


2010

A Teacher's Guide for Increased Parent Involvement in Low Socioeconomic and Highly Diverse Areas.

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A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR INCREASED PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN LOW
SOCIOECONOMIC AND HIGHLY DIVERSE AREAS

A Project

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Education

by

Alyssa Newby

June 2010

ABSTRACT

A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR INCREASED PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN LOW SOCIOECONOMIC AND HIGHLY DIVERSE AREAS

by

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Secondary research was performed to obtain an overview of parent involvement in schools with low socioeconomic status and ethnically diverse populations. Within the project, different ethnicities' typical values and perceptions of appropriate involvement in a child's education were presented. These perceptions often contradict educators' perceptions of parent involvement, which generally takes on a white, middle class perspective. The purpose of the project is to better inform educators about the variety of ethnicities. As a result, this project addressed challenges to parent involvement and suggested possible solutions/interventions to bridge the gap between educators and families.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION
Problem Statement

Lack of parent involvement in highly diverse or low socioeconomic areas has been an ongoing issue in education. “Evidence has shown that parents and educators define involvement differently” (Anderson & Minke, 2007, p. 311). There are many different perceptions of what parent involvement is, how it looks, and how it is accomplished. “Parent involvement includes parenting styles, communication between educators and families, volunteering in the classroom, support for learning at home, participating in decision making, and collaborating with the community” (Mattingly, 2002, p. 551). In low socioeconomic and highly diverse areas, differing perceptions of parent involvement often creates barriers between educators and families. Educators tend to have a white, middle class expectation for parent involvement. This expectation may include parents volunteering in the classroom, chaperoning field trips, or attending after school programs and evening events. Families of non-majority races or a low socioeconomic status tend to have different beliefs about their responsibility to participate in the education of their children. In 1993 a national survey reported, “95 percent of the parents of public school children reported that it was very important for schools to encourage parents to take a more active part in educating their children” (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1993; Griffith, 1998, p. 53-54). It is also important for teachers to better understand the demographics they serve in order to help bridge the gap between them and the students’ families from low socioeconomic and diverse backgrounds. This paper will identify the varying values/expectations of parent involvement within several different ethnic communities in America and within low

socioeconomic status areas, as well as looking the challenges faced when trying to increase parent involvement in low socioeconomic and diverse areas.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to inform educators about the diverse student populations they may serve and provide educators with knowledge and strategies to help increase parent involvement. Two questions often loom large in school districts these days: How can schools more effectively involve parents from diverse populations groups? How can schools deal with the sudden increases in minority student population? (Azzam, 2009). Educating a child takes many people working together, including educators, community members, and the families of the children. However, educators and families often fail to connect. Educators tend to talk through parents and not to parents; parents often feel alienated from their child's education. Too often neither parents nor educators are aware of the others' understanding of what constitutes effective parent involvement. In highly diverse or low socioeconomic status areas, parent involvement is poor from the point of view of educators because parents rarely volunteer in the classroom, attend field trips, or participate in after school events. "Educators sometimes misjudge immigrant families' ability to contribute to their children's school success" (August & Shanahan, 2006; Borba, 2009). From the point of view of the parents, it is difficult for them to be visible at school because they are busy taking care of their family or working; often family members have more than one job or work opposite hours to educators. "However, families powerfully influence the academic achievement of their children, and most take a strong interest in what happens in schools" (Au, 2002; Borba, 2009). "Children's experiences in kindergarten and grade one lay a fundamental foundation, and though schools and teachers are important, parents are key in determining their children's experiences" (Kao & Turney, 2009). To help

educators better understand the populations they may serve, the author did secondary about the perceptions of parent involvement from the point of view of various ethnic groups and families living in low socioeconomic areas. The author proposed possible solutions and strategies educators might use to help bridge the gap between themselves and the families they serve.

Scope/Limitations of the Project

This project investigated the relationship between the socioeconomic status and ethnicity of parents and their involvement in their children's schooling. It discussed the barriers families from low socioeconomic status and different non-majority groups (African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Muslims) face when it comes to their children's education. Lastly, included strategies educators may use to more effectively work with non-majority families. It is important for educators to learn about the different ethnicities they teach so that they can make connections with the families and the children. Educators who teach in highly diverse or low socioeconomic areas often have to put forth extra effort to successfully involve families.

Technology has become a focal point of education. However, because of the economic barriers families from low socioeconomic status face, technology is not always an effective way for educators and families to communicate, and thus, technology is not included in this project. There are also many ways educators can integrate different cultures into the curriculum they use. Integrating different cultures can be approached in many different ways and should be determined by the educators themselves. Therefore, curricular incorporation was not explored. Lastly, state standards are not affected by parent involvement. State standards are created by a team of legislators and educators to help drive and focus an educator's instruction. Therefore, state standards were not discussed.

Definitions

Parent Involvement: the statute defines parental involvement as the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring—

- that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning;
- that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school;
- that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and
- that other activities are carried out, such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA (Department of Education, 2004)

Socioeconomic Status: based on household income versus the number of dependant family members, whether or not a student qualifies for federal subsidized school lunch program (Corrigan, n.d.)

Ethnicity: exhibiting behaviors which reflect specific cultural values (Tyler, et al., 2008)

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Despite high student aspirations, large achievement gaps persist among students by income and ethnicity contribute to this gap. Parent involvement is also a large factor in a child's education. This chapter is organized into three areas: low socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and parent involvement and its effect on the achievement gap. Within these areas, this chapter examines the challenges schools face when trying to close the achievement gap and presents strategies educators can try to increase parent involvement.

Low Socioeconomic Status (SES)

A concern in the education world today is the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and student achievement. There is an achievement gap between students who come from low socioeconomic status families and those who come from middle to high SES families. Students from low SES tend to struggle with school. This achievement gap leads to a higher dropout rate for students from low SES. "Students from low socio-economic background constitute the largest population of individuals considered to be at-risk of not graduating from high school" (Caldwell & Ginther, 1996, p. 1). In addition, lower percentages of these students pursue post secondary education. "Only 47 percent of high school graduates in the bottom income quartile go to college compared to 85 percent of students from the top income quartile" (Pathways to College Network, 2007, p. 1). While in school, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds succeed at lower rates than those coming from middle class families. "Socio-economic status (SES) impacts student achievement because school practices do not account for the various needs students have" (Low Socio-Economic Think Tank Strategic Plan, 2003, p. 3).

There are many different theories on how this achievement gap can be narrowed but few have been systematically tested and proven to work. “It is consistently found that student achievement is greatly influenced by socioeconomic status and that the more affluent the student’s background the better they will perform” (Tajalli & Opheim, 2004, p. 44). The well known Coleman report found that “next to a student’s family, the socioeconomic status of his or her school is the single most important determinant of academic success” (Kahlenberg, 2006, p. 23).

