The Importance of Parents' Involvement in Their Children's Performance in San Bernardino

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Abstract

The principal objective of this research is to identify what technology skills parents in San Bernardino need to help K-12 students succeed? We reviewed related articles in identifying technology skills. We conducted two types of data collection which were interviews and a survey. The results showed that Microsoft Office and email skills are the technology skills that parents in the San Bernardino need in order to help K-12 students succeed. These findings have significant implications for students and parents in the same time. Also, it appears that these technology skills have an impact on developing the relationship between school and home. In conclusion, we hope that the research will contribute more accurate data about parents' technology skills.

**Introduction:**

1. **General statement of problem:**

It is an important for parents’ to get involved educationally in different ways. These include: parents' assisting children in their learning (most commonly with homework), ensuring school attendance, supporting good behavior, and having a ‘greater say’ in how schools are run (Selwyn et al., 2011).

Using technology increases the engagement of parents in their children’s schooling.

There are two essential benefits of parents who have technology skills.

1. Academic achievement: software (Microsoft office)
2. communication tools: (emails, cell phones, school website)
3. **Review of Related Literature:**

To start with, many parents have access to computers daily, whether to do their activities like browsing the internet or to help their children with school homework. Ortiz, Green and Lim (2010) mentioned that some teachers request their students to do their assignments by using some computers skills, such as accessing a web page or using e-mail. As a result, parents always ask teachers to know how to assist their children via technology. It means that parents demand to learn computer skills to support their children in school. The reason is because those parents play a significant position in their children education. Nobody denies that parents, who are keen on learning computer skills, believe that learning computer technology will increase achievement scores. In the same way, parents enroll their children in schools where they use computers, because they are supposed to help them in math and reading classes. According to statistic in the article, there are differences between white and black parents in using technology. White parents like using technology rather that black parents (Ortiz et al., 2010).

In the article, “Parents’ At-Home and At-Scholl Academic Involvement with Young Adolescents” by Lee Shumow and Jon Miller, referred that parents of struggling students were involved more in homework assistance and parents of successful students were involved more at school than were other parents. On the other hand, establishing a parent and teacher relationship is essential in helping children succeed in school. Firstly, parents helping their children with their homework could increase academic achievement. Also, the authors explained some benefits of using technology skills to help their children to enhance academic achievement. For example, Microsoft Office would be the easiest and most effective way to help their children do their homework. The author introduced that training and resources could help parents get involved in using technologies. Secondly, the authors said one of the factors needed to establish a good relationship was communication, such as email and cell-phone. Teachers and parents' dialogue together; however occurred when concerns were noted about their children. Another factor was cell-phone call, which was good to contact the teachers and get the feedback immediately (Shumow & Miller, 2001)

In 2009, Cardler conducted a study sponsored by Project Tomorrow showed that students in grades K-12 reported using technology for schoolwork. For middle school and high school students used technology to access class information, create PowerPoint or video presentations, communicate and collaborate with peers for schoolwork. For elementary student, they basically play educational games.

There are some websites that most of parents should learn to use to help their children in their homework for example, the website (Time for Learning.com). This website usually is used by homeschoolers. It consists of a program that has different ways to teach the child. However, it has additional practices, worksheets, and activities. Also, the author mentioned that there are some websites that include only worksheets like (Practice Worksheets). In this website, the child can find more math practice which will help students achieve higher scores. Furthermore, in these websites parents can find new methods or styles to teach their children. At the end, parents should research the internet to find helpful websites for assisting their children (Renee, 2009).

Numerous research articles cite that an improvement in students' behavior and academic success is because of something as simple as parents using Microsoft Word to help their children. Grant (2011) stated that “all parents can learn new and effective strategies for supporting their children’s development, but not every parent is ready or willing to learn new strategies at a particular point in time.”

