

2009

Parental involvement in child's education : Does it help? How can we make it better?

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Parental involvement in child's education : Does it help? How can we make it better?

Abstract

How often and in what ways do my students' parents get involved in their children's education? How important do the parents of my students think it is to get involved in their children's education? How do I find out how and how much my student's parents involve themselves in their children's education?

For those parents already involved in their children's education, how do I get these parents to increase their involvement in their children's education? How do I convince the parents who are not involved in their children's education just how important it is?

The research discussed in this paper will help to uncover solutions to these questions.

Parental Involvement in Child's Education: Does it help? How can
we make it better?

A Research Paper Presented to
Department of Educational Psychology and Foundations

Submitted
In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Art in Education

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September 2009

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This Research Paper by:

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Entitled:

Parental Involvement in Child's
Education: Does it help? How can we
make it better?

Has been approved as meeting the
research paper requirement for the degree of

Master of Art in Education: Educational Psychology:

Professional Development for Teachers

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9-16-09
Date Approved

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Chapter 1

Introduction

As an educator, it is my responsibility to ensure the educational success of all my students. This responsibility requires me to search out all barriers which may hinder the success of my students and to find ways to eliminate these barriers. In this chapter, I will introduce the importance of parental involvement in children's education. I will also state the questions I have regarding parental involvement and how it affects children's education.

Statement of the problem

In classrooms across America, there are students that all have the potential to succeed in their education, but for some reason this does not happen. I see this in my classroom all the time. My students all have the same access to the same materials, tools, and information presented in the classroom. I use a wide variety of teaching styles and techniques. The "playing field" of the classroom is "level" for all of my students, yet some of my students work up to their full potential and succeed in their academics, while others struggle just to get by, and still others fail to meet their academic potential at all. Some of the students follow the rules of the school and are very respectful to the other people in the school, while others are not. If all of my students are being

treated the same and they have equal access to the same information and supplies, and yet all are not succeeding in their education, then I must infer that the cause of the different levels of success is not in the classroom, but someplace else.

One huge variable I have no control over that affects the success of my students is the amount of parent involvement they receive from their parents regarding their education. Thinking about this variable raises some tough questions for me: How often and in what ways do my students' parents get involved in their children's education? How important do the parents of my students think it is to get involved in their children's education? How do I find out how and how much my student's parents involve themselves in their children's education? For those parents already involved in their children's education, how do I get these parents to increase their involvement in their children's education? How do I convince the parents who are not involved in their children's education just how important it is? The research discussed in this paper will help to uncover solutions to these questions.

Significance of the problem

In my nine years of teaching I have noticed that the students who appear to have parents who are involved in their children's education are more successful in their academic

endeavors than those students whose parents appear not to be involved in their children's education. My experience revealed that when parents and teachers keep in contact with each other in a positive manner, students succeed in school.

I always have some parents each year that are easy to talk with. They seek me out at least once a week, if not more often, to check up on their children's progress and to discuss any problems or concerns they or their children may have. We are able to talk through these concerns to make sure the students are right on track for success. On the other side of the coin, I also have those parents that I only see or hear from once or twice a year. I only get to talk to them if their children are acting up, being disrespectful, not following school or classroom rules or policies, or not turning in homework on a regular basis. This communication happens only because I contact them. I send home notes and leave phone messages, but many times I get no response from these parents. This lack of notable parent involvement is evident in many of my students' grades, attitude towards education, and lack of respect for the adults in the school. We must discover a way to turn this trend around. We as educators must provide opportunities for our parents to become involved in their children's education. We must insist that the parents of our students get involved in their children's education to help insure their success. Today's

children are the leaders and care takers of the world tomorrow. To insure our success means we must insure the success of our children.

When parents are involved in their children's education everybody wins. The parents win because they are involved in the whole educational process. Parents know what their children are learning and how to help them learn this information. Parents get the opportunity to develop and build strong bonds that will last a life time with their children. Parents may learn some new information themselves.

