Running Head: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

What are the factors that lend to greater parental involvement in grades K-12 of public schools, including regular & special education?

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Abstract

Parental involvement in a child’s primary and secondary education is usually associated with academic success, higher achievement, and positive attitudes towards education. Though various studies have been conducted to investigate and monitor the effects of parental involvement, little has been researched about the factors that cause parents and guardians to take a proactive approach in supporting their child’s education. The purpose of this study was to research and examine the factors that influence parental involvement within the K-12 public school setting. In this study, quantitative research methods, questionnaires, and document reviews were employed with the intention of investigating the dynamics associated with parental participation. In order to obtain a diverse range of information, the study took into account various facets of parental involvement. Some of the aspects investigated included: socioeconomic status (SES) of parents/guardians, grade level of students, as well as volunteered classroom activities performed in or out of class by parents. The study found that parents with higher education levels (some college, college degree, etc.) attended more school events than parents with a secondary education or less. It was also found that classroom settings (special education vs. regular education) did not yield significant differences in parental involvement. The results of this study supports contemporary research about the positive effects of parental involvement in a student’s education.

The term parent involvement is used broadly in this report. It includes several different forms of parent/guardian participation in education and with the schools.

Introduction

What does parental involvement mean? For many educators and parents, there is a miscommunication as to what constitutes parental involvement. It becomes difficult to define what parental involvement means as the definition is different between parents and educators (Anderson & Minke, 2007). Parents see parental involvement as getting their kids to school on time and solving issues at home with their children; whereas, educators see parental involvement as being involved in the education process by helping in the school and helping out with homework (Anderson & Minke, 2007).

Educators of grades K-12 have a shared interest in the role of parental involvement as they define it. Research has linked greater parental involvement to greater academic success in the student (Randall, Shin & Spoth, 2008). This has been made evident through documented higher levels of reading (Henry, 2007), higher student achievement, higher math scores, and leading to less risky behavior in adolescents manifested through declining drug usage (Randall, Shin & Spoth, 2008). The purpose of this study is to determine the factors that lend to greater parental involvement in grades K-12 of public schools, regular and special education included.

In this age of high-stakes testing with No Child Left Behind, schools and educators have been clamoring to do everything that is possible to raise test scores (Campbell & Verna, 2007). This includes looking at the school’s function in the community and seeing the parents as much needed resources that can enhance the community and their children’s education. This results in the relational interaction that ultimately benefits the students. According to Dempsey, Walker & Sandler (2003), in order for schools to increase their parental involvement rate, schools need to serve the parents in the community, as well as the student body. This changes the perception of education in the minds and attitudes of the parents. In turn, this creates positive attitudes towards education and the school setting at home. As students’ perceptions of school and education are influenced positively at home, students bring this positive attitude back to the school. This research has shown that these students with positive perceptions are more successful in school (Campbell & Verna, 2007).

Parental Involvement

According to Anderson & Minke (2007), parents and educators defined “involvement” in different ways. Parents felt that if they were keeping their children safe and getting their children to school on time, they were involved in their children’s education. On the other hand, educators defined “involvement” as parents being present at the school. This type of miscommunication has caused resentments and led to blaming the other parties between teachers and parents (Lawson, 2003). Therefore, it is important for teachers to communicate what parental involvement is, clearly and concisely, and for parents to communicate their limits on resources (time, money, etc.). When attempting to contemplate parental involvement choices, teachers need to consider that parents with fewer resources may have difficulty involving themselves in the school, due to time constraints, work schedules, and transportation.

Another factor in parental involvement was the educational level of the parents (Dearing & McCartney, 2004). Parents with higher levels of education (Graduate Level & Professional School Level) participated more than those with a high school diploma or lower (Herrold & O’Donnell, 2008). They participated more in school events (80%) and In School Fundraisers (72%) than that of lower educated parents. They also directly had a positive effect on their children’s literacy in Kindergarten, thereby setting the foundation for further success. Furthermore, highly educated parents showed greater satisfaction in their child’s school and with their child’s teacher than those of lower education. This is seen as a correlation of positive attitudes towards education in the parents, directly linked to the educational level of the parents. This manifests itself not only in greater involvement, but also to a positive perspective of education at home. Herrold & O’Donnell (2008) reported findings that Graduate/Professionally Schooled parents showed higher satisfaction levels in schools & teachers, homework checking being important, and 94% stated that they had a plan to pay for their child’s college. This positive perspective on education/schools led to a positive Academic Home Climate (Campbell & Verna, 2007).