Second, no doubt that communications tools are one of the most important things to keep teachers in touch with students and parents. According to Wade (2012), he suggests verities of online tools that have impact on developing the relationship between school and family. The first tool is e-mail. By using e-mail school can inform parents about new events in school, field trips, school activities, students’ performance, students’ grades, and other important information that is related to their children. The second tool is to create a school webpage for parents. This page provides basic information that relates to school like phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and home addresses. The page will explain to parents teaching policy, homework policy, grades policy, goals, and suggestions. In addition, the school will provide a camera to allow parents and teachers conferences instead of face to face meeting. Next, the online tool is social networking sites. The author said that today a lot of teachers have Facebook or Twitter. Through these sites parents can make friendship with teachers. In the same time, parents will keep in touch with the teachers. The last tool is an online grading system. Some school districts use a special grading system for parents to know their children’s grades. This system includes important grades, such as attendance grades, home work grades, test, midterm, and final grades. Finally, it is very important for parents to learn how to use these tools to communicate with the teachers and school and to help their children in learning process (Wade, 2012).

Tobolka (2006) mentioned there was a gap in communicating between teachers and parents. Communication via new technology improves students’ interest in their coursework and provides parents with more knowledge about their daily class activities. The web pages and e-mails are common ways for parents to know about students’ educational experiences and as a

source of one-to-one correspondence. Using web pages and e-mails to help communicate is becoming increasingly popular with many different educators (DeGennaro, 2010).

A web site serves parents not only by giving curriculum and class information, but also reporting on students' performance in classrooms, articles, news stories, diaries, chats, newsletters, and hot links. Moreover, developing a weekly e-mail program is a very useful tool to stay in touch with the parents (Tobolka, 2006).

As a result Tobolka found that parents, who use the website and check weekly updates to communicate with their children days in school, feel more comfortable and involved which motivates students to do their best in school. They enjoy using the website and receiving the weekly informative emails which coveres all details about their children’s achievement and behavior. Subsequently, children improve overall; behavior and academic achievement. However, communicating with the parents that not speak English is challenging because they cannot communicate easily with the child’s teacher. According to DeGennaro (2010) Gmail applications support communicating with parents whose English is their second language to translate emails to English by using Google translator.

Focusing on the communication tools, Villano and Matt (2008) in their article, "Meet the Parents", talked about the improvement of communicating with the parents by using technologies. They explained the tools that were used in the 1990s. These primary ways were calling parents individually or sending with the students a printed announcement hand by hand. These ways were often never effective. The paper would be lost or tossed out or even forgotten.

Moreover, the preferred method of communicating with parents for some schools was the telephone. Many schools used "calling tree," a system which administrators who had a message to deliver called a handful of parents, who in turn were expected to call other parents and pass the message along (Villano & Matt, 2008).

Gradually, as technology became increasingly sophisticated and greater numbers of K-12 districts started using content management systems, schools embraced the more efficient computer based notification systems (Villano & Matt, 2008).This significant improvement shows the importance of having parents’ technology skills in communications tools.

In the article, “Using theoretical models to examine the acceptance behavior of mobile phone messaging to enhance parent-teacher interactions”, noted that parent's involved in technology skills influence student’s academic achievements and social competence positively. The authors pointed out parents and teacher’s communication did not build on parent’s reliance; it enhanced parents’ technology skills of raising children. As technology developed rapidly, it was already a trend that e-communication has been replacing traditional paper communication such as cellphone and email. By using e-communication, the authors referred to some benefits. First, parents could support schools by knowing what changed in school and instruction. Then, parents were not informed could not participate fully in schools. Next, parents could know their children better and will be in a better position to inform schools about their children’s needs and capacities, and will be deeply invested in their children’s success. Last, parents partially informed must rely on the media and politicians to inform them and neither knew teaching and leaning as well as education professionals. Parents involved in e-communication would have a lot of benefits to help their children succeed (Ho, Hung & Chen, 2012).