Teachers gain valuable allies to help insure the success of their students when parents are involved on their children's education. Teachers gain insight as to how the students learn, what the student's interests are, and how to motivate the students to learn.

The students are the biggest winners of all when their parents are involved. Students get the support they need both at school and at home to insure they are successful, not only in their academics, but also in their life's quests.

Not getting parents involved in their children's education can have catastrophic results. School can become prison like for some children. Students may feel unsafe and unwanted. Students may fall further behind academically each year. Some parents will harbor negative feelings towards school and will pass these

feelings down to generations of children to come. We must find a way to involve parents now.

Purpose of the paper

The purpose of this paper is to identify questions I have regarding the affects of parental involvement on their children's education as well as questions other educators and researchers have asked about the effects of increasing parental involvement in school. This paper will disclose barriers and conflicts many parents have regarding parental involvement in their children's education. Finally this paper will offer some solutions to help parents overcome these barriers and conflicts.

Definition of Parent Involvement

For this paper, I will define meaningful parent involvement as any interaction students are knowledgeable of between parents, students, and schools. Examples may include, but are not limited to, helping with homework, attending parent-teacher conferences, being a member in the schools PTO or PTA, helping students to study for tests, reading with students, attending school functions such as open house, concerts, in-school celebrations, or just talking about how important a good education is to a person.

Organization of paper

This paper is organized into five chapters. Chapter One has an introduction, statement of the problem, significance of the problem, and definitions. Chapter Two addresses the barriers of family income level and ethnicity towards parent involvement in their children's education. Chapter Three depicts other barriers parents may have which hinder their abilities to be involved in their children's education. Chapter Four will examine possible solutions to barriers many parents have in regard to parental involvement in their children's education. Finally, chapter Five will discuss possible causes and effects, with regards to solutions and expectations, in parental involvement in their children's education.

Chapter 2

Introduction

For years, educators have questioned the effects of parental involvement in a child's education. They have been questioning the many different factors that may influence the amount, type, and quality of parental involvement. In this chapter we will look at two of these factors. The first is how income level affects the amount and quality of parental involvement. The second is how ethnicity plays a role in the amount and quality of parental involvement.

Impact of income level on parental involvement

Educators and researchers have been studying the achievement levels of children of low-income families and children of wealthier families. Studies have confirmed there is a significant difference in the achievement level of children of lower-income children and children of wealthier families. These studies show that on average, the children of lower-income families achieve at a lower level than those children of wealthier families. Dearing (2006) tells us, through his research, that we must have parents involved in their children's school if we are to reduce the achievement gap between children living in low-income families and children of wealthier families.

Parental involvement is crucial if students are to get ahead in this world, and it must happen no matter what income level a child lives in. Unfortunately, according to Drummond (2004), "Studies have shown that low-income parents value education as a route to economic and social mobility, but their actual involvement often falls short of school expectations".

Dearing (2006) suggests, "Higher levels of involvement and increases in involvement are both associated with levels of performance. Knowing this information schools need to view family involvement in a positive light and promote family involvement in the schools, creating an educational environment that increases the involvement of the families that are less involved, and then help sustain that involvement across elementary school. This need is underscored by the fact that, on average, lower income families display relatively low levels of involvement that may decrease across the early schooling years". (655)

In other words, students whose parents get involved in their children's education increase the chance of academic success, but low-income families are less likely to get involved in their children's education than parents of higher-income. Also, parents of low-income tend to decrease the amount of school involvement as their children get older and advance to higher grades.

As stated earlier in the article, students of low-income families, on average, show a lower level of academic achievement than students of middle to high-income. There are various factors that contribute to this phenomenon. Dearing (2006) suggests the education level of the parents plays a role in the

amount of parental involvement in the home. Unfortunately, research has shown parents of lower-income, in general, tend to have a lower level of education than their counterparts do. This lack of education may make the parents feel inept or unqualified to help their children with their school work. Many parents do not understand the work their children are doing in school. Some parents are afraid of giving their children the wrong information, therefore hurting their children's chances of academic success.