Academic Home Climate

Academic Home Climate was termed by Campbell & Verna (2007) to create a macroterm to describe the main concept that illustrated the microlevels of behavior towards education, high achieving students, and their families at home. The 5 top-scoring microlevel categories were: Expectations, Work Ethic, Communication, Homework, and Commitment. Many of these parents had already had a positive perspective of education that was transmitted and nurtured to their children and fostered at home (Freeman, 1991; Gottfried, Gottfried, Bathhurst & Guerin, 1994). These are many of the parental characteristics which are included in highly educated parents. Being highly educated, they directly saw the positive benefits of education and the means to support their children at home (through involvement) and at home (Academic Home Climate).

In order to bridge the educational gap in students who have the advantage of highly educated parents and those who do not, it becomes important to positively enhance the lower educated parents’ perspective of education. This can be done through the schools of their children. These schools need to influence the social constructs and beliefs of parents in areas of participation (Dempsey, Walker & Sandler, 2003). This is done by inviting two-way communication, parental informing of linking participation to higher student success, a welcoming climate, interactive homework, and a range of involvement activities and services at the school site (Dempsey, Walker & Sandler, 2003).

Offering services and activities to low- income families at the school site need to be meaningful and useful to attract families to the school. This could be in the form of ESL classes, GED test preparation, aerobics, and cake decorating classes. This creates ties to promote involvement (Smith, 2006). As parents feel more welcomed at the school site, a critical variable for parents (Anderson & Minke, 2007), parent’ perceptions of education are positively influenced. As parents’ own successful school experiences influence their own perspective, they will bring that attitude home to improve the Academic Home Climate. This Academic Home Climate generates the environment which fosters curiosity in the child and a desire to pursue their own academic interests. Furthermore, it generates “positive behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, and values that lead to children having higher levels of achievement” (Campbell & Verna, 2007). In other words, these classes and services directly change the perception of education in lower educated parents. This positively influences a student’s perspective on education in a positive way (O’Donnell, Kirkner & Meyer-Adams, 2008).

Student Perception

As parents’ perspectives of education are positively influenced, so are those of their children. Parents bring these attitudes home where it positively affects the attitudes of their children towards education. For instance, in one study, second graders’ reading scores were raised in circumstances where the reading interaction (read alouds) between parent and child were improved in quality through educating and involving the parent in QARs (Question and Response); thereby, changing their perspective on education and their role (Henry, 2008). In other words, reading aloud to their children was not enough to improve reading scores, it was the change of quality of reading aloud accomplished by an improvement of education perceptions in the parent that was the catalyst.

Furthermore, these constructive social connections that are enhanced between child and parents at home improve student learning supports (Randall, Shin & Spoth, 2008). This positively influences academic learning (Denham & Weissberg, 2003). For instance, these constructive parental connections predict math development in grades 8 through 12 (Gregory & Weinstein, 2004). This effective social bonding was shown to strengthen academic success throughout middle and high school, thereby having long lasting effects (Randall, Shin & Spoth, 2008).

This prior research suggests that students are not isolated variables in the educational system. In order to raise scores and enhance student success, the student needs to be seen as a component of the family. The family needs to be supported and feel welcome at the school site. As the family develops positive perspectives regarding education, the student is brought along to develop their own positive educational perspective. This has long-lasting benefits in student learning and success. This may partly explain why highly educated parents have students who are more successful; they have already gone through this process on their own.

Design and Methodology

Study Participants

Participants in this study included adult parents and guardians of students ranging from 2nd to 8th grade. Out of the 150 surveys distributed, 74 surveys were completed and returned. The participants were asked to answer questions regarding their children. The surveys were handed out in grades 2, 3, 5, 7, and 8 in the Crestline, Hemet, and Moreno Valley Unified School Districts. The students were in a regular education, special education, or GATE classroom setting. Demographic information was also collected such as parent education level, material status, socio-economic status as determined by the qualification for free and reduced lunch, and other children in the household. This sample was chosen to consider factors pertaining to parental involvement across various grade levels and classroom settings.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

The researchers involved in the study conducted a quantitative research to determine factors that may influence parental involvement in his or her child’s school. A 5 point Linkert scale survey was created with 7 questions concerning parental involvement in a closed descriptive format. The statements were positively framed and responses ranged from “I strongly disagree (1)” to “I strongly agree (5)”. Differentiated statements were included that considered Socio-economic Status (SES), student grade level, student placement, and frequency of parental attendance at school functions. The rationale behind this method is to statistically analyze the factors of parental participation to empirically determine vital factors.