In the article, “From public policy to family practices: researching the everyday realities of families' technology use at home” by O Stevenson. The author aimed that one of the approaches to educational technology was move to home, which also explained how technologically privileged parents at home were using information and communication technology skills. Steven (2011) referred that parents approached and used technology skills in home for learning were entwined with was entwined with many other dimensions of social life. For example, parents used email to communicate with school was an easy way to know their children’s information. At the same time, parents could get in social communication with their children’s classmate parents. Parents could send emails to each other for important events via email. In sum, more explicit technology skills practice in the home connected social communicating (Steven, 2011).

Most of teachers prefer to use a website or email to communication with parents. Through that technology, parents will know some information about their children such as attendance, behavior, student portfolios, and graduation rates. In the same time, a classroom webpage is a very useful technology tool for parents to know daily homework, teacher feedback as well as grades. The author emphasized, there are few parents who have not had training to use the school website because they do not speak English. In simple word, parents need from school to identify what kinds of technology would use to communicate with (Adkins et al., 2004).

Finally, the school website is an essential communication tool between schools and parents. A research shows the importance of having parents technology skills in browsing and using the school website. The respondent of the research noted "Students benefit from having instructions given in a variety of formats, and usually seeing it written on the board is the best way." The same respondent also wrote "The website should be used to reinforce what goes on in the classroom, not to give new information" (Alexiou-Ray, J. A., et al., 2003).

1. **The research question is:** What technology skills do parents in San Bernardino need to help K-12 students succeed?
2. **Definition of terms:**

Social network: a network of social interactions and personal relationships.

Performance: the execution or accomplishment of work, acts, feats, etc.

Software: instructions that tell a computer what to do.

Technology: technology can refer to material objects of use to humanity, such as machines, hardware or utensils.

1. **Significance of the Proposed Study:**

The purpose of this study is to clearly identify technology skills needed by parents so that they may effectively help their children succeed. First, using software skills plays an important role to make students succeed in school and affecting their performance. For example, in reading and math classes some teachers asked students to do their homework by using Microsoft Office. Certainly, that will help students better understand and achieve higher scores.

Techers play an important role in students' performance, but not nearly as important as parents. Parents are a child’s first teacher. When the teachers and parents work together, the students get a better high quality education they need to lead more productive lives (Grant, 2011).

Furthermore, today the technology has become integral to constructing knowledge; therefore most of teachers use technology daily to develop and facilitate learning (DeGennaro, 2010). Parents need to be involved in the child's education and give them daily support at home. This requires them to have or improve their technology skills that their children need in accomplishing their homework, such as using Microsoft Word to type or using the internet to finish a simple research paper (Tobolka, 2006).

According to Smith et al. (2011), children whose parents have technology skills are involved more effectively with their schools, earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, complete more homework, demonstrate more positive attitudes and behaviors, graduate from high school at higher rates, and are more likely to enroll in higher education, than students with less involved parents. #Parents' involvement in children's education is a matter of assistant and is beneficial to all; parents, teachers, school and students dramatically to increase academic achievement (Grant, 2011).

For these reasons, increasing parent’s involvement in the education of their children is an important goal for children’s success. Stetson et al. (2012) stated that teachers and schools have a lot of challenges in encouraging parent involvement, but studies utilizing large databases have shown positive and significant strong effects of parent involvement on academic achievement. There are many things that parents could do to help their children, but unfortunately some parents cannot help their children because they don't have some important technology skills that their children use daily to do homework (DeGennaro, 2010).

Therefore, parents' involvement in schools is not enough without having basic technology skills. Thus there is a lack of effective models for how parents having technology skills can support their children’s academic achievement. In addition, involving parents in school to help children do their homework requires teaching parents new technology skills to support their children development (Tobolka, 2006).

