

Short Communication

Family Involvement in K- 12 Education; An Exploratory Look at Best Educational Practices

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Abstract

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Learning is commonly associated to an institution's performance and capability to transfer knowledge from the instructors to the students. However, as shown in previous studies, it was proven that family involvement has a great influence on the holistic learning of students. Family participation and guidance within and outside school premises provide students with healthy learning experience. This may lead to better school performance, improved social skills, and success. Hence, family involvement is encouraged.

Keywords: Family, Parent Involvement, Graduation, Educational Programs, Learning and Development

INTRODUCTION

According to the National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition (2018), many students referred to family involvement as the holistic support families provide their children. In the previous years, the way schools and communities focused on family involvement have greatly changed. Today, the goal is to develop alliances with families that will encourage and support the children to learn and grow (Gordon et al., 2017)

Successful partnerships between families, communities, and schools reflect an understanding of diversity within families as well as the differences in cultural and socio-economic conditions.

An individual approach to family involvement helps build strong relationships, which in return will improve outcomes for the youth.

Family involvement in the child's education is considered to be one of the most important factors in a student's success. Higher test scores and graduation rates of students support this claim, which also shows that family involvement increases young people's chances of pursuing higher education. Based on the findings of a study from 1993 to 2005, the percentage of pre-kindergarten children (ages 3 to 5), whose family members read to them three times or more every week,

have higher test scores (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

Approaches for an Effective Family participation

Family participation is generally supported by the head of schools and implemented by directors, teachers, and staff for it upholds the interests of the students, offers individualized options, and includes family involvement in school programs (Meegan and Morley, n.d.). Traditionally, "participation" usually means that families participate in an activity with their children at school or in the community. However, given the wide range of barriers and individual differences, schools and communities should facilitate and promote participation in different ways and at various levels.

Some of the Most Effective Approaches to Promote Family Involvement include

1. Offering a variety of opportunities to participate

2. Supporting family participation in any school or community programs;
3. Considering individual and cultural differences;
4. Enabling the participation of everyone regardless of their educational attainment and;
5. Providing support to improve participation skills.

Parents and families have the most direct and lasting influence on their child's learning and social skills development (NAEYC, 2018). When parents are involved, students gain more confidence in new environments. Early interventionists need to speak with families to establish this kind of relationship early in a child's education. In most cases, families are essential partners in promoting positive social skills. Thus, home visits, kindergarten, school visits, phone calls, newsletters, informal notes, notices, workshops, and face-to-face communication can be used to inform families about specific matters concerning their children.

Along with familial involvement, effective counseling strategies should also be implemented to support the student. Early childcare providers should involve the parents once their children are registered in programs and should ask for help regarding the family's goals for their child (Parents Magazine, 2018). Additional sensitivity to family and cultural differences is also crucial and can be improved by one's ability to listen and through communication. The acceptance of differences within families is important for each parent and child to have a greater sense of belonging in early childhood programs.

Mutual respect, cooperation, shared responsibility, and the willingness to negotiate when disagreements arise between parents and care professionals are needed to achieve the common goals of early childhood orientation and education.

Factors Influencing Students and Families

The experiences of schools and district curricula discussed in this report support the conclusion that family involvement can have a significant impact on student performance.

While it is impossible to solely attribute the academic performance or achievements of other students in these schools or districts to the parental involvement in activities, it seems that their involvement is an important feature in many schools. For example, attendance at general or face-to-face meetings allows parents to monitor school and classroom activities as well as coordinate their efforts with the teachers to promote acceptable classroom behaviors while ensuring that their child accomplishes assigned homework. Teachers with very dedicated parents tend to pay more attention to these students, and more likely to identify initial problems that may hinder students' learning (Helping students direct their learning, n.d.). It has also been found that

positive interactions between parents and teachers positively influence the self-perception and professional satisfaction of the teacher. In this case, schools who consider family involvement a priority alongside a strong curriculum and high standard engagement for all students tend to achieve better results.

Ways to Advance the Child's Education

Studies illustrate that children who read at home with their parents tend to work better at school. Thus, it is essential for the parents to show their children the enjoyment from reading appropriate books, magazines, and newspapers at home. Other resources include portals around the library, which encourages the parents and the children to personally obtain library cards (Steps you can take to improve your children's education, n.d.). Hence, it promotes interaction and strengthens the bond between them.

Moreover, parents should keep themselves updated on the progress of their children by meeting teachers and local policymakers, which can be achieved through general meetings. Parental involvement in school, as represented by attendance at general meetings, consultation with teachers, presence in school events, or through volunteer or service works on committees, emerged significantly between 1999 and 2007 but dropped by the year 2012. However, in 2007, 89 percent of students from kindergarten across the twelfth grade had parents who attended a general meeting compared with the 78 percent and 87 percent back in 1999 and 2012, respectively. In 2007, 78 percent of parents attended a scheduled meeting with a teacher while 74 percent of parents attended a school event. Within the same year, 46 percent of parents volunteered at school or served on a committee. The percentage of parent's participation in various activities increased compared to the data back in 1999 with 73%, 65%, and 37% involvement, respectively. However, the trend changed by 2012, wherein the proportion of the parents who attended a scheduled meeting had decreased to 76 percent, while the proportion of those who volunteered or served on a committee had decreased to 42 percent (US Department of Education, 2001).

Proper Use of Television

Exposure to television greatly influences the academic performance of students. In a study by Barak and colleagues (2011), it was observed that animated movies improved the understanding and comprehension of students on scientific concepts. This may be attributed to the utilization of three learning styles present in the use of multimedia through seeing, learning and sensing. However, based on another study, the academic

performance of children who watch television greater than ten hours every week or greater than two hours every day drops tremendously. Thus, it is recommended that parents limit the amount of time spent by the children in front of the television. Instead, help the children to choose educational programs. Correspondingly, parents can watch and talk about specific programs with their children for this will help and guide the children to better understand the stories (ERIC - Education Resources Information Center, n.d.).

Importance of family Routine and schedules

Studies show that successful students have parents who form and maintain family routines. Similarly, nursing students surveyed by Henderson and colleagues (2012) exhibited better task accomplishment and learning under routine practices. Through routines, the children's attendance in school is ensured every day while regular homework schedule is set in a favorable environment at home (How to Set Up a Family Routine That Works, 2014). Hence, since students find it difficult to organize their own schedule, it is essential that teachers and parents help and guide them with time management to promote better learning (van der Meer et al., 2010).

CONCLUSION

Parent involvement in their child's education directly influences the success of the student. As shown by several studies, students should take advantage of the educational programs and opportunities provided by their communities. Whether that's inside of school or outside of school, it is the student's responsibility to take advantage of the provided resources and have the support of their family alongside them. This support coming from family members can help with motivating the student and provide a proper foundation for them as they venture out into the world after graduating. It is also critical to consider the personality and mindset of the student. For example, if a student opts to take part in extra-curricular activities because they find it meaningful or developmental – parents should be supportive as those activities may further enhance holistic learning.

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