

The Relationship between Parental Involvement and Academic Achievement

Fact: By 2000 there were 11 million children of immigrants out of 58 million total children enrolled in PK through 12th grade.²

- Research supports the hypothesis that at-home parenting practices and involvement with the school explain much of the variation in school performance on the basis of group-level distinctions such as race-ethnicity.³
- Assessments of parent academic involvement have been consistently related to school achievement across grade levels.⁵
- Among middle and high school students, discussions among parents, teachers, and school administrators, and discussing schooling and future plans with adolescents have the strongest relations with academic outcomes.⁵
- Parent involvement has been linked to middle school students' engagement, educational aspirations, and achievement. Unfortunately, parental involvement tends to decline during middle school.¹⁰
- When parents are involved, students report being more attentive and having a more positive mood, greater homework enjoyment, and perceive their homework activities as less difficult and more manageable.⁸
- Parents who are involved in homework have an opportunity to demonstrate their belief that schoolwork, homework, and learning are important and to show support for their children.⁸

Barriers and Interventions for Parental Involvement

Barrier:

- Some ESL parents struggle with understanding simple school procedures and practices. For example, knowing how an open night or back to school night function, as well as some workshops.⁹

Intervention:

- Schools need to rid themselves of the presumption that parents are aware of traditions in this country, such as the concepts of an open house or a school which can be visited without a personal invitation.⁴
- Schools also need to teach parents about the U.S. educational system.¹

Barrier:

- It is not uncommon for some educators to perceive low levels of involvement among immigrant's parents as a lack of motivation and interest to cooperate and participate in their children's education as well as not placing a high value on education. However research suggests that such attributions are erroneous by showing data in which immigrants' parents express their interest in participating in their kids' education and recognize the value of education.¹²

Intervention:

- Schools should caution not to misinterpret immigrant parents' minimal or absent participation in school-related events as evidence that parents were not interested in their children's schooling.⁷

Barrier:

- Lack of English proficiency continues to be one of the most salient barriers to parental information and participation.¹
- Some Spanish speaking parents suggest that when they have attended Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, they leave the room understanding little about what was discussed because those meetings have been conducted entirely in English.⁹

Intervention:

- All written materials sent out to parent should be in the home language and English, bilingual staff should be available to speak with parents when they come to school, and interpreters should be provided at meetings and events. Native language training should be available for teachers and ESL training for parents.¹

Barrier:

- Some parents have argued that they cannot help their children with school work because of their own limited knowledge, as well as limited literacy skills, both in English and in Spanish. Moreover, sometimes these parents do not communicate their concerns to the school.⁹

Intervention:

- Schools can support parental education, which encompasses both family literacy and understanding school community. Family literacy may involve teaching ELL parents how to read and write, then supporting them as they learn to create situations in the home that encourage reading and writing with their children.¹
- The provision of an educationally supportive home environment consistently has been shown to be positively related to achievement. Home-based involvement includes providing appropriate structure and intellectually engaging materials in the home.⁶
- Supporting a student who is having trouble completing homework can deepen and further the student's understanding of the material. However, helping with homework can interfere with achievement if the parents interfere with the students' autonomy, create excessive parental pressure, or if there are differences between how parents and schools present the materials.⁶

Barrier:

- Parents have reported being discouraged from participating in schools because they perceived the school as an unwelcome environment. Some parents feel that school staff often fails to understand their values and culture.⁹
- ESL parents are frequently seen as lacking the resources to provide their children with the support they academically need, and often dealing with these barriers represents a burden for teachers which influences their attitudes and actions towards this population.⁹

Intervention:

- Suggestions for improving school-home relationships include visits to students' homes and communities to learn about the funds of knowledge in their families and cultures, participating in community events and celebrations, developing relationships with adults in the students' communities, bringing family members into the classroom, offering classes and other activities for family members, and hiring and supporting the hiring of staff members from the language and cultural backgrounds of the students.⁴

Barrier:

- Some ESL parents do not participate in school activities, such as meetings, workshops, and open house, either because they have limited transportation access or because they have a very demanding work- schedule.¹¹

Intervention:

- Schools have created policies which include neighborhood meetings to address the problem of a lack of transportation that discourages parents from attending functions.⁴
- School-home communication within ethnic communities needs to be addressed to reveal what the needs are for students and parents.⁴
- Modifying meetings to accommodate parents work schedule, providing child care to facilitate parental attendance at school functions, and arranging transportation to facilitate student involvement in school activities address some of the barriers leading to the decrease in ELL parental involvement.¹

References

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