Research comparing low-income families and families of wealthier income show that while both have similar expectations for their students; those parents of low income were less engaged in the activities at their children's school. Some low-income parents claim that they have less flexibility to be able to make it to school events. Work or job situations make it impossible to help their children with their educational endeavors. Parents of low-income have to work during the school day and are not able to get time off to visit their children's school. Many parents are at work when their children are at home doing homework and do not get home until after their children have gone to bed for the night. Many parents do not have access to transportation to their children's school.

Edwards (1999) suggests, that low-income parents spend more time working with younger students in the matters of reading and

basic math, but as the students grow older, and their education becomes more advanced, this help at home becomes less and less. Several parents that were interviewed and questioned did not feel they had adequate knowledge of the subject matters being taught in their children's school. Also, many parents may feel it is important for students to learn to work on their own and not rely on the parents for help all the time. These parents feel their children need to figure school work out on their own.

In short, parents of both low-income and parents of wealthier-income levels believe education is important. Unfortunately, parents of lower-income tend to be less involved in their children's education for a large variety of reasons. Educators need to find ways to help parents overcome these obstacles so they can help their children succeed in their education.

Role of Ethnicity in Parental Involvement.

Does ethnicity play a role in the amount and quality of parental involvement? In a word "Yes", but not in the way many would predict. Parents of different ethnicities have different views of what parental involvement is, what it looks like, and where parental involvement takes place.

Most parents believe that a good education is a key factor to a child being successful in life, regardless of their ethnicity. This being said, parents of different ethnicities

look at education differently. For example, many Latino parents expand education into areas of social and moral development. The majority of Latino parents believe moral learning is the foundation for all other learning. Latino parents also express a concern about showing respect to authority figures. This last concern may hinder the amount of parent involvement due to the chance of showing disrespect to the teacher.

On the other hand, Mexican-American and Anglo-American parents put more importance in the cognitive development of their children than the development of their motivation, self-management, and social skills.

Sheldon (2002) suggests that Caucasian and non-Caucasian parents have similar beliefs in the importance of a good education and have similar beliefs in the importance of parental involvement in their children's education. There is a similar level of parental involvement at home in both Caucasian and Non-Caucasian parents, but Caucasian parents tend to be more involved at the school than do their non-Caucasian counterparts.

As mentioned earlier in this article, parents of low-income tend to be less involved in their children's education. Parents of non-Caucasian ethnicity make up the majority of parents in the low-income bracket. This is a barrier many non-Caucasian

parents face and must try to overcome in order to become more involved in their children's education.

Throughout the years, people of different ethnic backgrounds came to the United States to make a life for themselves and for their children. Most immigrant populations spoke different languages and have different customs. This language barrier can still cause problems today. Many parents do not understand the curriculum being taught because they do not understand the English language well enough to feel comfortable in talking with teachers to find ways to help their children.

Ethnicity plays a role in parental involvement, and creates many barriers that block parental involvement. Later in this paper, we will explore some way to help tear down these barriers.

Chapter 3

Introduction

Income level and ethnicity are not the only factors that play a role in the amount of parental involvement in children's education. Where involvement takes place is also a factor. There are two main places parental involvement in children's education takes place; at home and at school. In this chapter, I will discuss the barriers blocking parents from getting involved in their children's education both at home and at school.

Barriers at School

Communication or lack thereof, is one of the largest barriers to parental involvement. This barrier can be overcome if teachers would make sure they send home weekly or monthly newsletters. Phone calls are also an easy way for teachers and parents to communicate. Email or teacher web pages are a very quick and efficient way for communication to occur, although not all families have access to a computer or the internet. Whatever the form of communication, teachers need to ensure they have open lines of communication with their families. The problem is, many teachers, for a variety of reasons, do not make the effort to communicate with parents. These reasons include, but are not limited to; 1) calling only when the student is in trouble, either academically or behaviorally, 2) not feeling comfortable talking with parents or not having enough time to talk with

parents, 3) not having enough time to establish and up-keep a web page or a newsletter on a regular basis. Some teachers feel it is the parents responsibility to contact the teachers, and some teachers think the parents just do not care. Many teachers have not been trained how to communicate with parents and some teachers are just afraid to talk to the parents.

