

Pathways to Partnership

Abstract

Our goal is to better educate students for a brighter future, and to be able to inform parents of ways to be better involved in their student's education and schools. Parent involvement was studied by an online survey form sent throughout many different school districts to find out how parents feel about parent involvement in their district. It was found that lack of time and funding are the leading causes for parents to not be involved in their children's schooling. At the same time, parents also see a positive sense of community, communication, and collaboration with the school.

Purpose

The purpose of school is to educate students to become the best individual they can become to be an active member of society. To do this, it takes a team of teachers, administration, students themselves, and their parents. Parent involvement is a challenge in many schools but is essential for the achievement of all learners. Lueder (2002) stated that, "The goal of the partnerships is to create 'learning communities' where families, communities, and schools collaborate to provide the best possible educational opportunities and environments for children" (p.5). When parent involvement is present, Lueder (2002) states the roles: "partnerships, collaboration and problem solvers, audience, supporters, advisors and co- decision makers" (p.13). The first step of creating a team is to develop parent partnerships. The partnerships are the networking that takes place between the school, parents, and community to engage all in the child's education. As the partnerships grow, parents not only become involved with the school by volunteering and attending different school events, but they also support the school when decisions are made about how to deal with problems that occur with their child (Lueder, 2002, p. 13). The goal is that eventually parents will become involved in the policy making at their child's school by becoming part of different organizations within the school (Lueder, 2002, p. 13). The belief is that if educators can better understand a student's environment then they will be able to provide more explicate instructions to better fit a student's needs (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992).

Methods

Parent partnerships can be measured through engagement in schools. To measure this we conducted an online survey that included parents, school personnel, and community members from around the United States. For this survey we used the Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnership (Salinas, Epstein, Sanders, Davis, and Aldersebeas, 1999). The survey was sent out to 42 different schools around the country, and included school personnel, community members, and parents. Once the volunteers agreed to participate, they were asked to provide their role within the school or community. Next, the participants were asked to complete 53 rating scale questions and 3 open-ended questions (Salinas et al., 1999). The participants were prompted to rate their school on six types of parent involvement (parenting, volunteering, communications, decision making, learning at home, and collaborating with the community) (Salinas et al., 1999). Their ratings were based on a 1 (not occurring) to a 5 (extensively) (Salinas et al., 1999).

Literature Review

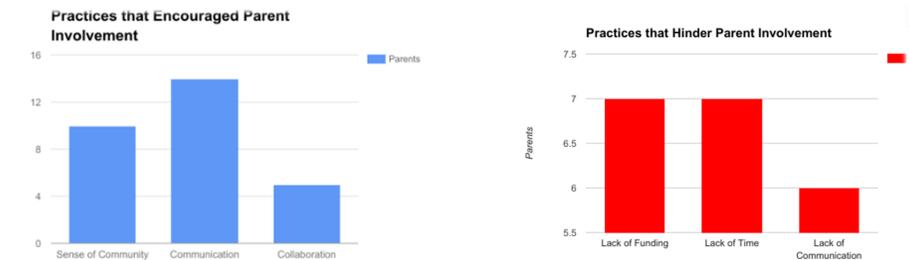
To foster parent engagement in schools, it is important for educators and administrators to be aware of what barriers may prevent parents from doing so. Some common barriers that have been found to hinder a parent's desire or ability to be involved include their socioeconomic status, language, racial or ethnic background, or a lack of education, trust, communication, or a sense of community (Delgado-Gaitan, 2007; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Lake & Billinsley, 2000; Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012; Mendez, 2010; Turney & Kao, 2009; Warren, Hong, Rubin, Uy, 2009). While some of these barriers may be difficult for school personnel to overcome, most of them can be lessened by educators or administrators. A family's socioeconomic status can be a major barrier in a parent's engagement in their child's school. The more a parent is involved in a child's education outside of school the more successful the child will be within school. Education and involvement both need to have a great deal of value to families so that both become priorities (Harris, 2008). According to research conducted by Turney and Kao (2009), parents of children who have a lower socioeconomic status are less likely to be involved in their child's education. Often because of the time involved (i.e., interferes with work schedules) or transportation concerns. By providing public transportation in a community, more parents would be able to be more involved in their children's schools (Mendez, 2010).