A preliminary pilot survey was created and given to 3 parents to examine. Parents evaluated the survey for the value of each question, succinct and understandable language and terminology, and spelling and grammar. Upon further modifications, an informed consent paper and the survey were distributed en mase by classroom teachers after permission from the site administrator was obtained. The teachers had one week to return any completed surveys to the researchers. Of the 73 surveys returned, one survey indicated the student was in a dual-immersion program. This data was considered an outlier and removed from further data analysis. A copy of the survey can be found in appendix 14-19

Data Treatment Procedures

Once the surveys were collected, each survey was assigned a subject number (n=73). This assured participant anonymity. The questions and answers were numerically coded and inputted into SPSS Statistics 17.0 and Microsoft Excel 2003. Descriptive statistics for mean, median and mode were collected on questions 1 through 7 and tabled. Data was analyzed and converted to visual representations.

Presentation of Findings

Upon analysis of the data, several findings emerged. The table below indicates the mean, median, and mode for the seven initial questions concerning attitudes towards parental involvement. Most of the participants ‘somewhat agree’ that they have time and energy to attend special events at school. Most of the participants also agreed that it is their responsibility to supervise his/her child’s homework (mean of 4.82) and talk to the child about his/her school day (mean of 4.73)

TABLE 1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF SURVEY QUESTIONS 1 THROUGH 7

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q5 | Q6 | Q7 |
| Mean | 4.14 | 3.73 | 3.67 | 4.32 | 4.42 | 4.82 | 4.73 |
| Median | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Mode | 5 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |

As indicated in previous research, the educational level of the parents played an important role in the involvement in school sponsored activities. The parent education level was considered in terms of activities attended. Events included: Back-to-School Night, Parent/Teacher Conferences, IEP meetings, Fieldtrips, Open House, etc. The data (Graph 1) indicated that as the parent’s educational level increased, the frequency of events attended increased as well.

GRAPH 1. PARENTAL EDUACTION LEVEL



The parents feeling comfortable and welcome at the school were also believed to be a factor in parental involvement. As more parents felt they were welcomed at the school, the more events they attended, as indicated in Graph 2.

GRAPH 2. PARENTS FEEL WELCOME AT STUDENT’S SCHOOL SITE.



Finally, the researchers considered if the student’s classroom placement affected the events attended at the school site. It was somewhat surprising to find that the child’s classroom placement did not yield a significant difference on the events attended (Graph 3).

GRAPH 3. CLASSROOM PLACEMENT



Limitations of the Design

During the course of research, several limitations were discovered. 73 surveys is a relatively small sample size when considering parental involvement in the field of education. A greater sample size may yield more significant results. Participants were limited to various school districts and schools in the Inland Empire. The demographics and economy in the Inland Empire is not representative of other regions. This limits the ability to generalize the findings of the current study. Lastly, the survey did not consider the student’s behavior or attitudinal perspective towards school as well as the parents. This could have skewed the data to yield different results. So while every effort was made to collect and analyze valid and reliable data, limitations are present, but the researchers feel that the data provided is an accurate representation of factors that influence parental involvement.

Conclusion

In this study, parent involvement in schools was based on the number of activities parents attended. After reviewing the 74 questionnaires received from parents, results showed a correlation between the participation level of the parents which was directly influenced by the level of education the parent had completed. Parents with an education level of kindergarten to eighth grade yielded fewer school events attended than those parents with a college degree. Another factor which influences parent involvement are feelings of being welcome at the student’s school site. Results showed a dramatic increase in parental participation from those who strongly agreed that they felt welcome at the school site as opposed to those parents who only somewhat agreed. Surprisingly, the one factor which appeared to show little influence on parent attendance at school events was that of classroom placement. There were no significant differences in parental participation if the students were placed in regular education, special education, or GATE classes.

Recommendations for Further Research

Since the results of our survey showed that a parents participation in school events is directly related to their feelings of being welcome at the school, it is suggested that further research into what makes the parents feel comfortable at their child’s school be performed. Another suggestion for future research would be to have a larger sample size which encompasses varying demographics and economies which would produce more generalized results.

**Informed Consent**

You are being asked to participate in an educational research study. This study is being conducted by Stacey Fisher, Sarah Leon, Kimberly Spooner, Erika Hernandez, Samuel Duran, and Anthony Santillanes under the supervision of Professor Enrique Murillo, Ph.D, Associate Professor College of Education, California State University, San Bernardino.