Up until now, the blame for the lack of success of low SES students has been placed primarily on the schools and teachers. The No Child Left Behind Act has placed more pressure upon states and schools to ensure that all students are achieving regardless of any outside forces that may affect their learning. However, the role of parent involvement is now acknowledged as an important determinant of student achievement. “Eligibility for Title 1 money is now contingent on the development of school-family compacts in which families and schools declare their mutual responsibility for children’s learning...The first type of involvement, parents’ involvement in decision making, has been mandated by Title 1-funded programs because of a strong belief that educational programs will be more relevant and effective if parents participate in the development of these programs” (Baker & Kessler-Sklar, 2000, p. 101-102).

Cultural differences are also being viewed as relevant as socioeconomic status. An example of these differences is that students from different socioeconomic groups are taught to think about problems in different ways based on their upbringing. One study focused on math and problem solving skills. Many students from low-SES were resistant to learning through problem solving and discussion, whereas students from a higher-SES were comfortable making sense of the math themselves. “Low-SES students wanted to just be told how to do it and be told

the answer” (Lubienski, 2007, p. 54). Students were led in a discussion about what they thought the mathematical ideas were, but many low-SES students became confused and were unable to decide which ideas were right or wrong. “Higher-SES students were able to see mathematical ideas and procedures that were repeated in problems and lower-SES students were distracted by the real-world aspects of the problems” (Lubienski, 2007, p. 54). Lower-SES students often missed the mathematical point of a problem because they used a more common-sense approach to solving a problem. The study further shows that the reason behind lower-SES students’ struggle is because in daily life, families from the working class often separate work and play and tend to be more directive, showing or telling kids the answers to problems. “Kids from middle-upper class tend to be questioned and guided to solve the problem themselves” (Lubienski, 2007, p. 54).

Socioeconomic inequalities in non-academic settings also impact school achievement. Children from low income families often do not have health insurance, so they do not get routine medical and dental care. This lack of health care leads to increased absences and health issues that affect children’s learning (Rothstein, 2008). Children from poverty are more prone to asthma which results in sleeplessness, irritability, and lack of exercise (Rothstein, 2008). Lower birth weight can cause lead poisoning and iron-deficiency, which may lead to diminished cognitive ability and more behavior problems (Rothstein, 2008). “Their parents typically do not get health care leading to sickness in the family, and often they fall behind in rent and move so children move schools often” (Rothstein, 2008, p. 8). Their parents often have low paying jobs and can be laid off more easily, causing stress and worry about getting basic needs met. “Parents often work two or more jobs leaving little time or energy to guide and nurture children” (Corrigan, n.d., p. 2). “They tend to live in tough neighborhoods and do not always have the best examples around

them, and have fewer opportunities to travel and be exposed to the world around them” (Rothstein, 2008, p. 8). Children are generally not read aloud to as often or exposed to complex language and large vocabulary (Rothstein, 2008, p. 8). Children are more often from single-parent families resulting in less adult attention (Rothstein, 2008). Families also have access to fewer resources than their middle-class counterparts (Rothstein; 2008, p. 8). Middle-class networks frequently make available various resources that parents use to deal with such situations, thereby attaining a desired outcome for their children (Horvot, Weininger, & Lareau; 2003). In contrast, working-class and poor parents inevitably responded to such situations in a purely individualized fashion (Horvot, et al., 2003). Family members typically have little education themselves, and so educational achievement is seldom emphasized and older siblings are often responsible for taking care of younger siblings (Corrigan, n.d.).

There is no single cause for why students from low SES families achieve at a lower rate than those from middle to high SES status. Schools did not create these problems, and on their own they cannot solve them (Levin, 2007). A first step is to make sure that the schools low-SES children attend have all the resources provided to children in higher SES areas, including qualified teachers and teachers who stay longer than a few years (Kahlenberg, 2006). In some cases low-income districts form partnerships with middle-class suburban districts, through which some urban students attend middle-class suburban schools and some suburban students attend magnet schools in the city (Kahlenberg, 2006).

Social and economic reforms can also affect low-SES students. In one article Rothstein (2008) gave several suggestions: Ensure that all students receive good pediatric and dental care from school based clinics; expand existing low income housing to help keep kids in one school; provide higher quality early childhood care so children are learning from an early age; increase

minimum wage and earned income; promote mixed income housing developments to clean up neighborhoods; and fund after school programs so that students have opportunities to experience things other than television. Smaller class sizes also increase achievement in every subject at challenged schools (Tajalli & Opheim; 2004). Schools can help by committing more resources to those students who most need them and ensuring that low-socioeconomic and minority students get the best teachers, the richest curriculum, the smallest class sizes and the most careful guidance (Lubienski, 2007).

Increasing parent involvement has also shown positive impact on closing the achievement gap in low SES. Some strategies for increasing parent involvement in children's education include: promoting support networks, garnering resources through work, and conquering time and space challenges (Weiss, Mayer, Kreider, Vaughan, Dearing, Hencke, & Pinto, 2003). In addition, structural supports can also facilitate education involvement among working mothers, such as scheduling convenient times for family-related school activities, school staff visiting parent job sites, work places offering scheduling flexibility, and on-site workplace elementary schools (Weiss, et al., 2003).

A few school districts in Wake County North Carolina are experimenting with integrating students based on socioeconomic status. The school districts are allowing "no more than 40 percent of students to be eligible for free or reduced lunch, or [sic] have more than 25 percent of students performing below grade level" in each school (Kahlenberg, 2006, p. 22). Theoretically, schools with a high concentration of poverty are often more difficult environments in which to learn. There is higher teacher turnover, lower parent involvement, and high student mobility. Kahlenberg (2006) states that students in high poverty schools are often surrounded by peers who are more likely to misbehave and are more apathetic to learning. In an integrated school

there is not a high concentration of poverty in one building, and there are different role models for students. Studies “have shown that when children from low-income backgrounds are exposed to an emotionally supportive home environment in which academic success is affirmed, their academic achievement scores improve tremendously” (Okpala, Okpala, & Smith, 2001, p. 115), these strategies will provide students with more positive role models. Kahlenberg (2006) suggests integration in districts that are mostly high poverty by drawing in students from private schools by having each school offer a specialty. Another approach would be to partner a majority low income district with a majority middle class district and bus students. Kahlenberg (2006) states that the results of these experiments show that low income students perform better in integrated schools than in non-integrated schools.

There is increasing awareness that the SES achievement gap is a problem that is not just for the schools to address. There needs to be change in the way schooling is offered so that these children are not left behind to continue the circle of poverty. One recommendation the Achievement Gap Task Force has made is to, “provide achievement gap school districts structured, rigorous, and culturally relevant curriculum that includes: expanded access to exemplary programs proven to increase academic achievement for students; increased focus on STEM curricula areas; and continuation on state learning standards and the assessments that measure those standards and open accountability to results,” (Achievement Gap Study, 2009, p. 3-4).

