Parental Involvement and the Effect on a Child’s Academic Performance

Amanda Barrs

Liberty University
Abstract

In America the value of education seems to be declining. Parents have so many things on their plate and something has to be pushed to the back burner. The research shows that parents may want to be involved, but are lacking the knowledge or tools to move forward. The different ethnic groups, age groups, and socioeconomic groups all affect the amount of involvement from the parent according to the research. Education is earned through hard work and with the support of educators and families, the children can be successful and their education is something that can never be taken from them.
Parental Involvement

Parental involvement has a tremendous effect on the academic performance of students. A child must know someone cares and the best way for them to know this is for their parents to be willing to be involved in their school career. Over the years, there have been numerous studies have been completed that show the correlation between parental involvement and student success. Schools are going to great lengths to involve parents in their child’s education.

Parents may have decided to be involved in their child’s education by attending school activities, helping with school assignments, having an open line of communication with the school, or volunteering at the school. There is a huge emphasis placed on standardized test, therefore those scores are used to measure a student’s performance as well as daily class grades. While reviewing the literature that is available on this topic, it was quite clear there are many opinions on the topic. This paper will review several studies that have evaluated the correlation between parental involvement and academic performance. The research chosen may represent different minorities, grade levels, and socioeconomic status.

As a student begins through school career, parents seem to be very involved. Parents make sure they attend family nights planned by the school, take an active role in parent teacher organizations, attend conferences, and eat lunch with their child especially for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Field Day. The process of building a value for education begins early in a child’s life. When a toddler is read to on a regular basis and later when the time management for school related activities is established by the parents, children realize the importance of education. When parents view education, do they understand the involvement that must be devoted to the child’s education at home? The parents' understanding of their role in the child's life: what they believe that parents are supposed to do in relation to their children's education and educational
Parents become involved in schools if they hold the belief that they should be involved. The parents' sense of efficacy for helping their child succeed in school: do parents believe that their involvement can exert a positive influence on children's educational outcomes? Active management from parents in the home supports the educational endeavors and the motivational to learn and be successful (Rogers, 2009). Supportive and encouraging parental involvement by rewarding a child with verbal praise and encouragement is associated with higher school achievement. There is a fine line between encouragement of children and placing pressure to succeed that a child views education and learning in a negative manner. By punishing students for grades and criticizing their performance, a child may perform at a lower level because of not having positive support from parents. Parents what their children to do the very best, but parents must look at each child individually and realize they may not be able to make all A honor roll and A/B honor roll is also a great achievement.

With the growing number of single parent homes, there are many factors that may contribute to a parent not being involved. The state of the economy is having a tremendous effect on the American family. The rising price of gasoline and other goods as well as the high unemployment rate, when a parent is fortunate to have a job they must go to work and even work any available overtime. It is important for teachers and administrators to be aware of family situations. When a parent has previously been involved and the student is being successful and then the communication ceases between the parent and school, there may be underlying factors affecting the child’s educational performance.

Statistics were used from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) by Hong and Ho (2005) that investigated the correlation between parental involvement, characteristics of students, and performance academically to determine the differences between ethnic groups.
the study, communication and parental participation at home and at school were measured among 1500 students from different ethnic groups which included African American, Caucasian, Hispanic, and Asian American. The number of males and females were equal among the different ethnic groups.

Parental involvement was viewed differently among the different ethnic groups. African Americans did not view communication between the parent and teacher as having an impact on academic achievement, while participation in activities at school was a significant for Asian American parents (Hong & Ho, 2005). Asian American parents also viewed supervision at home as significant. Student aspiration was significant among all ethnic groups when related to academic performance.

Other issues that have an effect on parents being involved in their children’s education is cited as being a lack of time. Parents’ work a full-time job and then other duties that they expected to complete leaves little time to meet with teachers. It seems that educators are more willing to work with these parents that are making a living, but what is the reason for unemployed parents not being involved and communicating with the schools. Some reasons may they feel in superior and do not understand the education jargon that teachers speak, they may feel the whole world is against them especially when they have a meeting and there is a team of educators, and lack of communication on the schools part.