A lack of trust can also be a major barrier for parents. Parents may not trust school personnel, because of their lack of education or the differences they find among themselves and school personnel (Delgado-Gaitan, 2007; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Lake & Billinsley, 2000; Turney & Kao, 2009; Warren et al., 2009). Parents may feel overwhelmed by school personnel's knowledge of several academic and legal issues that may affect their child (Lake & Billinsley, 2000). This can be especially true of parents who do not speak the same language as school personnel. To help all parents feel less intimidated educators and administrators can be more aware of how they present information to parents to make sure that it is accessible to parents from all educational backgrounds. It is important for parents to feel that they can be included and involved in their child's education.

Reference List

- Delgado-Gaitan, C. (2007). Fostering Latino Parent Involvement in the Schools: Practices and Partnerships. In *Narrowing the Achievement Gap* (1572-1981, pp. 17-32). Springer US. doi: 10.1007/0-387-44611-7_2
- Harris, A., & Goodall, J. (2008). Do parents know they matter? Engaging all parents in learning. *Educational Research*, 50(3), 277-289. doi:10.1080/00131880802309424
- Hornby, G. & Lafaele, R. (2011). Barriers to parental involvement in education: an explanatory model, *Educational Review*, 63: 1, 37-52, DOI:10.1080/00131911.2010.488049
- Lake, J. F., & Billinsley, B. S. (2000). An Analysis of Factors That Contribute to Parent-School Conflict in Special Education. *Remedial and Special Education*, 21(4), 240-250.
- Lawson, M.A. & Alameda-Lawson, T. (2012). A Case Study of School-Linked, Collective Parent Engagement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 49 (4),651-684.
- Lueder, D. C. (2000). *Creating Partnerships with Parents: An Educator's Guide*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Mendez, J. L. (2010). How can parents get involved in preschool? Barriers and engagement in education by ethnic minority parents of children attending head start. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 16(1), 26-36. doi:10.1037/a0016258
- Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory Into Practice*, 31(2), 132-141.
- Salinas, K. C., Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Davis, D., & Douglas, I. (1999). Measure of school, family, and community partnership. *Baltimore, MD & Portland, OR: Johns Hopkins University & Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory*.
- Turney, K., & Kao, G. (2009). Barriers to School Involvement: Are Immigrant Parents Disadvantaged?. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 102:4, 257-271, DOI: 10.3200/JOER.102.4.257-271
- Warren, M. R., Hong, S., Rubin, C.L., & Uy, P.S. (2009). Beyond the Bake Sale: A Community-Based Relational Approach to Parent Engagement in Schools. *Teachers College Record*, 111 (9), 2209-2254.

Findings



After analyzing the survey results we gathered, we were able to compare the similarities between what information we found through our literature reviews and the information provided to us by our participants. In both the data collected from the survey and our research we found that a lack of funds (either for the families or schools) and lack of time are major barriers in parents being able to be involved in their child's education (Lake & Billinsley, 2000; Mendez, 2010; Turney & Kao, 2009). The survey results also showed that while several parents felt that their children's schools were able to effectively communicate with them, there were still some who felt that the schools lacked communication with them. As Harris (2008) determined that a lack of communication can be a barrier to parental involvement, we were able to confirm that with our survey results. Positive aspects found during this survey were a sense of community, communication, and collaboration. The results show that when a school created a sense of community there was a positive effect on parental involvement within school and students learning; this supports the findings that we found in our research (Delgado-Gaitan, 2007; Lake & Billinsley, 2000; Warren et al., 2009). Communication between schools and parents can at times be difficult. Parents at times can find it just as hard to communicate with the school as the school may find to communicate with them (Harris 2008). Lastly, collaboration between school and parents was shown to be beneficial, but it was not as positively recognized as communication was, according to our survey, showing that communication shows to be the best way to get parental involvement.

Next Steps