Ethnicity

Socioeconomic status is not the only contributor to the achievement gap. One of the largest, yet most controversial, contributors, is a lack of multicultural understanding of the students in the classrooms. The disparity between the Eurocentric view most educators follow

and the cultures in which they teach has been an issue since Europeans settled in the Americas. “For many ethnic minority students, their introduction to public schooling in the United States includes an introduction to sanctioned behaviors and expectations that often reflect Western or mainstream cultural values,” (Tyler, et al., 2009, p. 280). Education in America has taken on a Eurocentric point of view, forgetting that not every child in the class is from a European/American culture. Some students may not be able to easily conform, possibly contributing to the high dropout rates among minorities. Only “about 52 percent of African-American and 56 percent of Hispanic students graduate from high school on time, as compared to 76 percent of their white peers.” (Evans, 2005, p. 586).

The U.S. Department of Education states since “two thirds of public school population will be African American, Asian American, American Latino, or Native American by 2020” (Tyler, et al., 2008, p. 280), the importance of understanding the student population for educators is becoming more and more pertinent. To be able to understand the students, educators must recognize that students of ethnicity are socialized in two different ways: school and home life. Cultural discontinuity is created because behaviors expressed at school are based on learning preferences, while behaviors which would normally take place at home are discontinued while at school. Cultural discontinuity is evidenced by the differences between behaviors exhibited at school and behaviors exhibited at home. Many students experience discontinuities throughout their school life, but these discontinuities are more evident in students of ethnic minority. “In 1999, 18 percent of Black students and 13 percent of Hispanic or Latino students in kindergarten through twelfth grade had repeated at least one grade. These retention rates are higher than the nine percent of white students who had repeated a grade” (Wong & Hughes, 2006, p. 645). The retention rates may be related to the cultural discontinuity the students experienced.

“The education system tends to take away the culture and identity of minority students by not allowing these students to exhibit their culture (and therefore their identity) by mainly teaching subjects from a Western view point...Once students enter the classroom, it is explained (subconsciously or consciously) that their cultural behaviors are not conducive to optimal learning” (Tyler, et al., 2008, p. 282). At this point, students of ethnicity must decide whether or not to conform to the norm and adhere to the classroom culture or to stay true to their roots. Mainstream culture-based activities promote cultural discontinuity.

Mainstream Cultural Values

The values of the mainstream culture in America are twofold: individualism and competition. Individualism is a person’s disposition toward fundamental autonomy, independence, individual recognition, solitude, and the exclusion of others (Tyler, et al., 2008). In order for students to be successful, they must achieve without the help or guidance of others. An individual’s identity is bound by materialistic things and they feel they are only responsible for themselves. Competition is another characteristic of the mainstream culture. Competition is being preoccupied with doing better than others (Tyler, et al., 2008). Individualism and competition are two values that are often not present in minority cultural values. If educators provide positive approaches for dealing with the issue of diversity by having programs for minorities, having parents as advisers, and providing multicultural curricula in the classroom (Baker & Kessler-Sklar, 2000), may help bridge the gap between mainstream values and values of minority families.

“How families create positive environments for their children to develop in is an important question for developmental and family psychology” (Davis-Kean & Sexton, 2009, p.

309). The next section of the chapter will examine the cultural values of four American minority groups. These values will be compared to those of mainstream American culture.

African American Values

African Americans communities embrace three main values: communalism, movement, and verve. “Communalism is the perceived fundamental interdependence of people” (Tyler, et al., 2008, p. 284). People act with the notion that duty to the group is more important than individual rights and privileges. A kinship between family members and social identity is tied to group membership. Sharing is promoted because it solidifies the importance of social interconnectedness. Communalism is viewed to be similar to collectivism (Tyler, et al., 2008).

“Movement is expressed in many ways; dance, polyrhythm, percussiveness, and musical beat” (Tyler, et al., 2008, p. 285). A person with movement orientation prefers physical movement, music, and rhythm, especially in speech, thought, and behavioral patterns. This is why educators experience restlessness with some students of African American descent.

“Verve is defined as the tendency for a high level of physical stimulation” (Tyler, et al., 2008, p. 285).

Mainstream American cultural values are different than African American values because American values are based on individualism whereas African American values involve communalism (working together).

To help increase parent involvement among African American families, educators may begin by inviting African American families to participate in physical education or music programs. Ask the families to organize a performance at a school function, such as a multicultural night or music concert. Educators may invite African American families to read literature which pertains to their culture to the students in the class.

Asian American Values

Asian American values include collectivism, conformity to norms, emotional self-control, humility, achievement, and respect of/for authority. “Collectivism is defined as being able to establish interdependence between the self and the group” (Tyler, et al., 2008, p. 286). Many Asian cultures believe conforming to the norms is a safe way to continue order in the community and to maintain harmony. What is more evident in Asian American students is their determination to succeed. The determination to succeed gives Asian Americans family recognition and is held in high regard (Tyler, et al., 2008). Another value which is evident in the classroom is the respect educators receive from the Asian American students. This is because Asian American children are taught at a young age that educators deserve the utmost respect.

Asian American values tend to follow the values of mainstream American values because Asian American members believe conforming to mainstream norms is safe. However, Asian American members do this in order to continue and maintain harmony.

To involve Asian American families in their children’s education, educators may invite Asian American families to participate in a multicultural event where the families can display artifacts that are relevant to their culture. At this event, the Asian American families can explain the significance of their artifacts to the other participants. Educators may also encourage Asian American families to reach out to other families in their community to provide support to other families whom are struggling to be more involved in their children’s education.

Latino Values

Latinos are considered the most diverse ethnic group in America. Despite this diversity, most Latinos are raised to strongly identify with their ethnic group, to cooperate and socialize actively. They are sensitive toward the feelings of others, and they respect adults within the

community (Tyler, et al., 2008). Collectivism is also a main cultural theme. An interconnectedness is not only apparent within families, but throughout the community. Latinos are often able to participate in many activities at one time (Tyler, et al., 2008).

Latino Values are different from mainstream American values by their strong identification to their ethnic groups and their respect for others within their community. Mainstream American values concern the individual, not the group members.

To help educators increase parent involvement among their Latino population, educators may invite Latino families to host before/after school events, such as cooking or dancing lessons for the school's students and staff. The Latino families may also perform a traditional dance at a multicultural event or organize a potluck for an evening school event.

Native American Values

Because of the unique cultures and languages of the many Native American tribes, Native Americans have many different perceptions of child-rearing and learning. Many Native American cultures value cooperation and sharing, harmony with nature, noninterference, a deep respect for elders, and a present-time orientation (Tyler, et al., 2008). There is an orientation toward family and group function. Whatever belongs to the individual also belongs to the group. Survival of an individual is equal to, but not more important than, the survival of the community and family. Native Americans relate a person to their family and background, as opposite to their profession. Native Americans generally greet a person with questions like "Where do you come from?" and "Who is your family?" (Tyler, et al., 2008, p. 288).

Noninterference and harmony are related values. Allowing situations to unfold without interference allows for the individual to eventually find harmony. Breaking this natural occurrence only causes more turmoil for the individual (Tyler, et al., 2008). Lastly, Native

Americans believe in the here and now approach to life. They do not dwell on the past and do not fret about the future; they take pleasure in the moment in which they are living.