Igo (2002) suggests that many schools do not have enough, if any, funds budgeted for parental involvement. Schools need to have funds available to get information to parents. Usually, there are no funds available to pay teachers for working and meeting with parents during non-school hours in order to help parents get involved at a time that is convenient for parents. Also, there are no funds budgeted for in-services' to train teachers how to help foster parental involvement in school.

The school building itself can be, and often is, a barrier to parental involvement. Too many schools are rundown and uninviting. Buildings are not warm and inviting to parents and students. Parents do not feel welcomed when they visit the school. Often there are not clear directions on how to get around in the building. Also, those directions are not in the language that some of the parents speak.

Barriers at Home

As mentioned earlier in this paper having a lower level of education, time constraints, and not being able to get off work

to meet with teachers or go to school events can hinder parents from getting involved in school, but there other barriers as well. I will explore these other barriers in the rest of this chapter.

A large percentage of parents who do not get involved in their children's education had a bad experience at school either as a student or a parent. Many parents had teachers they did not get along with; therefore, these parents had trouble either academically or behaviorally. Several parents did not have access to teachers and technology that would go the "extra mile" to insure the student would succeed when they were students. Due to these bad experiences, too many parents have a negative attitude toward school.

Sheldon (2002) suggests that self-efficacy, or a parent's belief in the education and skills they possess is at a sufficient level to help their children at home with their education, are a large barrier. Parents' beliefs that they possess the necessary skills and the ability to utilize these skills in a positive manner in order to help their children is crucial to developing parents that are involved in their children's education. Parent's knowledge of what is going on at school is another barrier researchers are concerned with. Parents are not keeping in contact with their children's teacher and teachers are not keeping in contact with parents. Just as

many teachers do not feel comfortable talking with parents, there are just as many, if not more, parents that do not feel comfortable talking with teachers. Parents are not asking teachers what is happening in the classroom, or what their children are being taught. The parents are also thus, not reinforcing the skills being taught at home. Too many parents have the attitude that the teacher is the professional and that the teacher knows what is best for the students. Some parents are afraid they will either be disrespectful to the teachers, or sound inferior for lack of a higher education.

Drummond (2004) suggests culture at home has an effect on parental involvement as well. In many cultures parents believe their only responsibility is to make sure the child is at school and it is the teacher's responsibility to make sure the students learn. In many households, academics is not a priority, but rather work is the parents first and highest priority. There are a significant number of families that own their own business and parents are focused on teaching their children how to run the "Family Business", rather than how to do well at school. The parents believe their children's future is in the well being and continuing of the family business.

Barton (2004) found that when a large number of parents were interviewed about what parental involvement was, the parent's ideas did not match the school's. Parents were unaware

of what was expected of them and not sure how to fulfill these expectations. A significant number of parents just did not understand how to be involved in their children's education.

Finally, too many parents lack motivation to get more involved in their children's education. They need to feel that they do make a difference in their children's education, no matter how much they are involved, because it makes a difference. Sheldon (2002) implies this is a key factor to parent involvement. The more parents feel they make a difference, the more they get involved.

Sheldon (2002) suggests that parent involvement at school has a triple impact: One, parent involvement at school allows students to see that parents take their (the student's) education seriously. Two, parent involvement at school allows parents to help students at school who need some extra help. Three, parent involvement at school allows the parents to be informed as to what is going on in school. Parents are too valuable of a resource for teachers to let go untapped. Teachers must find ways to get parents into the school to help their students. When students experience parents in their schools, students become more motivated to work harder and do better.