The purpose of this research is to study the factors that influence parental involvement within the K-12 public school setting. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and refusal to participate will yield no penalty to the participant or student. The subject may discontinue participation at any time during the study. All of your responses will be held in the strictest confidence by the researchers. All data will be reported in group form only. You may receive the group results of this study upon completion on March 19, 2009 at 26700 Cottonwood Ave., Moreno Valley, CA 92555

Subjects are asked to complete a short survey that is expected to last 15 to 20 minutes. Subjects will not be asked for any indentifying information when completing this survey. There are no foreseen immediate or long-term risks involved with this study. There are no foreseen benefits for the subjects involved in the study.

If you have any pertinent questions regarding this study or subject rights, please contact Enrique Murillo at 909-537-5632.

By placing a check mark in the box below, I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and that I understand, the nature and purpose of this study, and I freely consent to participate. I also acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.

**Please make a check mark here Today’s date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Parent Involvement Survey**

Please answer each question honestly, but please don’t spend too much time on one question. Your answers and anonymous and cannot be connected to you in any way. Please return the completed survey as soon as possible. Thank you Please circle one number for each question. (Please answer the following questions for the oldest student in the household)

1. I feel my student looks forward to going to school.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1**  **Disagree Completely** | **2** | **3**  **Somewhat Agree** | **4** | **5**  **Agree Completely** |

1. I believe it is my responsibility to volunteer at the school.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1**  **Disagree Completely** | **2** | **3**  **Somewhat Agree** | **4** | **5**  **Agree Completely** |

1. I have time and energy to attend special events at school.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1**  **Disagree Completely** | **2** | **3**  **Somewhat Agree** | **4** | **5**  **Agree Completely** |

1. I feel welcome at this school.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1**  **Disagree Completely** | **2** | **3**  **Somewhat Agree** | **4** | **5**  **Agree Completely** |

1. I feel comfortable contacting the school with any questions or concerns.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1**  **Disagree Completely** | **2** | **3**  **Somewhat Agree** | **4** | **5**  **Agree Completely** |

1. I feel it’s my responsibility to supervise my child’s homework as needed.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1**  **Disagree Completely** | **2** | **3**  **Somewhat Agree** | **4** | **5**  **Agree Completely** |

1. I talk with my child about his/her school day.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1**  **Disagree Completely** | **2** | **3**  **Somewhat Agree** | **4** | **5**  **Agree Completely** |

*Please circle one*

1. Student Grade Level:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. I am the: Father Mother Guardian Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Martial status: Single Married Committed relationship

Separated Widowed Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Highest level of parent education:

K-8 High School Some College College Degree Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| YES | NO |

5. Does your child receive free/reduced lunch?

6. My child is in a \_\_\_\_\_regular education classroom

|  |
| --- |
| \_\_\_\_\_special education classroom / receives pull-out services |
| \_\_\_\_\_GATE classroom |
| \_\_\_\_\_Dual/Bilingual programs |
| Other (please) list: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

7. I have attended the following school sponsored activities at my child’s school

(Within the last year)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| \_\_\_Back-to-School Night | \_\_\_Winter Program |
| \_\_\_ Awards Assembly | \_\_\_\_Black History Program |
| \_\_\_Parent/Teacher Conference | \_\_\_\_Open House |
| \_\_\_IEP meetings | \_\_\_\_Father/Daughter Dance |
| \_\_\_\_Cinco de Mayo celebration | \_\_\_\_Mother/Son Bingo |
| \_\_\_\_Chaperoned a school dance | \_\_\_\_Participate in PTA |
| \_\_\_\_Fieldtrips | Other: |

8. Any other children in the household (Please list Age):

**Forma de Consitimiento**

Se le están pidiendo participar en un estudio educativo de investigación. Este estudio está siendo conducido por Stacey Fisher, Sarah Leon, Kimberly Spooner, Erika Hernandez, Samuel Duran, y Anthony Santillanes bajo supervisión de profesor Enrique Murillo, Ph.D, profesor de la Universidad de California State University, San Bernardino.

El propósito de esta investigación es estudiar los factores que influencian la implicación parental dentro del ajuste de la escuela pública K-12. La participación en este estudio es totalmente voluntaria y la denegación a participar no rendirá ninguna pena al participante o al estudiante. El tema puede continuar la participación en cualquier momento durante el estudio. Todas sus respuestas serán llevadas a cabo en la confianza más terminante por los investigadores. Todos los datos serán divulgados en forma del grupo solamente. Usted puede recibir los resultados del grupo de este estudio sobre la terminación el 19 de Marzo de 2009 en 26700 Cottonwood Ave., Moreno Valley, CA 92555

Los temas se piden terminar un examen corto de 15 a 20 minutos. Los temas no le pedida ninguna información que identifica al terminar este examen. No hay riesgos inmediatos o a largo plazo previstos implicados con este estudio. No hay ventajas previstas para los temas implicados en el estudio.