Mainstream American values involve competition and individualism, which are opposite of Native American values of cooperation and sharing.

Educators may ask Native American families in their classroom to participate in science units which involve nature, such as soil or animals. The Native American families can organize a field trip, like a nature walk, to provide an opportunity to observe what the students have learned occur in the real world. Native American families may also participate in a multicultural event where they perform a tradition dance or ritual.

Discontinuity between the cultures is a reason the achievement gap is wider for students of minority cultures. The majority of educators are white females. Combine the discontinuity between cultures with a Western curriculum most schools use, and this explains at least one reason why there is a large gap between students from minority cultures and those from the mainstream group. "In order for teachers to be effective with diverse students, it is crucial that they first recognize and understand their own worldviews; only then will they be able to understand the world views of their students" (McAllister & Irvine, 2009, p. 3). When educators understand their own worldviews and the worldviews of their student, this will open the doors to a new understanding of other cultures and will allow the educator to be open-minded and empathetic. Another part of this training should include looking at the current curriculum and working with coaches, principals, and grade level team members to supplement standard curriculum with empowering multicultural texts and lessons. In addition, "spending on bilingual education had a positive impact in the early stages of education" (Tajalli & Opheim; 2004, p. 51).

When educators open the path of communication with parents, many discontinuities can be ameliorated. “Specifically, parent participation in education is associated with increased student achievement, better school attendance, increased achievement motivation, reduced dropout rate, better emotional adjustment, and improved social behavior and interactions with peers” (Wong & Hughes, 2006, p. 646). Unfortunately, communication between families and educators and family participation in education among minority families is low for various reasons. Hispanic parents, especially Spanish-speaking parents, report low levels of communication with the school and a low sense of shared responsibility for their childrens’ education. “Hispanic, African-American, and Asian-American parents reported less participation in school activities than did white parents” (Griffith, 1998, p. 69). However, studies show that parent involvement is predictive of student achievement for Hispanics (Wong & Hughes; 2006).

Parent Involvement

The definition of parent involvement has changed throughout the years from an exclusive focus on specific activities and roles played by caregivers such as help with homework, school-home notes, school-based parent workshops, and encouragement of parents to “join the PTA, provide merchandise for the bake sale, and show up at times specified by the school” (Chrispeels, 1996; Zellman & Waterman, 1998; Fishel & Ramirez, 2005, p. 373) to an inclusive emphasis on a wide range of parent activities that support children’s learning.

Although the definition of parent involvement continues to evolve, the majority of research on the effects of parent involvement programs supports the activity-based typological definition proposed by Epstein (Epstein, 1987 and 1995; Fishel & Ramirez, 2005). Epstein and Dauber state that there are six types of involvement within a school’s comprehensive program to

share responsibilities with families for the education of their children. The first type of involvement is “*basic obligations of families* including providing for children’s health and safety, developing parenting skills and child-rearing approaches that prepare children for school and maintaining healthy child development” (Epstein & Dauber, 1991, p. 290).

The second type, “*basic obligations of schools* includes communications with families about school programs and children’s progress” (Epstein & Dauber, 1991, p. 291). The third “*involvement at school* includes parent and other volunteers who assist teachers, administrators, and children in classrooms or in other areas of the school” (Epstein and Dauber, 1991, pg 290). The fourth type “*involvement in learning activities at home* includes requests and guidance from teachers for parents to assist their own children at home on learning activities that are coordinated with the children’s class work” (Epstein & Dauber, 1991, p. 291).

The fifth “*involvement in decision making, governance, and advocacy* includes parents and other in the community in participatory roles in the parent-teacher association/organizations, advisory councils, Chapter 1 programs, or other committees or groups at the school, district, or state level” (Epstein & Dauber, 1991, p. 291).

Lastly, the sixth type of parent involvement “*collaboration and exchanges with community organizations* includes connections with agencies, business, and other groups that share responsibilities for children’s education and future successes” (Epstein & Dauber, 1991, p. 291). These six different types of involvement put the responsibility on both the parents and the educators to communicate about the child. Strengthening the cooperation between schools and parents appears to be critical to improve the school careers of disadvantaged students, such as ethnic minority and low socio-economic status pupils (Driessen, Smit, & Slegers, 2005).

There are two other models of parent involvement besides Epstein's. The first is *home-school partnership* in which the goals of the parents and the schools are mutually agreed upon and responsibilities are shared in home school partnerships instead of traditional parent involvement in which schools and parents are often unequal partners working toward a common goal because parent participation is initiated or directed by the school (Fishel & Ramirez, 2005,). The second is a *multidimensional variable* which includes behavioral, personal, and intellectual components (Fishel & Ramirez, 2005

There are three types of parents: strongly involved parents (very active at school, and satisfied with the school and information received); an intermediate group (contact school when something was bothers them or to gain information, want to be more active in the school); and a fringe group (have difficulties communicating with the school and feel powerless in relation to the school) (Phtiaka, 1994; Driessen, et al., 2005). Families from low-socioeconomic areas and/or from minority groups often fall into the latter group.

“Evidence has shown that parents and educators define involvement differently” (Anderson & Minke, 2007, p. 311). Parents tend to take a communal view of involvement, which includes keeping children safe. Educators tend to define involvement as parental presence at school. Miscommunications often occur when the different definitions are not clearly recognized by each party. These miscommunications can lead educators to blame families for their child's difficulties and therefore families feel unappreciated for the efforts they take in raising their children. When looking at “cooperation between school and parents, at least two perspectives can be discerned: school-initiated parent involvement and parent-initiated involvement” (Driessen, et al., 2005, p. 510). In low-socioeconomic status and diverse areas, educators often take the lead when communicating with families because of the perspective most

families have of education. Disadvantaged groups experience barriers to communication, differences of opinion with regard to education and socializations within the domains of home and school, with a significant number of parents placing responsibility more or less exclusively with the school (Driessen & Valkenberg, 2000; Driessen, et al., 2005). Educators need to make the extra effort to reach out to disadvantaged groups with whom they work with in order to limit miscommunication and increase positive relations.

According to Greenwood and Hickman (1991), “considerable research now documents the contributions of parent involvement to positive outcomes, such as the following: (1) higher academic achievement; (2) student sense of well-being; (3) student school attendance; (4) student and parent perceptions of classroom and school climate; (5) positive student attitudes and behavior; (6) student readiness to do homework; (7) increased student time spent with parents; (8) better student grades; (9) higher educational aspirations among students and parents; and (10) parent satisfaction with teachers” (p. 279). These outcomes can highly impact children’s success in school as well as their future. Results indicated that parents’ participation in school activities positively predicted school engagement (Fishel & Ramirez, 2005).

“Reforms to increase academic achievement... has made parent involvement a priority in current national educational and social policy” (Zellman & Waterman, 1998; Fishel & Ramirez, 2005, p. 372). When educators and families work together for the common good of the children, the children will succeed and therefore the schools and families will succeed too.

