

Parental Involvement and Communication

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Introduction

Parental involvement, and communication meant different ideas to different groups of parents (Radzi, Razak, & Sukor, 2010). Many parents believed traditional communication, and involvement was the only channel available to those not educated in computer technology, or thought media methods difficult (Radzi, Razak, & Sukor, 2010). The introduction of computer technology meant new communication avenues through social media had opened (Sukor, 2010). Teachers reached a wider audience with improved communication channels, and more options for involvement (Bird, 2006; Radzi, Razk & Sukor, 2010). Parents were required to be educated in the different avenues, and taught to embrace new ideas with confidence to encourage involvement in their child's school life (Radzi, Razk, & Sukor, 2010).

Parental Involvement and Effects on Student Achievement

Students whose parents supported, and encouraged them showed satisfaction in feeling safe and secure while in school as lower stress levels was felt between the child, and parent (Jensen, 2008; Radzi, Razak, & Sukor, 2010). Jensen (2008); and Macias-Brown (2011) found that school students who felt safe in the school environment learned, and retained teachings as their brain was less stressed. A child's brain placed under stress did not learn because it lost the ability to process, store, and access information (Jensen, 2008). Parents were the first role model a child saw, and involvement in this early stage was crucial to guide, and ensure child development in all social, and thinking skills (Jensen, 2008). Finally adding school participation, and community lead to group of people all with the common goal of academic success for the student (Radzi, Razak, & Sukor, 2010). Parental involvement was a main feature in any child's development, but in addition the extent of the parent's involvement was found to reflect in the child's academic results, and general

knowledge as stress levels lowered (Jensen, 2008; Macias-Brown, 2011). This academic improvement continued when lower stress and anxiety was recorded because students felt better supported by parents, and teachers (Jensen, 2008; Macias-Brown, 2011; Patrikakou, 2004). Despite this knowledge parents still chose not to become involved further than odd phone calls, or meetings, often not showing up or replying, blaming work commitments, transportation, and lack of understanding of the educational system (Patrikakou, 2004). Stress, or low self-esteem made the student's brain block learning, which lead to learning issues, and those students then labeled for special educational services because stress became a behavior, or disability issue (Jensen, 2008). Six types of involvement developed, including basic responsibility of the family, and the school, which helped all stakeholders (Epstein, 2008). This childhood development base allowed scaffolding to appropriate grade level behavior, and social development (Epstein, 2008; Jensen, 2008). Students benefited from parental, and community involvement, and this interaction led to higher academic success rates, and a mutual trust between all stakeholders (Epstein, 2008; Macias-Brown, 2011). A child's academic performance in the general education classroom increased when linked to high parental involvement demonstrating connection (Fantuzzo, McWayne, & Perry 2004, Patrikakou, 2004; Macias-Brown, 2011). Patrikakou (2004) showed if parents had high expectations for their children the amount of time working on schoolwork at home increased along with student academic level. However, Macias-Brown (2011) showed that parental involvement also increased when their child started to gain higher academic results improving parental pride, and desire to be involved. When home and school environment emerged as a solid platform the types of reinforcement and messages took on a stronger appearance regarding the expectations of all parties involved, thus frequency, and effectiveness was increased (Epstein, 1995; Patrikakou, 2004; Xu & Gulsino, 2006). Fantuzzo, McWayne & Perry (2004) found the strongest indicator of a student's academic

performance and motivation was an active home environment that communicated, therefore enforcing the belief that communication, and involvement was an indicator of strength. Student's success was linked to the communication relationship between the teacher and parent, and found to be more influential in aiding students to reach full potential than their teachers' qualifications (Xu & Gulsino, 2006). Students began to see a common goal sought by the two most influential parties in their development, and this encouraged more effort, and achievement in the classroom (Xu & Gulsino, 2006).

Potential Barriers to Teacher-Parent Communication

As students moved through the school system parents acquired better, and more informative information because this helped parents to reduce stress, and help their child's academic and developmental needs (Jensen, 2008; United States Department of Education, 2005). Teachers were asked to take responsibility to pass on information and communicate with parents so that answers were given, support was developed and maintained, stress reduced, and achievement seen (Epstein, 2008; Jensen, 2008). Parental involvement was seen as a strategy and when combined with social competences, such as improved peer interaction, it showed positive affect, and reduced stress that led to academic success (Bower, & Griffin, 2011; Jensen, 2008). When schools built relationships, and developed the sense of belonging, the accountability of all parties improved, and communication channels opened because parents grew in confidence to use the channels, and teachers believed the time was no longer wasted (Jensen, 2008; Bower & Griffin, 2011). Although some parents interacted with teachers, parents in general did not interact with other parents causing another breakdown in communication, and community involvement (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Hill & Craft, 2003). Higher income families were more inclined to involve themselves in school fund raising and events as finances were less strained (Bower & Griffin, 2011). It was lower income families who felt the burden when classroom supplies were requested, and

