ALL CHILDREN IN SELECTED CLASSES
REDUCED ABSENTEEISM

source: Getting Parents Involved, September 2010, Table 11

Comparison Classes
Non-Volunteers: 2.2 days
Volunteers: 1.9 days

Comparison Classes
Non-Volunteers: 2.1 days
Volunteers: 1.7 days
Pupils’ behavior and cognitive outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>VOLONTEERS</th>
<th></th>
<th>NON-VOLONTEERS</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Treated</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Treated</td>
<td>Control</td>
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<td>Discipl. sanctions</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>34.5%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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- French: +7% of s.d. for teacher marks and +8% of a s.d. for easiest items of external test
- No impact in Maths
Take away

- The programme has demonstrated effects on parental involvement and child behavior – to a smaller extent on cognitive achievement

- The behavior of all students in the selected classes improved, including those whose parents did not participate
Policy implication

- Important issue but limited political action
- Simple and inexpensive program
- Rigorous evaluation: can convince schools or governments that such action is worth taking
- Generalization going on in France