Chapter 4:

Introduction

Educators and researchers agree that parental involvement is a vital element in the success of children's education. There are a significant number of barriers and obstacles blocking the amount and type of parental involvement in children's education, but we are not defeated in the quest of achieving a larger quantity and better quality of parental involvement in education. In this chapter I will look at some solutions researchers have found to tear down these barriers.

Communication

The first step in fostering parental involvement in children's education is communication. Parents, teachers, and students must communicate with each other. Whether in written or oral form, there must be dialog. One means of communication is for teachers and schools to set up and maintain web pages. This is an inexpensive and easy way for schools and teachers to get information to parents and students. It is also a way for parents to get information to teachers via email or blogging. Bird (2006) suggests schools set up a computer based program that will allow parents to get on line and check up on their student's progress. This program would give up to date progress on student's grades, assignments turned in, missing assignments,

spells out in detail what parental involvement is, what parent involvement can accomplish for the student, and ways parents can get involved. It is also a guideline to help build parents confidence in themselves so they will want to be involved.

Funding as a Barrier

School districts must allocate funds to schools for parent involvement. Schools need to utilize this funding in a variety of ways so information will get to parents, get parents into the school or to school sponsored events, and to get supplies and teaching materials to parents. There needs to be funds available to pay teachers to meet with parents outside the school day so they can meet with parents at times that are conducive to the parent's busy work schedules. Schools may need to bring in a substitute or guest teacher so the classroom teacher is available to meet with parents during the school day. If parents do not have transportation to school events, the school could run a shuttle system to bring parents to school for functions such as an open house, parent teacher conferences, and school socials.

Changing Negative Past Experiences

Many parents have had a negative past experience with schools, and although schools cannot change this negative

experience, they can make sure that the new experiences parents have at and with school are positive. Politis (2004) suggests that a friendly and helpful staff will go a long way with developing relationships with parents. The school building should be a clean and well lit building. There should be clear, easy to read signs in multiple languages directing parents where to go in the building. The building should be a safe place for the students. Parents need to feel welcome every time they come to the building. Also, parents should receive reinforcement from teachers for what they are doing to help make a positive difference in their children's life. Tonn (2005) indicates that research has shown the more a parent believes they are making a positive difference in their children's education, the more they get involved.

Time

A significant number of parents said that "time" is the number one reason they were not more involved in their children's education. Educators cannot create more hours in the day, but they can help make the hours available in the day a little more user friendly. One way to do this is to use the internet. Parents can get on line when it is convenient for them to email teachers with questions and concerns. Teachers and parents can set up a time during the day when a parent is free

to contact each other by phone if needed. There also needs to be more communication at home between parents and their children. If this can't be in person, then parents can leave positive notes to their child saying "Have a good day in school today." Students need to know their parents are concerned with their education and want them to do their best.

Education

Edwards (1999) found a large number of the parents interviewed about their involvement with their child's education lacked the self-confidence needed to help their children due to their own lack of education. These parents did not know what to do to help their children be more successful in school. Educators can help these parents by holding evening classes to teach these parents how to aid in their child's education. Pamphlets explaining how to help children can be given to parents. These pamphlets should have simple tips of things parents can do both at home and at school to help their child succeed. These tips can be as simple as making sure the student has breakfast in the morning, to volunteering to chaperone a field trip. Parents need to know they can make a difference no matter how much education they may or may not have. Drummond (2004) suggests that when parents receive suggestions or information on how to become involved in their children's

education, they place a higher value on becoming involved and therefore becoming more involved themselves.

Volunteerism

Parents who volunteer at school can make a big difference in a child's educational performance. Studies by Drummond (2004) show that the students of parents who volunteer at school tend to achieve higher grades than students whose parents do not volunteer. When parents volunteer in the classroom, their physical presence not only helps children gain additional drill and practice, it also shows the value of education. Children know that other adults care and that school is important. Not all parents can volunteer at school, but those that can not only make a big difference in the life of their own child, but all the children they help.

