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Individual Paper:

***The relationship between Parents and Schools: Parents'
Involvement in their children's education.***

Substantial evidence exists to show that children whose parents are involved in their schooling have extremely increased their academic achievement and perceptive development (Andrews and others (1982), Henderson (1981), and Herman and Yeh (1980) revealed in Becher, 1986)

Increasing parents' involvement in their children's education is viewed as a cornerstone of most schools in the United States. Parents can play an important role in helping their children succeed in schools. They, at the same time, can improve their skills in certain ways and their abilities to be active as well as their desire for participating with teachers' and their children's activities. Therefore, parents' involvement with teachers, I believe with no doubt, has its obvious effects on children's achievement in schools. On one hand, there are many programs and strategies that would contribute and promote such relationships between parents and teachers. On the other hand, there are some problems that might face parents and prevent them from being involved, but, in my opinion, it is possible to solve them.

One of the eight National Education Goals of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act states that " Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children." For instance, Turmail indicated that the number of California, Colorado, and Indiana public school principals reporting that a lack of parental involvement is a serious problem for their schools has declined from 1991 to 1994.

State	1991	1994
California	20%	11%
Colorado	17%	8%
Indiana	19%	9%

These percentages obviously show that parents' involvement gradually decreases problems in schools. That, I think, is an excellent evidence of the progress and the improvement of parents' involvement in schools.

Parents' involvement in school will benefit not only parents and their children but also teachers (Becher, 1986). Parents' involvement in their children's education is one of the most essential subjects in education in the United States. One of the parents' functions is to support schools in term of enhancing children's education, and preventing and remedying educational problems (Cullingford and Morrison, p. 253). Further, parents increase the rate of contact made with the school and their understanding of child development. Hence, parent-school cooperation makes parents better teachers of their children at home and empowers them to use more positive and effective methods to foster their children's skills and achieve sufficient learning (Becher, 1986). As a result of parents' involvement, children achieve higher grades and test scores, have better attendance at school, complete more homework, demonstrate more positive attitudes and behavior, graduate at higher rates, and have greater enrollment in higher education.

Parents who are involved in their children's education have positive attitudes about themselves and increased self-confidence (Becher, 1986). Also, Epstein et al were quoted in Aiex (1996) that saying " Research shows that parents' involvement improves student achievement." Moreover, the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL, 1995) indicates that when parents participate in their children's education, the result is an increase in student achievement and an improvement of students' attitudes toward both self-respect and society. Increased attendance, fewer discipline problems, and higher aspirations also have been correlated with an increase in parents' involvement.

Parents and teachers share responsibilities for creating a working relationship that fosters children's learning. Those children must be understood from different angles because they behave in school in one way and in another at home. In light of this fact, I think, teachers are responsible for things that happen in school, and parents are responsible for things that happen at home. To improve children's education, teachers and parents must work hand-in-hand to obtain

certain goals. Further, Epstein said, “ The main reason to create such partnerships is to help all youngsters succeed in school and in later life” (Chavkin, Gonzalez, and Dora, 1995). A national study of 8th grade students and their parents indicates that parental involvement in students' academic lives is indeed a powerful influence on students' achievement across all academic areas (Keith & Keith revealed in Swartz, 1995).

Since parents are important in the educational environment, every school endeavors to have its children's parents involved in their children's education. Cullingford and Morrison said, “ In every school there is a desire to work with parents, to involve parents and to engage with parents ...” (Cullingford and Morrison, p. 256). Parents on the other side of this issue should be involved and associated with school in terms of developing children's learning.

Schools cannot meet all their students' interests and needs unless parents powerfully participate with them. Schools can create particular programs to provide parents with strategies to support the academic success of their children and guarantee more than one way to obtain learning at home. Also, schools can foster the chances to make connections between teachers and parents in order to work together to help children (Rutherford and Billig, 1995). Moreover, schools can inform parents about classroom goals for the year and give some examples of what, when, and how children will be learning (Coleman, 1991). The open conversations between teachers and parents will give teachers extra help and give a sense of continuity between what goes on in home and in school (Cullingford and Morrison, p. 256).

As I mentioned, school can create special programs for parents to let them be more involved in their children's education. The purposes of such programs are to give equal consideration to the needs of all students; to consider the resources and experiences of parents; to empower parents with confidence because when parents learn how to teach their own children, they not only give the children new skills, but also build their feelings of competence. This

increased confidence, in turn, motivates the children to perform better (NCREL, 1995) and to create an environment that encourages information sharing.

Several research studies examined the impact on achievement when parents participate in decision-making roles in the educational program. NCREL (1995) refers to Gillum (1977) who studied adoption of reading programs in three elementary districts. Each district shared information about the new program with parents. However, students in the district that involved parents in decisions about implementation of the program and strategies for reinforcement at home had significantly higher reading scores.

In addition, the California Department of Education indicates that Foothill Elementary School in Corona, California, which received the 1998 Outstanding Unit Award by the National PTA. The honor was awarded for the association's successful efforts to make Foothill Elementary a year-round school. The PTA created the Home-School Communications Project, which sends home weekly folders containing information for parents; reformatted the PTA monthly newsletter for families that are not in school to inform them of school events; and created a 24-hour PTA information hotline and PTA website that provide immediate access to PTA and school information. Parents were pleased with these services, according to a survey conducted halfway through the year.

Parents' Participation Program in schools is program in which parents can play an important role. Parents can participate by preparing classroom materials, serving on a committee to select classroom equipment and materials, or even leading classroom activities in which they have experienced (Coleman, 1991). Also, parents can come to school and participate with teachers in classrooms by working and helping children.