obligations shared because of their lack of available funds thus reducing the number of lower income volunteers (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Hill & Craft, 2003). African American families often chose to monitor their student's education without intervention because of their lack of knowledge of the education system (Hill, & Craft, 2003). African American parents showed less confidence, or knowledge about the education system than their Euro-American counterparts, and because of this it resulted in the belief that it was better to say nothing than involve themselves in their child's education (Hill & Craft, 2003). Lower-income working parents had a breakdown in communications with teachers, and administrators because of the awkward, often clashing working, and school hours (Hill & Craft, 2003). Students of low income, working parents often believed it was impossible to succeed, or improve themselves because they only saw only a reoccurrence of the parenting pattern, adding to their low self-esteem, stress and breakdown in school academic achievement (Hill & Craft, 2003; Jensen, 2008). The contact between school, home, and community saw sides blaming each other for lack of initial contact because parents often believed teachers waited until issues had to be serious before initiating and providing details, or feedback on their child (Thompson, 2008; Sirvani, 2007). Parents believed positive, and negative feedback should have been reported throughout the academic year to prevent issues building (Montgomery, 2005). However, teachers blamed parents for the lack of communication, believing that social events, and personal careers were placed ahead of basic home responsibilities, and their child's education (Epstein, 2008; Sirvani, 2007). Parent participant groups that once connected the school with community have declined in attendance leaving a reduced communication path between these groups, and no replacements offered to communicate between parties (Epstein, 1995). Parents found the changes in curricula challenging, requiring them to revisit their own schooling and update to changing learning strategies that helped their child at home (Epstein, & Salinas, 2004; Scott, 2007).

New teachers entered the teaching field with knowledge of school-required skills, but without requisite communication skills because of the lack of teacher training in building school home relationships was not part of required coursework (Epstein, 1998). Colleges and universities failed to develop communication skills between new teachers, and potential parents; yet the literature showed when teachers initiated communication, and involvement was established students performance rose along with attendance, behavior, and social interaction (Patrikakou, 2004; Xu & Gulsino, 2006).

Efforts for Increased Involvement.

Strict laws meant schools revised, and found easier ideas to bring parents back to schools for meetings, discussions, and opened the communication channels that helped to build relationships, and improved academic growth (Patrikakou, 2004; United States Department of Education, 2005). The communication and interaction of all stakeholders had to run smoothly to enable students to achieve the benefits of the education community (Christian, 2004), and in turn this open channel community aided the development of the individual student's highest level of academics (Christian, 2004; Christian, & Hurley, 1997; Epstein, 1995). When kept simple, and with regular feedback the contact was well received by parents, and resulted in a parental desire to continue the communication (Bobetsky, 2003; Patrikakou, 2004; Scott, 2007). An important factor in maintaining contact was the teacher's attitude, and positive stance, as negativity acted as a deterrent to communication and quickly closed the channel, or alienated the parent destroying home, and school relationships (Fantuzzo, McWayne, & Perry 2004; Montgomery, 2005; Xu & Gulosino, 2006). Parents who believed themselves part of the academic team and liked the attitude and atmosphere were likely to keep communication open, and flowing in both directions, helping students to develop a bond, and sense of security with all environments (Jensen, 2008). Methods of interaction that were workable, and popular were likely to be used, because they helped

confidence grow with use (Epstein, 1995). Early learning groups, tutoring, and mentorship were used by parents to demonstrate the importance school life had within daily life, and the individual's development (Scott, 2007). Low-income families recognized the importance of involvement, and needed the encouragement, and simplicity of avenues to encourage involvement, and communication input from them. When relationships between parents, and teachers were comfortable parents were more inclined to voice ideas, and communicate (Drummond & Stipek, 2004).

Conclusion

Regardless of a student's socioeconomic status improved achievement was related to parent-teacher communication, and relationships. When a teacher-parent relationship was established scaffolding from this base provided the adult support, and modeling that assisted student's academic achievement in, and out of the school environment. Communication paths initiated by teachers saw improved academic achievements in students when parents reciprocated the communication.

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