Chapter 5:

Introduction

The research I have presented in this paper has shown parental involvement in their child's education is a vital aspect to the child's success in his or her educational quest. Parental involvement has several barriers, but fortunately, there are solutions to these barriers. As I consider my students and their parents, and reflect on the research I have done in this area, I have come to the following conclusions on the topic of parental involvement in their child's education.

Goals

Parents of my students need to be involved in the education process of their children, and my goal as a teacher is to ensure this happens: Drummond (2004) found that teachers who form strong bonds with parents and encourage involvement will have parents who get involved. This parental involvement is a key factor in my students reaching their full potential.

Communication

Communication with parents and students is crucial to getting parents involved in their children's education. As previously stated in this paper Drummond (2004) suggests that

parents who are asked by the teacher to get involved in their children's education tend to become more involved than parents who are not invited to become involved, therefore, I as the classroom teacher must be the one to initiate this communication. I know that I will need to use a variety of vehicles to communicate with the parents of my students. In the coming paragraphs, I will elaborate in further details as to the methods of communication I plan to be using with the parents of my students.

First, I will have a grade level web site that will keep parents informed as to up coming school events such as tests, field trips, picture day, school social events, etc. This web site will give parents access to an on line version of the main textbooks that are being used in the classroom. Parents will have the ability to contact me to ask questions or supply me with information I need to know about their children.

Second, I will have a weekly written forum to keep in contact with the parents who are not able to utilize the web page. I will send home a weekly folder with my students to help facilitate communication between myself and their parents. This folder will have the same information that is on the website, along with the students work they have completed throughout the week. This will help keep the parents up to date with their

child's grades. The parents and I will be able to exchange information in the form of written notes to each other using this folder. The weekly folder allows parents an inexpensive means to keep informed of student progress and to keep in touch with the teacher regardless of parent's busy work schedule.

Phone calls, both positive and negative, will be made to parents in regards to the progress of my students. Too many times teachers only call home to talk to parents when the student is either misbehaving or struggling academically. I plan on sharing the positive things going on in the classroom with the parents, too. Parents will have the opportunity to have positive interactions in regards to how and what the students are doing in school.

Contacting parents via the telephone is a more personal forum of communicating than notes are. This personal contact will help to encourage my student's parents to become even more involved than they already are. I will be able to build relationships with the parents of my students, and this relationship will make it easier for me to make suggestions to my parents.

Finally, I hope to reach many parents through "Home Visits". Here I can see first hand where students spend the majority of their time and will be able to offer suggestions to

parents to help them get involved in their children's education. It will also be a valuable tool for parents to enlighten me on things I can do at school to help their children. Home visits let the students know that I am personally communicating with their parents. This will show the children that their parents are involved in their education and that they believe an education is important.

Education and Past Experience

While it is true I cannot change the education level of my student's parents, nor can I change the parents past educational experiences, I can enlighten them as to what is going on in my classroom in a positive way. I can help my parents feel good about school and the educational process of their children. I can entice the parents to become involved in their children's education. I will try to insure that parents start to think of school as a positive place for their children to be.

To keep parents informed as to what is being taught in the classroom, I will send home student-parent interactive homework. This homework will allow parents and students to work together. It will build the skill level of the students and build the confidence level of parents. To help increase the self-confidence of the parents, I will start the school year with easy or simple interactive homework, and then increase the

difficulty level as the year goes on. Student-parent interactive homework will include, but not be limited to, reading together, writing stories together, working on language worksheets, and completing math fact sheets. I will also make myself available for questions parents and students may have about the assignments.

As I already stated, I cannot change the past experiences parents have had with schools and teachers, but I can make school as pleasant as possible for the parents. Parents will be treated with respect. The lines of communication will be kept open with parents. Parents will be contacted when their children have accomplished something positive, not just when their children have made a poor or negative choice. Parents need to be kept informed of the negative things their children do, but there must be a ratio of three to one of the positive things children have accomplished compared to the negative choices students make.