The Booktalk Program is another program that aims to improve and increase parents' involvement in their children's education especially young adolescents' reading. In this program,

parents are sent letters at the beginning of the school year and students are given a list of 15 books to examine with their parents in order to select five to read. Students are divided into groups of ten according to book titles. Parents have only three weeks to read their children's books. After that, schools will invite parents to attend discussions with their children and teachers (Aiex, 1996). Further, Morris and Kaplan stated that parents were so surprised by their literary children's discussion (Aiex 1996).

Project FIEL was begun in 1985 and is in eight elementary schools in El Paso, Texas. This intergenerational literacy program involves limited-English-proficient parents and their kindergarten children in oral language, story writing, reading, discussions, and at-home activities. Another program, which is "Reading Club", was implemented in 1994 in a rural middle school. Folsom said, "Reading interests did, indeed, improve, and parents were gratified by their children's success and their own involvement in the children's education (Aiex, 1996). Obviously, parents' involvement impacts and increases children's achievement in schools.

Since students spend approximately eight hours daily in school and the rest of the day in their parents' home, I think parents are the connection circle between the students and their teachers in school. Teachers do not know more about students' situations after school time, but parents do know especially the interests and experiences of their children outside schools. However, they want to help their children succeed in school, but often needed help and guidance about how to do this most effectively. Therefore, the information that parents have about their children is so valuable and important to enhance those children's education. There are many ways to share this information with teachers such as parent-teacher conferences and encouraging parents by speaking to them to involve in their children's education. Having such information, teachers will focus on the essential interests and needs of children and teachers' understanding empower teachers to contribute actively in classrooms (Becher, 1986).

There is no perfection in education. However, there are some claims that indicate that parents' involvement might cause a few problems. These claims may be either some teachers believe that parents do not know how to work with children or waste too much time by planning such programs (Becher, 1986). Other claims include a history of bad experiences with schools, a general lack of trust of institutions, and the lack of English language skills. Also, parents might avoid contacting the school because what they have learned and experienced two or three decades ago is completely different from what their children learn and experience (Coleman, 1991).

These claims are considered some of the difficulties that face parents and keep them away from involvement. However, on the other hand, it is possible to remedy such problems. First, successful programs help parents identify other skills that they can participate with in school (Becher, 1986) and encourage them to be not anxiety of failure. Second, education departments presented by schools' administrations provide parents with some information that reveals a school's history and experiences. For example, Turmail said that the Colorado Department of Education published two guides, in both Spanish and English, to help parents ask important questions about education. They were: *Recipe for Success: A Colorado Parent's Guide to Improving School Quality and Student Achievement* and *Moving Ahead Together: A School-Improvement Tool Kit for Colorado Communities*. Third, Chavkin and Williams said that Schools that are serious about developing partnerships with parents can provide information to parents about different ways they can be involved and understand the barriers that keep parents from being more active (NCREL, 1995). Eventually, schools should consider the resources and knowledge of parents (Rutherford and Billig, 1995) because that will make parents feel more comfortable toward school. Powell reveals that educators in California have developed new publications, resource centers, and networks designed to help schools involve parents more in

their programs. Also, they have paid more attention to the training that teachers receive in learning how to work well with parents.

In addition, to avoid such problems, Schools should create an environment where teacher input on implementation of parent involvement strategies is sought out and encouraged. Furthermore, there are many strategies that let parents and teachers work together without having problems and difficulties. I will list some of these strategies with a brief explanation:

1- Inform parents with how and when they can contact school and teacher (Katz and others, 1996). Since each teacher has his/her own office hours and parents have leisure time. It is important to save time by making appointments to avoid wasting time, If both teachers and parents cannot make appointments, they can contact each other by using either newsletters or electronic mails.

2- teachers should give opportunities to parents to participate in classrooms at any time that is convenient to them (Katz and others, 1996). Parents, I think, will feel better when they see how and what teachers try to teach their children. This way might let some parents propose some ideas that may be missed by teachers. In addition, parents can be leading classroom activities.

3- Monthly parent-teacher conferences (Nielsen and Finkelstein stated in Katz and others, 1996). Through these meetings, parents and teachers will share and propose their ideas and some new notions that might promote children's education in certain methods. It is possible to distribute brief questionnaires for both parents and teachers in terms of evaluating set goals and how children's achievement in schools are going.

4- Include topics related to classroom and family environment (Coleman, 1991). The reason to have topics associated with classroom and family is to make parents feel comfortable when they visit school. These kinds of topics such as childhood stress, parent-child communication, and tips for parenting, perhaps, would motivate parents to be active once they

are involved. School can serve the interests and needs of parents by offering information and educational programs that give some suggestions on topics like these and others.

5- Participation in field trips (Katz and others, 1996). This is perhaps an appropriate element to parents who have insufficient time during week's days to participate inside schools. Those parents can show their desire for participating with teachers and children. Therefore, they, of course, can show their skills in certain ways and their abilities to be active.

As a conclusion, American families continue to change. Programs and projects for children will need to be adapted by educational institutions presented by schools. Parents' involvement, indeed, improves children's education and develops children's attitudes toward both self-confidence and society. Therefore, parents can improve their treatments' skills by being involved in their children' education and they can give some suggestions to teachers and school's administration. Teachers and administrators should not expect parental involvement to solve all the problems facing schools. They should, however, seek to foster communications that create strong parent-teacher partnerships and stress the importance of parents' efforts to work with their children. By working together and having well organized, schools, teachers, and parents will be able to face all the difficulties that might impede students' achievement in schools.

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