There are many things schools can do to help increase the level of parent involvement in low socioeconomic and highly diverse areas. “Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, and Lopez (1997) provided a framework of content areas for teacher preparation when considering increasing parent involvement. The content areas include (1) general family involvement, (2) general

family knowledge, (3) home-school communication, (4) family involvement in learning activities, (5) families supporting schools, (6) schools supporting families, and (7) families as change agents” (Wong & Hughes, 2006, p. 657-658). Driesson, Smit, and Slegers (2005) suggest “schools that go to migrant parents and listen to their specific questions and needs may be most successful” (p. 513). Approaching the families on their grounds provides the families with a sense of calm, and they may be more willing to play an active role in their children’s education if they see the educator making an extra effort to interact with them. Machen, Wilson, and Notar (n.d.) also suggest creating more frequent opportunities for positive communication among the school, parents, and community; reducing the barriers that prevent parental involvement by providing babysitters or childcare to allow parents the ability to attend school related activities; scheduling requested parent-teacher conferences during times that are favorable to the parent’s schedule; and providing formal educational workshops for parents that will serve to increase the parents’ ability to be more aware of their children’s academic potential and aspirations (Machen, Wilson, & Notar, n.d.).

It is important for educators to not only contact families when there is a problem, but also to report positive aspects of the students. “Results show that a large proportion of parent-teacher contact was associated with poor school engagement by students; researchers noted that behavior problems are among the most frequent reasons for parent teacher contacts....Therefore, it is not the contact that is detrimental. The negative association that many parents have exists because those contacts are primarily associated with behavioral problems” (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Doan Holbein, 2005, p. 108). Families will be more open to future suggestions the educator may present. If schools devote attention to “taking parents seriously”, being available for parents

to ask questions, and treating the complaints and desires of parents respectfully, parents feel more positively about contact with the school (Driessen, et al., 2005, p. 517).

Conclusion

“Schools with lower (parent) involvement had greater percentages of students living in poverty households and greater percentages of children who were African American, Asian American, and Hispanic” (Griffith, 1998, pg 70). Schools in low socioeconomic or highly diverse areas have to put more effort into reaching out to their students’ families because of the numerous discontinuities between values of school and values of families. Good communication between the school and parents and increased empowerment of parents should lead to increased parent participation or involvement in school activities and satisfaction with schools (Griffith, 1998). When schools take the time to listen and talk with their students’ families, positive relationships get built and many of the barriers the families face will slowly fade. Grade-school educators especially must take the time to build positive relations with the family because as Arnold, Zeljo, and Doctoroff (2008) stated that there is “strong research literature that has established parent involvement as an important factor in grade-school children’s development” (Arnold, Zeljo, & Doctoroff, 2008, p. 75). In 1993 a national survey reported, “95 percent of the parents of public school children reported that it was very important for schools to encourage parents to take a more active part in educating their children” (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1993; Griffith, 1998, p. 53-54). In order to close the achievement gap among low socioeconomic status and highly diverse schools, educators must take many steps. One of the most important steps is to positively reach out to the families to get them involved in their children’s education.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

Databases

Many different research databases were accessed for this project. The articles were compiled from Academic Search Complete, Article First, Education Full-Text, ERIC, JSTOR, LexisNexis, Academic National Newspapers-Proquest, and Project Muse. Education Full-Text, JSTOR, and Project Muse were the most useful because they provided the most articles related to the topic of parent involvement in low socioeconomic status and highly diverse areas. These articles also discussed how parent involvement, low socioeconomic status, and diversity affect the achievement gap, which provided additional information for the project. These articles were primarily used in the development of Chapter Two and Chapter Four.

Evaluation of Databases

All the databases used were recommended by professors and the writing advisor. Some databases were easier to access and navigate than others. Education Full-Text, JSTOR, and Project Muse were the most useful because they were easily accessible and easy to navigate. These databases also provided the most articles related to the project's topic. These databases also provided additional articles which provided background knowledge about the topic. Academic National Newspapers-Proquest, Lexis Nexis, and Academic Search Complete databases were not useful. They were easy to navigate, but they did not provide many articles related to the topic. The articles had a short section or paragraph about parent involvement, low socioeconomic status, or diversity within education. The articles did not elaborate or provide enough information to use in the project.

Procedure

A review of the literature was conducted to gather information about parent involvement involving ethnicity and low socioeconomic status. Chapter Two organizes this research into points of view of parent involvement from African American, Asian American, Latino, and Native American. It will also explore the challenges families from low socioeconomic status face and the barriers educators create with the demographics of their students. In conclusion, the project will outline the values of each ethnic group which contribute to the students' families' involvement in their children's education and propose possible solutions educators may find successful. As shown in the table below of Madrona Elementary, a school in the Highline School District, schools with a high diverse and low socioeconomic population may face the challenges presented in Chapter Two. The purpose of this project was to inform educators about the demographics they serve and provide educators with strategies to help increase parent involvement.

Student Demographics		
Enrollment		
October 2008 Student Count		633
May 2009 Student Count		614
Gender (October 2008)		
Male	313	49.4%
Female	320	50.6%
Ethnicity (October 2008)		
American Indian/Alaskan Native	15	2.4%
Asian	100	15.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	100	15.8%
Black	127	20.1%
Hispanic	352	55.6%
White	39	6.2%
Special Programs		
Free or Reduced-Price Meals (May 2009)	551	89.7%
Special Education (May 2009)	57	9.3%
Transitional Bilingual (May 2009)	291	47.4%
Migrant (May 2009)	0	0.0%
Other Information (more info)		
Unexcused Absence Rate (2008-09)	626	0.8%

Plan for Implementation

This project targets educators, specifically elementary educators, who work in low socioeconomic or highly diverse areas, because secondary research indicates that parent involvement at an early age sets the stage for a child's academic life. It is important for educators to connect with their students' families because for a student to be successful in

school, the community needs to come together and support the student. This project will be given to educators at Madrona Elementary in SeaTac and will be used by the author in her classroom in throughout the 2010-2011 school year by participating in home visits in September, communicating with students' families in a manner that is effective for the students' families, and offering seminars for the students' families to participate in to learn more about how they can help their children with their homework.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROJECT

Educators who are teaching in a low socioeconomic and diverse area face many challenges, one of which is involving families in their child's education. Parent involvement at the author's school, Madrona Elementary School, in SeaTac, Washington, is low in the eyes of educators in this district. Finding ways to interact with families and try to get them more involved in their children's education has become an interest of the author. While researching for Chapters Two and Four of the paper, the author discovered information about how to involve students' parents and why families have a difficult time being involved in their child's education. In addition to having multiple ways to reach out to parents, teachers need to understand the demographics they serve. Included in the following pamphlets are descriptions of the values of the different ethnic groups which make up the student body at Madrona Elementary and reflect the student body in the Highline School District, tips to involve the parents of children from different ethnic groups, descriptions of challenges which families from low socioeconomic status face, and a few resources teachers may find valuable while extending their knowledge about their students' families.