Si usted tiene cualesquier pregunta pertinentes con respecto a las estas derechas del estudio o del tema, entre en contacto con Enrique Murillo por favor a 909-537-5632.

Poniendo una marca de check mark en la caja abajo, reconozco que me han informado, y que entiendo, la naturaleza y el propósito de este estudio, y yo consienten libremente participar. También reconozco que soy por lo menos 18 años de la edad.

**Haga por favor una marca check mark Fecha de hoy:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Questionario**

*Conteste por favor a cada pregunta honestamente, pero no pase por favor demasiada tiempo en una pregunta. Sus respuestas es anónimo y no se pueden conectar con usted de ninguna manera. Devuelva por favor el la encuesta al terminarla.. Gracias*

*Por Favor circule un número de cada pregunta.*

(Conteste por favor a las preguntas siguientes para el hijo con mas edad de la casa)

1. Siento que mi estudiante espera ir a la escuela con gusto.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1**  **Estoy Completamente Desacuerdo** | **2** | **3**  **Estoy De Acuerdo Un Poco** | **4** | **5**  **Estoy Completamente**  **De Acuerdo** |

1. Creo que es mi responsabilidad ofrecerse voluntariamente en la escuela.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1**  **Estoy Completamente Desacuerdo** | **2** | **3**  **Estoy De Acuerdo Un Poco** | **4** | **5**  **Estoy Completamente**  **De Acuerdo** |

1. Tengo tiempo y energía para atender a acontecimientos especiales en la escuela.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1**  **Estoy Completamente Desacuerdo** | **2** | **3**  **Estoy De Acuerdo Un Poco** | **4** | **5**  **Estoy Completamente**  **De Acuerdo** |

1. Me siento bienvenido en esta escuela.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1**  **Estoy Completamente Desacuerdo** | **2** | **3**  **Estoy De Acuerdo Un Poco** | **4** | **5**  **Estoy Completamente**  **De Acuerdo** |

1. Me siento cómodo entrando en contacto con la escuela con cualesquiera preguntas o preocupación.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1**  **Estoy Completamente Desacuerdo** | **2** | **3**  **Estoy De Acuerdo Un Poco** | **4** | **5**  **Estoy Completamente**  **De Acuerdo** |

1. Me siento que es mi responsabilidad supervisar la preparación de mi niño según lo necesitado.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1**  **Estoy Completamente Desacuerdo** | **2** | **3**  **Estoy De Acuerdo Un Poco** | **4** | **5**  **Estoy Completamente**  **De Acuerdo** |

1. Hablo con mi niño sobre su día de la escuela.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1**  **Estoy Completamente Desacuerdo** | **2** | **3**  **Estoy De Acuerdo Un Poco** | **4** | **5**  **Estoy Completamente**  **De Acuerdo** |

*Por favor de circular una*

1. Nivel de grado escolar:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Soy yo el: Padre Madre Guarda Otro: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Status Matrimoniales: Soltero Casado En un relación seria

Separado Viudo Otro: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. La mas alto nivel de educación del padre:

K-8 Preparatoria Poco de Colegio Titulo de Colegio Otro: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| SI | NO |

5. Su hijo recebe almuerzo deducido/gratis?

6. Mi niño está en un \_\_\_\_\_ salón regular de educación

|  |
| --- |
| \_\_\_\_\_la sala de clase de la educación especial/recibe servicios extraíbles |
| \_\_\_\_\_Salón de GATE |
| \_\_\_\_\_Programa Dual/Bilingüe |
| Otro (por favor de listar): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

1. He atendido a las actividades patrocinadas por la escuela de mi hijo/a siguiente.

(Dentro del año pasado)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| \_\_\_Noche de regreso a la escuela | \_\_\_Programa de invierno |
| \_\_\_ Awards Assembly | \_\_\_\_Programa de Historia Africano |
| \_\_\_Conferencie de Padre e Maestro | \_\_\_\_Open House |
| \_\_\_Juntas de IEP | \_\_\_\_Baile de Padre e Hija |
| \_\_\_\_Cinco de Mayo celebración | \_\_\_\_Madre/Son Bingo |
| \_\_\_\_Chaperones de el baile de escuela | \_\_\_\_Participante de PTA |
| \_\_\_\_Fieldtrips | Otro: |

8. Cualquier otro niño en la casa (Por favor de escribir la edad):

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