**Design and Methodology:**

1. **Subject and Case:** Parents Technology skills
2. **Instrumentation/Data Collection:**

To obtain data for this study, two methods of collection were employed. Quantitative data was collected by using parent surveys (See Appendix A) from different K-12 schools. Afterwards, qualitative data was collected by teachers from different schools. The interviewees (See Appendix B) were formally interviewed via e-mail to allow for a more in-depth discussion of technology practices. We collected both quantitative and qualitative data during a nine-week project.

The survey questioners was first used to gather quantitative data regarding parent technology skills to find out what technology skills they have and what they don't have. We distributed a survey paper and posted an electronic version on the Survey Monkey web site so that parents could answer the questions. Their answers went to the group-leader e-mail inbox to review and take notes. The survey had an “other" choice which parents could leave additional thoughts or additional answers. A total of 45 parent surveys were distributed and 16 were returned completed.

The teacher interviews were the second method used to gather qualitative data regarding what technology teachers often use in classrooms and what technology students need for doing homework, what the best ways to communicate with parents and what technology skills parents need to help their children to succeed. We tried interviewing five teachers but unfortunately we could only interview two teachers.

1. **Data Treatment Procedures:**

An analysis of the quantitative data collected revealed parents’ technology skills. We began by creating a database in Microsoft Excel 2010 which included tables for each question. Each table has the question as a header and the selected responses in the cells under that question’s header. Afterword, we gathered the data from the papers and the electronic version. We entered the data which were the numbers of the each response with the total. We did this process with the questions from one to eight, except for the last question which was an open ended question. In the last question we categorized the responses into three groups: Microsoft Office, communication tools, and other. After all responses were entered, we were ready to analyze our data. We started thinking of what we want to conclude from the data collected. We decided to use a function to find the percentage for the results and charts describing our findings.

An analysis of the qualitative data collected revealed teacher’s suggestion for what technology skills parents need for helping their children succeeded. We sent emails to the teachers that contained three open ended questions. After we got the teachers' responses, we went to Microsoft Office Word 2010 to synthesize and started coding by highlighting the similar answers. Later we categorized the coding into three groups: Microsoft Office, communication tools and, other. Lastly, we combined the interview categories with the survey categories in one Excel table to get percentages and charts which helped us answer the research question.

1. **Presentation of Findings:**

According to the data analysis, we found from the interviews that teachers suggested that Microsoft office skills have the priority that parents need to help their children succeed. Teachers think it is important because parents can help their students to do some homework by facilitating it with technology tools. This situation requires parents to know basic computers' skills to help their students accomplish their home tasks.

Moreover, teachers recommended emails as the best communication tool between parents and schools. This recommendation clarifies the importance of parents having basic skills in using emails in any email provider. Furthermore, the surveys showed significant results. Most frequent of the parents are willing to improve their technology skills and get involved with their children in the educational technology environment. (Figure 1)

*Figure 1:* Average of the parents’ educational technology involvement.

Also, most of the parents often use Microsoft Word and half of them use Microsoft PowerPoint which means they have basic skills of this tool. (Figure 2)

*Figure 2:* Average of Microsoft skills do parents have

Another thing to add that sixty-three percent of parents prefer using emails to communicate with teachers. (Figure 3)

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*Figure 3:* average of communication tools that parents prefer

Finally, each parent provided a specific technology skill he/she wanted to improve in. The figure below shows the percentage of these skills. Sixty percent of parents want to improve their skills in Microsoft office. Twenty percent of parents want to improve their skills in communication tools. The same percentages of parents want to improve their skills in different technology tools such as Twitter and Adobe Photoshop. (Figure 4)

*Figure 4:* average of technology tools skills that parents want to improve

To sum up the results, we found that the research identified the technology skills that parents need to help K-12 students' succeed in San Bernardino which are Microsoft Office and email skills.