Resources for Educators

Cultural Discontinuity: Toward a Quantitative Investigation of a Major Hypothesis in Education

Article by Tyler, K., Uqdah, S., Dillihunt, M., et al.
Parental Involvement and Educational Achievement

Article by Drieseen, G., Smit, F., & Slegers, P.

Islamic schools in the Netherlands: Commpromising Between Identity and Quality?

Article by Driessen, G. & Valkenberg, P.

Evidence-Based Parent Involvement Interventions with School-Age Children

Article by Fishel, M. & Ramirez, L.

Parental Involvement in the Classroom Article by Machen, S., Wilson, J., & Notar, C.

Cultural Discontinuity: Toward a Quantitative Investigation of a Major

Hypothesis in Education Article by Tyler, K., Uqdah, A, Dillihunt, M.,

Beatty-Hazelbaker, R., Conner, T., Gadson, N., Henchy, A., Hughes, T.,

Mulder, S., Owens, E., Roan-Belle, C., Smith, L., & Stevens, R.

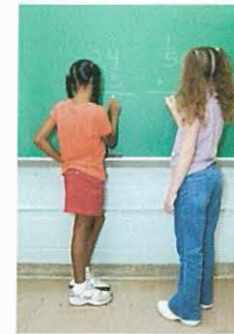
We Can't Teach What We Don't Know Book by Gary R. Howard

Teacher Tips and Quick Facts

(For Educators Working in

Low Socioeconomic and/or

Highly Diverse Areas)



African American Families

By Alyssa Newby

Highline School District

African American Values

Many African American families share the following values:

Communalism--the perceived fundamental interdependence of people.

People act with the notion that duty to the group is more important than individual rights and privileges. There is a kinship between family members and social identity is tied to group membership. Sharing is promoted because it solidifies the importance of social interconnectedness.

Movement--expressed in many ways: dance, polyrhythm, percussiveness, and musical beat. A person with movement orientation prefers physical movement, music, and rhythm, especially in speech, thought, and behavioral patterns. This is why educators may experience restlessness with students who are from African American descent.

Verve--defined as the tendency for a high level of physical stimulation.

Tips for Educators Who Want to Encourage African American Parents to Participate

- Create opportunities for African American families to participate in multicultural events so they can share their traditions with others. The families can teach the students about their African traditions such as food, legends/folktales, art/crafts, and music.
- Create more frequent opportunities for positive communication among the school, parents, and community.
- Invite African American families into the classroom to learn along with their children
- Encourage African American families to participate in school events, such as field day and music concerts

Resources for Educators

Cultural Discontinuity: Toward a Quantitative Investigation of a Major Hypothesis in Education

Article by Tyler, K., Uqdah, S., Dillihunt, M., et al.

Parental Involvement and Educational Achievement

Article by Drieseen, G., Smit, F., & Slegers, P.

Islamic schools in the Netherlands: Commpromising Between Identity and Quality?

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Evidence-Based Parent Involvement Interventions with School-Age Children

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Parental Involvement in the Classroom Article by Machen, S., Wilson, J., & Notar, C.

Cultural Discontinuity: Toward a Quantitative Investigation of a Major Hypothesis in Education Article by Tyler, K., Uqdah, A., Dillihunt, M.,

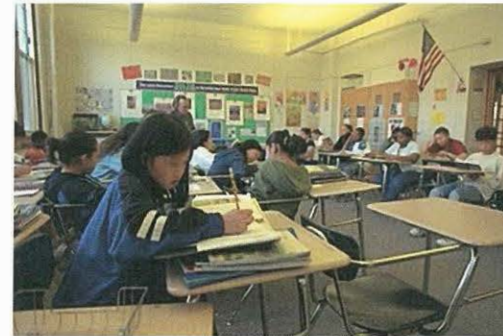
Beatty-Hazelbaker, R., Conner, T., Gadson, N., Henchy, A., Hughes, T.,

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Asian American Families

By Alyssa Newby

Highline School District

Asian American Values

Many Asian American values include collectivism, conformity to norms, emotional self-control, humility, achievement, and respect to authority:

Collectivism--being able to establish interdependence between the self and the group. Many Asian cultures believe conforming to the norms is a safe way to continue order in the community and to maintain harmony. More evident in Asian American students is their determination to succeed; this gives them family recognition and is held with high regard

Respect--another value which is evident in the classroom is the respect educators receive from the Asian American students. This is because children are taught at a young age that educators deserve the utmost respect.

Tips for Educators Who Want to Encourage Asian American Parents to Participate

- Create opportunities for Asian American families to participate in multicultural events so they can share their traditions with others. The families can teach the students about their Asian traditions such as food, legends, art/crafts, calligraphy, and music.
- Goals of the parents and the schools should be mutually agreed upon, and responsibilities should be shared in home-school partnerships.
- Schedule requested parent-teacher conferences during times that are favorable to the parent's schedule.
- Invite Asian American families into the classroom to educate the students about their Asian culture, this can be tied in with a literature unit
- Invite Asian American families to lead classes in calligraphy which may be provided to the school's students and staff

Resources for Educators

Cultural Discontinuity: Toward a Quantitative Investigation of a Major Hypothesis in Education

Article by Tyler, K., Uqdah, S., Dillihunt, M., et al.
Parental Involvement and Educational Achievement

Article by Drieseen, G., Smit, F., & Slegers, P.

Islamic schools in the Netherlands: Commpromising Between Identity and Quality?

Article by Driessen, G. & Valkenberg, P.

Evidence-Based Parent Involvement Interventions with School-Age Children

Article by Fishel, M. & Ramirez, L.

Parental Involvement in the Classroom Article by Machen, S., Wilson, J., & Notar, C.

Cultural Discontinuity: Toward a Quantitative Investigation of a Major Hypothesis in Education Article by Tyler, K., Uqdah, A., Dillihunt, M.,

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Teacher Tips and Quick Facts

**(For Educators Working in
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Highly Diverse Areas)**



Latino Families

By Alyssa Newby

Highline School District

Latino Values

Latinos are considered the most diverse ethnic group in America. Not all Latinos will identify with these values because they come from many areas of the world, but many Latino families share the following values:

Family--Latinos are raised to promote strong identification with the ethnic group and, to cooperate and socialize actively; they usually are sensitive toward feelings of others and they respect adults within the community.

Collectivism--a main cultural theme; interconnectedness is not only apparent within families, but throughout the community.

Multitasking--Latinos also show behaviors of being able to participate in many activities at one time.

Tips for Educators Who Want to Encourage Latino Parents to Participate

- Create opportunities for Latino families to participate in multicultural events so they can share their traditions with others. The families can teach the students about Latino traditions such as dances, songs, arts/crafts, and food.
- Make the extra effort to reach out to Latinos in order to limit miscommunication and increase positive relations.
- Ask Latino families to organize a potluck for a grade level math or reading event
- Invite Latino families to organize dance lessons for the school's staff and students

Resources for Educators

Cultural Discontinuity: Toward a Quantitative Investigation of a Major Hypothesis in Education

Article by Tyler, K., Uqdah, S., Dillihunt, M., et al.

