Fostering Effective Parent Engagement

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Family involvement is one of the most important factors in ensuring a child’s success in school (Graves, 2004). A full partnership between the school and the parents is the goal of the IDEA, in order to achieve this goal students and parents need to be involved. Parent involvement in schools is an important factor in student’s academic success (Damianidou & Phtiaka, 2018; Foley, 2015). Not only has parental involvement shown to benefit children, it also benefits families, schools, and communities (Damianidou & Phtiaka, 2018). While research shows that parent involvement improves academic success and decreases behavior issues, many barriers exist in getting parental participation in schools. These barriers largely affect parents with low socioeconomic status, those with cultural and communication barriers, and those that have children with disabilities (Baker et al., 2016; Damianidou & Phtiaka, 2018; Foley, 2015; Olmstead, 2013; Williams & Schenkel, 2011). Barriers regarding parent involvement must be addressed to bring about change. Barriers that exist between families, schools, and communities that hinder necessary communication and collaboration include:

- Language and cultural barriers (Olsmstead, 2013; Smith et al., 2011).
- Socioeconomic status: Families with low socioeconomic status reported not having the finances to access resources to enable them to be involved, such as transportation, child care, and technology. (Baker et al., 2016; Damianidou & Phtiaka, 2018; Foley, 2015; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).
- Time and distance: Due to work, other activities and scheduling conflicts (Baker et al., 2016; Olmstead, 2013; Williams & Schenkel, 2011).
- Poor literacy skills and negative school experiences: Parents who had poor academic skills themselves, or had negative or negative school experiences, often doubt their ability to help their children academically and avoid school involvement (Baker et al., 2016; Damianidou & Phtiaka, 2018; Foley, 2015; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).
- Disagreements, disappointments, and distrust: Many parents report that differing viewpoints, low-expectations, lack of structure, and low teaching standards, as well as feelings of distrust concerning school professionals, led to low parent participation (Baker et al., 2016; Damianidou & Phtiaka, 2018; Francis, Regester, & Reed, 2018; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Solutions that need to be addressed to prevent parental involvement and make changes to improve it. Parent involvement in schools is one of the most important factors in student’s academic success (Damianidou & Phtiaka, 2018; Foley, 2015; Olmstead, 2013; Williams & Schenkel, 2011). The differences between the findings and the literature review was the socioeconomic status. The open-ended questions did not show many issues with the lack of transportation, or funds to get to school events due to poverty. According to Foley (2015), poverty was an issue where many parents were not able to help their children academically because of financial issues due to not having transportation. However, both findings did have limited funding issues. Finally, it is important to implement different ways to actively get the parents involved with the school community and their child’s education to help with a successful future. This in turn will help to create meaningful relationships and trust by involving parents/families in school decisions. Creating community partnerships is also important as it can provide valuable resources to help support parents and foster partnerships.