1. **Limitations of the Design:**

Speaking of the limitations, there were three aspects that we faced during this study. First of all, time was limited. When we started to collect data, we visited some schools in the district. The principles refused collecting data from their schools unless we got permission from the district. Visiting the district and having permission needed time, and will extend the week's project to two or three weeks more. Since this is time consuming, we planned to collect data from our parents-friends.

Second of all, there were no approaches to interview teachers. Based on the data collections, we planned to interview teachers face to face, but all the teachers refused. This forced us to change the face-to-face interview to an email interview.

Third of all, there were fewer responses for the surveys. We built the surveys and distributed through a survey-provider, but the feedback was few. The unexpected results of surveys made us work more so we had to send surveys by emails to our friends who have K-12 children to get more reliable results for the research.

**Conclusion:**

To sum up, the most important technology skills for parents in San Bernardino needed to help K-12 students succeed were based on: one is the basic computer skill, which is Microsoft Office. The second is the basic communication skill, which is mastering emails. If people want to learn the above technology skills, they can follow the following steps. For using Microsoft Office, people can go to the www. Microsoft.com then accesses the training page. This page offers a breadth of solutions to suit people training needs, from classroom training to distance learning. For mastering email, the easy way is practice because practice makes perfect. For example, people can go to www.hotmail.com and create an account. Also, they can view different YouTube clips that illustrate and explain how to use a specific technology tools.

**Recommendation for Further Research:**

Since the research showed that Microsoft Office skills is what parents need to be improved to support their children in their assignments and projects, and email skills to better communicate with teachers and school we suggested that researchers might conduct a qualitative research that focuses on delivering training program to parents of K-12 students in San Bernardino. However, researchers can determine the training program plan by collecting narrative data and utilize an inductive approach. An interview to school principle, focusing group with expert trainers, and/or observing videotapes or existing documents would be proper to create a training program to the parents.

Another thing to add, the result shows the importance of parents’ involvement in their children’s performance by using technology. As result of our research, since we focused on the basic skills that parents need, there are secondary technology skills such as more communication tools through different social media that parents can use to help their children succeed. Researchers can use this point to conduct a research.

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Appendix A

**Parents Technology Skills -Parents Survey**

**This survey investigates what technology skills do parents need to help students succeed.**

Note: 5-0 (5 strongly agree to 0 strongly disagree) and multiple choices.

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1. **Do you think that mastering Microsoft office can help your children improve their academic achievement?**

5- 4- 3- 2- 1- 0

1. **My skills in using computers are:**
2. Microsoft
3. E-mail
4. Internet
5. Other…………
6. **Which tool in Microsoft office do you often use?**
7. Word
8. PowerPoint
9. Excel
10. Other…………
11. **If I don’t have computer skills, I would like to learn.**

5- 4- 3- 2- 1- 0

1. **Are you comfortable to communicate with teachers via technology tools?**

**5- 4- 3- 2- 1- 0**

1. **What kinds of technology tools do you prefer to communicate with teachers?**
2. E-mail
3. Cell-Phone
4. School website.
5. Other…………
6. **Do you believe that knowing Social Mediums (such as Facebook and Twitter) will help to control children’s behavior?**

5- 4- 3- 2- 1- 0

1. **What kinds of Social Mediums do you like to use?**
2. Facebook
3. Twitter
4. Other…………
5. **What types of technology tools do you like to improve?**

**……………………………………………………………………………………..**

**Please return this survey back to your child's teacherlease return this survey back to your child's teacher**

Appendix B

**Technology on a classroom-Teacher-Interview**

Greetings Mr /Mrs.

**I am working on a class project about "Identifying technology skills that parents need to help k-12 students in the Inland Empire succeed". Please answer these questions:**

Q1.What kinds of technology skills do you recommend parents to communicate with schools. (skills in such as cell-phones, emails, school-websites etc?

Q2. What technology skills do you think parents need to help students succeed? For examples: Microsoft office, social medias, communications tools. Please explain way?

Q3: have you ever asked your students an assignment that required technology skills? If yes, illustrate.