Parental Involvement and Educational Achievement

Article by Drieseen, G., Smit, F., & Slegers, P.

Islamic schools in the Netherlands: Commpromising Between Identity and Quality?

Article by Driessen, G. & Valkenberg, P.

Evidence-Based Parent Involvement Interventions with School-Age Children

Article by Fishel, M & Ramirez, L.

Parental Involvement in the Classroom Article by Machen, S., Wilson, J., & Notar, C.

Cultural Discontinuity: toward a Quantatative Investigation of a Major Hypothesis in Education Article by Tyler, K., Uqdah, A., Dilihunt, M

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Native American Families

By Alyssa Newby

Highline School District

Native American Values

Because of the unique cultures and languages of the many Native American tribes, there are many different perceptions of child-rearing and learning. Many of these cultures include cooperation and sharing, harmony with nature, noninterference, a deep respect for elders, and a present-time orientation.

Family--there is an orientation toward family and group function; whatever belongs to the individual also belongs to the group. Survival of an individual is equal with the survival of the community and family. Native Americans relate a person to their family and background, not to their profession.

Greetings-Native Americans generally greet a person with questions like "Where do you come from" and "Who is your family"; whereas in the mainstream culture, people associate who a person is with their profession and generally ask "What do you do for a living?"

Harmony-noninterference is related to the value of harmony; allowing situations to occur uninterrupted will allow for the individual to eventually find harmony; breaking that barrier only causes more turmoil for the individual.

Noninterference --Allowing situations to unfold without interference allows for the individual to eventually find harmony. Breaking this natural occurrence only causes more turmoil for the individual. Lastly, Native Americans believe in the here and now approach to life. They do not dwell on the past and do not fret about the future; they take pleasure in the moment they are living.

Tips for Educators Who Want to Encourage Native American Parents to Participate

- Create opportunities for Native American families to participate in multicultural events so they can share their traditions with others. The families can teach the students about their tribal traditions such as crafts, dances, foods, legends, and songs/chants.
- Go to Native American parents and listen to their specific questions and needs; approaching the families on their grounds provides the families with a sense of calm; the families may be more willing to play an active role in their child's education if they see the educators stepping out of their way to interact with them.
- Ask Native American families to organize a nature walk for your classroom, this nature walk can go along with a science or literature unit

Resources for Educators

The Provider's Guide to Quality and Culture.

Website by Management of Health and Science:

<http://erc.msh.org/mainpage.cfm?ffile=5.3.0a.htm&module=provider&language=English>

Parental Involvement and Educational Achievement

Article by Drieseen, G., Smit, F., & Slegers, P.

Islamic schools in the Netherlands: Compromising Between Identity and Quality?

Article by Driessen, G. & Valkenberg, P.

Evidence-Based Parent Involvement Interventions with School-Age Children

Article by Fishel, M. & Ramirez, L.

Parental Involvement in the Classroom Article by Machen, S., Wilson, J., & Notar, C.

Cultural Discontinuity: Toward a Quantitative Investigation of a Major Hypothesis

in Education Article by Tyler, K., Uqdah, A, Dillihunt, M., Beatty-Hazelbaker, R.,

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Pacific Islander Families

By Alyssa Newby

Highline School District

Pacific Islander Values

Many Pacific Islander families share the following values:

Family--well being of the family unit is valued more than the individual; the spirit of the deceased is also an active member of the family.

Interdependence--as a person becomes more interdependent, they acquire more self esteem and self worth.

Reciprocity--working and living cooperatively.

Spirituality--ancestral communication.

Holism--interconnectedness of all things; “ola pono” which means life in perfect order, goodness, and of true nature.

Tips for Educators Who Want to Encourage Pacific Islander Parents to Participate

- Create opportunities for Pacific Islander families to participate in multicultural events so they can share their traditions with others. The families can bring in traditional foods or teach the students crafts or traditional dances or songs.
- Provide formal educational workshops for parents that will serve to increase the parent’s ability to be more aware of their children’s academic potential and aspirations.
- Invite Pacific Islander families to organize a performance for a school event, such as a volunteer lunch-on or music concert

Resources for Educators

Norms and Values in Islam: www.uga.edu/islam/norms_values.html

Website by Akgunduz, P.

Parental Involvement and Educational Achievement

Article by Drieseen, G., Smit, F., & Slegers, P.

Islamic schools in the Netherlands: Commpromising Between Identity and Quality?

Article by Driessen, G. & Valkenberg, P.

Evidence-Based Parent Involvement Interventions with School-Age Children

Article by Fishel, M. & Ramirez, L.

Parental Involvement in the Classroom

Article by Machen, S., Wilson, J., & Notar, C.

Cultural Discontinuity: Toward a Quantitative Investigation of a Major Hypothesis in Education

Article by Tyler, K., Uqdah, A., Dillihunt, M., Beatty-Hazelbaker, R., Conner, T., Gadson, N., Henchy, A., Hughes, T., Mulder, S., Owens, E., Roan-Belle, C., Smith, L., & Stevens, R.

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Muslim Families

By Alyssa Newby

Highline School District

Muslim Values

Many Muslims live their life on five basic pillars of Islam; these are:

Life--a healthy body leads to a purposeful life; basic items such as food, clothing, shelter, transport, and health; the human held in high esteem.

Religion--used to provide guidance, peace, tranquility, comfort, and purpose; one is free to practice their religion of choice.

Intellect and Knowledge--intellectual nature of man is made up of mind, intelligence, or reasoning power. Knowledge is separated into two categories: basic fundamental knowledge, which is secured by every individual, and specialized knowledge, which is secured by only a few individuals.

Family--the very heart of society.

Wealth--the right of each individual to earn a living.

Tips for Educators Who Want to Encourage Muslim Parents to Participate

- Create opportunities for Muslim families to participate in multicultural events so they can share their traditions with others.
- Listen to the families concerns and questions, and take them seriously by following through with requests and checking in with the families on the progress
- Provide resources for Muslim families if they are having difficulties meeting the basic needs
- Invite Muslim families to share their knowledge to the students or staff by organizing an event where they teach others about their specialty
- Create opportunities for the entire family to help in the classroom, whether it is having the adults come read to the students or the students read to the children in the families

Resources for Educators

Parental Involvement and Educational Achievement

Article by Drieseen, G., Smit, F., & Slegers, P.

Islamic Schools in the Netherlands: Commpromising Between Identity and Quality?

Article by Driessen, G. & Valkenberg, P

Socioeconomic Status (SES) and Achievement

Article by Corrigan, R.

What We Can Do About Achievement Disparities

Article by Lubienski, S.

Whose Problem is Poverty?

Article by Rothstein, R.