Ethnicity and Income

As stated earlier in this paper, Sheldon (2002) found that ethnicity plays a role in how a parent becomes involved in school and if it happens at all. To overcome this barrier I will embrace the customs of different ethnicities and cultures that are found in my classroom. I will tie the different beliefs and

customs into my teaching which will allow parents to use these customs and beliefs to aid the education of their children. I will also find out what the parents are doing now to involve themselves in school and build off of that.

Income level and time constraints impacts the amount and type of parental involvement. I need to be aware of the time constraints some of my parents have due to their job situation. I need to remember that not all parents are home in the evenings with their children. Some parents may not be available during school hours or when school events are taking place. Many parents need to work nights to supply the necessities of basic living for their family.

In order to help break down these barriers, I will create a "Voluntary Parent Involvement Contract" with my parents and students. This contract will define parental involvement and it will spell out exactly what parent involvement consists of. This contract will provide simple ways parents can become involved in their children's education. The contract will help parents set goals on increasing their involvement. It will make parents, students, and me as the teacher, more accountable for making sure they're involved in the student's education.

General Tips

There are a significant number of parents who are not sure what they can do in regards to parental involvement in their children's education. I will fill this void with weekly tips of things parents can do. These tips will be inserted on a section of the web page and in the weekly folder that is sent home with the students. These tips will include, but are not limited to, the following;

- Inviting the parent to the classroom
- Inviting the parents to help on a field trip
- Inviting the parents to join the PTO
- Encouraging parents to stay involved even when the student moves on to higher grade levels
- Setting up a library in the home
- Reading and sharing the parent's favorite stories and books with their student
- Telling children about their family history
- Limiting the amount of television and electronic game time

- Setting homework time and place
- Setting a time and place for families to be together daily
- Encouraging students to tell parents what they did at school that day
- Reinforcing that parents talk with their student and let them know listening and paying attention at school is important

I know there is a level of parental support and involvement in my classroom now, and this involvement takes many different forms, but if the above is implemented, I hypothesize there will be a significant increase in parental involvement. There will also be an increase in both the quantity and quality of parental involvement. Research dictates that this increase in parental involvement will lead to an increase in student learning, which will in turn lend itself to students being successful in their academic ventures.

My Wish List

There are just too many things that can impact the educational success of the student for one person to have control over all of them. Teachers need the help of parents to insure the well being of our students. Parents spend more time

with the students than any other person. Parents are the teacher's most valuable and important resource, and I must take full advantage of this resource. Unfortunately, there are several barriers to this powerful resource. I have already addressed many of these barriers and the solutions to them. There are, however, some barriers I cannot control, but if I could, I would like to see the following things change in my school to help insure and increase parental involvement.

I wish more funding was available to help start programs to get parents involved. This funding would help train parents on how they can become more involved in their child's education. The funds would also help buy supplies for families. Too many of my parents are in the low income level and do not have money left over after paying their bills to bring educational materials into their home for the student. I wish my school offered night classes to help the parents who are at a lower education level and do not fully understand what their children are learning in school. I wish my school offered English classes to help parents who speak and read a different language so these parents would be able to communicate and share their thoughts and ideas about their children with me. If I could accomplish these items on my wish list, we would have a good start on obtaining 100% of parents involved in their children's

education, an involvement that is crucial to the academic success of the student.

Conclusion

Parents need to remember the most important thing they can do to help insure a positive and successful educational experience for their children is to get involved. There are many ways for parents to participate in their children's education. From volunteering to help in the classroom, to setting up a place and time at home for the children to study, to joining the PTO, it all helps. Parents also need to remember their children's learning does not start or stop at school. Children are born with a natural curiosity to learn. Parents must encourage their children to expand on this curiosity, and set up activities to help encourage and foster their children to want to learn more. Educators also need to understand the importance of parental involvement and do everything possible to get the parents to take an active role in their children's education. When parents and schools implement the ideas and strategies suggested, a child's chance at a successful educational experience is significantly improved. Improving children's learning experiences will help children want to learn more. The more children learn, the better off, we, as a society will be.

Our future lies in the hands of our curious and eager to learn children.

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