The impact of parental involvement had on academic performance of African American high school seniors was examined by Jeynes (2005). During his study he also looked at socioeconomic status as well as gender. The study showed that there was an impact on academic performance, but the parents of girls were more involved than those of boys. Jeynes theory is the socioeconomic status may affect parental involvement negatively because parents are unable to
attend school events because of work hours and personal attitudes about education.

Bakker, Denessen, & Brus-Laeven (2007) conducted a survey where 216 students and 60 teachers were asked to answer questions about parental involvement and student achievement where socioeconomic status was a factor. The teachers were from both urban and rural areas of the Netherlands, while four students were selected from each class for their parents to participate. The study’s purpose was to answer the following questions regarding teacher perceptions of parental involvement in education match that of the parents and the relationship to student achievement being there was no valid instrument to complete this survey.

The results showed that teachers view parents as one and the same, while parents view parental involvement differently from teachers. Teachers also place more emphasis on the affect parental involvement has on academic achievement than parents do. This information could relate back to a stereotype teachers have of parents and in return this image may affect academic results and learning negatively.

Jeynes (2005) completed a study that looks at the effects of parental involvement and family structure on academic achievement of students. The study looked at different positions of parental involvement and the structure of the family and the affect of student performance. The most significant factor of student achievement was family structure. If a parent was involved in the education of their child by discussing school issues or attending school events, a positive relationship was seen in academic performance. To the extent that parental family structure is, in itself, partially a measure of parental involvement, the relative influence of family structure and other measures of parental involvement on children's academic achievement is discussed (Jeynes, 2005).

The research is positive in looking at gains in a student’s academic success despite the
family’s socioeconomic status when a parent is involved (Darling, 2008). Teachers have seen that students are more motivated to succeed and an improvement in the students’ academic performance when their parents are actively involved in their education (Smith, 2006). Parents may have the desire to be involved, but may be lacking the tools to do so while others may be illiterate themselves. Research shows that parents with college degree spend more working with their children and caring for them with women spending 70% more time than women with a high school degree and fathers with a college degree spend more than double the time of dropout fathers (Guryan et al., 2008). The outcome could be great for all students with more parental involvement.

Schools, teachers, and administrators are going to have to make steps to get parents more involved in their children’s education. It seems very easy for parents to fill the stadiums on Friday night and some of these parents are the same ones that have never visited the school for meetings or student activities. At every level of education, teachers should incorporate homework that can be completed as a family. The “family project” such as a personal timeline, family tree, or decorating a pumpkin at the primary level may not be curriculum based, but it will get everyone involved and talking which may lead to conversations about what is going on at school. Schools must make an effort to meet the varying needs of parents. Instead of holding daytime conferences, the school could have an evening for parents to come in and have their conference so they do not have to make a choice of taking of work or meeting with their child’s teacher. In some instances, lack of transportation may be the issue and teachers should be willing to make home visits or arrange transportation through an administrator.

At Ben Hill Primary in Fitzgerald, Georgia, the school organizes different events to get the families involved. The administration has mandatory first and third quarter conferences and after
the first quarter the school had a 99.177% attendance with only 7 of 841 being no-shows. Instead of asking parents to come out for a thirty minute P.T.O. meeting, the school may organize a program performed by a group of students or offer a workshop on test taking strategies and tips. The school also has family bingo night and family reading night where the children read to the parents in the library and teachers are there to help the students take as many accelerated reader test as they can during the two hour window. The school encourages parents to come in and visit their child’s classroom during instructional time to see what the child is learning, but these visits are limited to thirty minutes. This school is very good at incorporating the students’ family into the learning and many schools should take their lead.

As an educator, it is very clear that parental involvement is very important to the success of students. When a parent is involved in education a student will perform make better grades, graduation rate will be higher, and test scores will increase. The student will be eager to learn and school attendance will increase, self-esteem and motivation will increase, and there will be a decrease in negative behaviors and suspensions. The value of education needs to be instilled into society and with everyone working together; school and parents will produce contributing members of society.
References