Teacher Tips and Quick Facts

**(For Educators Working in
Low Socioeconomic and/or
Highly Diverse Areas)**



Low Socioeconomic Families

By Alyssa Newby

Highline School District

Challenges Families from Low Socioeconomic Areas Face

- Students from low SES were resistant to learning through problem solving and discussion whereas students from a higher SES were comfortable making sense of the math themselves.
- Children from poverty are more prone to asthma which results in sleeplessness, irritability, lack of exercise, lower birth weight, lead poisoning and iron-deficiency often lead to diminished cognitive ability and more behavior problem.
- Students often do not have health insurance, so they do not get routine medical and dental care which leads to more absences and health issues that affect their learning. Their parents typically do not get health care either, leading to sickness in the family, and often they fall behind in rent so children move schools often.
- Parents often have low paying jobs and can be laid off more easily, causing stress and worry about getting basic needs met.
- Parents often work two or more jobs leaving little time or energy to guide and nurture children.
- Students tend to live in “tough” neighborhoods and do not always have the best examples around them; they have fewer opportunities to travel and be exposed to the world around them.
- Children are generally not read aloud to often or exposed to complex language and large vocabulary.
- Children are more than often from single-parent families resulting in less adult attention.
- Families also have access to fewer resources than their middle-class counterparts.
- Disadvantaged groups experience barriers to communication, differences of opinion with regard to education and socializations within the domains of home and school. Significant number of parents place responsibility for more or less exclusively with the school.

Tips for Educators Who Want to Encourage Low Socioeconomic Parents to Participate

- Ask families to get involved. Many minority families believe it is the educator’s responsibility to educate their child and will only get involved when they are asked to.
- Create more frequent opportunities for positive communication among the school, parents, and community.
- Schedule requested parent-teacher conferences during times that are favorable to the parent’s schedule.
- Provide formal educational workshops for parents that will serve to increase the parent’s ability to be more aware of their children’s academic potential and aspirations.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this project was to inform educators about the diverse student populations they may serve and provide educators with knowledge and strategies to help increase parent involvement. The definition of parent involvement has evolved throughout the years. There are many levels of parent involvement an educator may come across in his/her career, from parents who volunteer in the classroom to those who provide the basic needs for survival at home. Educators who work in low socioeconomic and diverse areas often struggle to help parents get involved in their child's education. This struggle is partly due to the different perspectives educators and parents have about involvement in a child's education. It is important for educators and parents alike to understand each other's points of view about education because it takes a community to educate a child. One person cannot do it alone.

Chapters One through Four discuss the issues of parent involvement in low socioeconomic and highly diverse areas and provide strategies educators may use to increase parent involvement at their schools. Barriers are created because of the different perspectives about parent involvement. If educators had a better understanding of the communities they serve, there would be more collaboration between educators and families. Chapter Two discusses the different cultural values of a few of the different ethnic groups in America. Chapter Two also discusses how ethnicity and low socioeconomic status affect the achievement gap and provides a few strategies for educators to help them connect to their community.

Chapter Three discusses the secondary research that was done and the databases that were utilized. Many of the databases were useful, but a few were not and additional research

was needed in order to find relevant information. Chapter Four is an extension to Chapter Two, but put in a more user friendly format in order to present the information in a more useful way. Chapter Four discusses the values of each ethnic group and the struggles families from low socioeconomic status face. Lastly, it contains recommendations for educators who work in low socioeconomic and diverse communities.

Conclusions

After reading the relevant research, I learned how important it is for educators to understand the cultures with which they work with, especially if the cultures are different from their own. Many parents believe it is the educator's responsibility to educate their children, and they will only get involved in their child's education if the educator asks. Many educators believe parent involvement is being in the classroom, volunteering on field trips, and participating in the parent teacher association. Educators' belief contradicts the values of many diverse families. It is important for educators to make the extra effort to include families in educating their children. Educators need to know the different levels and definitions of parent involvement as discussed in Chapter Two. Then educators should identify where their students' families lie on the parent involvement spectrum and work with their students' families at their comfort level. Communicating with families about their educational experience, their home life, and their comfort level with participating in their children's education is an important step educators should take. This communication can take many different forms, from home visits, to parent-teacher conferences, to a phone call home. The more collaboration there is between educators and families, the more successful the children will be.

Recommendations

The next steps for this project include doing additional research through cultural competency trainings, talking with my students' families about their children's education and how we can work together to help them be successful, and working with my colleagues to increase parent involvement in our community. I will share my knowledge of our community and their values based on the research I have done and share ideas about how we can reach out to our students' families to increase our involvement in educating their children. Also, I feel Chapter Four will help educators better understand the values and challenges of our students' community.

The way we educate children today is drastically different from how many of our students' families were educated. Educators should take the step to educate families about how to help their children. For example, there are many different ways a student can solve addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division problems besides the standard algorithm. I recommend that educators hold math seminars for parents and students to attend so they can get an understanding of what their child is doing in school, these seminars may increase parent involvement and homework help may increase. Providing extra resources for families to become more involved in educating their children will help the children become more successful in school. A school is as successful as the community it is in. If educators take the appropriate steps to help strengthen it, the community will prosper too.

At the school where I teach, the teachers go on home visits at the beginning of the year. This gives us the opportunity to reach out to our students' families and open the lines of communication; occasionally it is the only time we see or talk to the parents. The manner in which the home visits are conducted is up to the individual teacher. Some teachers use the time to introduce themselves and be introduced to the families. Other teachers use the time to talk to

the families about their educational experiences and the goals they have for their children. Home visits are also a great opportunity for the educators to provide resources for the families since many of them live in low socioeconomic areas. I personally enjoy going on home visits. It gives me background information about my students and provides an opportunity to communicate with the families. I recommend using home visits as not only a time to introduce yourself as an educator, but to also talk with the families about themselves. Ask parents about their level of involvement in their children's education. I also recommend asking families to fill out a questionnaire or evaluation of the home visit to gather further information about your families.

Another activity my grade level team tried on this year is a family math night. The idea of a family math night to help our families help their kids with math homework had been discussed numerous times, but never done. Since the parents have expressed that they want to learn about how they can assist their children with their math homework, my team created a family math night. The evening began by discussing what math was like for the parents growing up and then led into how they would mentally solve an addition problem. At the end of the night, the students taught their parents an addition strategy they use in class. We discussed the different questioning strategies the parents may try as they assist their children with their math homework. A next step to take is to provide evaluations for the parents to fill out at the end of the evening. These evaluations will provide educators with feedback about what worked for the families and what may need to change in order to specifically address family's needs.

The importance of communication between home and school was emphasized in this project. In a school that serves diverse families and families from low socioeconomic status, communication can be a barrier for everyone. I personally need to work on communicating more with my students' families by making more phone calls and going on home visits again in the

middle of the year. There is a high turnover rate at my school, and it would be nice to meet the families of students who moved into the area after September. I also need to be more conscientious about contacting my students' families when a student has done really well in school, not just when there is a problem. Communication is an important factor in parent involvement, and I personally need to take the first step into putting more effort into communicating with my students' families. I recommend taking the time to communicate with parents about positive academic and social progress, in addition to addressing concerns.

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