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Parental Involvement in Promoting Early Childhood Learning

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Abstract

This article presents Fundamental concepts for Parental involvement in promoting early childhood learning. Although socio-economic background is a key part when it comes to looking at data on education inequity, it has been shown that more involvement from parents in the child's education increases the child's likelihood to succeed in school with fewer behavioral problems, regardless of income or background. In this article mention 1) The Importance of Parent Involvement in Early Childhood Education 2) Types of Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education 3) How to Increase Parental Involvement with Connection and 4) The Value of Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education Academic skills

Keywords: Parental involvement, promoting, early childhood learning

Introduction

Parents who are involved in their child's education create a connection between the home and school. Those who participate along with their child are privy to the many aspects of their child's day. At home, they are able to replicate and extend activities that their child experiences in school. An astute parent will pick up where the school left off and have an intuitive sense for what their child may need to work on to increase his competency and confidence. Ideas gleaned from the classroom give the parent inspiration for home activities that coincide with classroom tasks. Involved parents learn the names of various children in their child's class. They have a sense of who their child's friends are, who may be causing them trouble and how their own child is getting along in the group.

Back in the old days, if your parent showed up to school it usually meant you were in trouble. But for kids whose parents regularly involve themselves in school activities, parental visits are a positive adjunct to the child's day. Teachers and school staff appreciate assistance with a myriad of duties that many parents can easily fulfill while also adding a new face to the mix. On a deeper level, involvement in this capacity shows your child and your child's teacher that you view education as an important aspect of life - one worth participating in.



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Early childhood education is just the beginning of your child's educational career. Involving yourself in a classroom setting allows you to get a peek into the world of young children. You may wonder why your child cannot draw shapes like Jennifer or speak as clearly as James. Taking the time to objectively determine where your child stands in his development is a key factor in getting to know and appreciate your child for who he is. Discover his strengths, interests and areas that need refining. If your child is struggling with certain aspects of his education, it is an ideal time to discuss concerns with your child's teacher or doctor.

Establishing a social network is one benefit of parental involvement that should not be underestimated. Parents of other children of similar age provide solace, sources of information and family connections that can be lifelong. Kids are apt to become friends with parents who are on a friendly basis. Social connections between children provide security when transitions, such as kindergarten, occur. A child may be more willing to join a group or activity if he has a friend willing to participate. Parents who are involved in their child's schooling can oil the social cogs for their children by demonstrating friendly openings. (Hello motherhood, 2022)

The Importance of Parent Involvement in Early Childhood Education

Some of a child's most important development happens during their preschool years. By taking an active role in the early childhood education (ECE) process, parents can help ensure that their child has all the support they need to develop to their full potential – emotionally and academically. That is why programs like Pre-K Counts, Head Start and Early Head Start highly encourage parent and family participation, with the belief that a parent's involvement is essential not only to the success of the child, but also to the program. As stated in the article, Parent Involvement in Head Start and Children's Development: Indirect Effects of Parenting, “Although it is possible that parent involvement in Head Start could have direct benefits for children, it is more likely that it will have indirect effects through improvements in parenting behavior, and it was these indirect pathways that the founders of Head Start had in mind when they decided to promote parent involvement”. As parents immerse themselves in the program, program staff then have a chance to enhance parents' knowledge and skills which could lead to positive gains in children's development, as well as their own personal development.

There are many ways parents and families can become involved in a program and strive to be an even greater role model for their children. Family members can:

1. attend center meetings,
2. get involved in developing an Individualized Education Plan for their child with special needs,



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3. serve on committees and special advisory councils,
4. assist in efforts like recruitment or sharing their personal story with school and elected officials or potential funders.

In addition to the activities that enhance a parent’s leadership skills, and also offer opportunities to expand a caregiver’s education, provide assistance to obtain employment or find a better job, and present a chance for parents to participate in parenting programs like The Incredible Years.

Types of Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education

Based on our research (Sprig learning, 2022), we discovered there are four categories of activities parents can engage in to better support their child’s education. Here they are along with some practical examples.

1. Attend Events

Parents should attend school events, whenever possible. During the pandemic, many school events were either cancelled or held virtually. While text, email and other social networks can be good tools for initial communication, there is nothing like building a partnership with the school or an educator in person. These events can be in school, or in the community. Examples: Attend parent-teacher meetings, conferences or briefings. Attend other school activities such as plays, tournaments, class presentations, chaperone school field trips.

2. Visit Places

Visiting signifies taking the initiative to take your child somewhere, rather than just attending what someone else has organized. It’s a crucial part of home learning, where the child uses their inquisitive nature to learn about the world around them. Examples: Plan educational trips such as to the library, museum, or neighborhood park.

3. Do Things at Home

“Doing” is the other half of home learning that can happen indoors, at the comfort of one’s own residence. Rather than going to a place, the parent can partake in any number of educational activities with their child inside the home. Sprig Learning developed Sprig Home so parents can access teacher-created activities to do at home. It helps parents to teach their kids while also familiarizing themselves with the school curriculum. It’s an app that can be downloaded and used to educate children independently of any schools as well. During the formative years, learning never truly stops, it just takes on many forms such as play-based learning or active learning. So it’s important to extend learning outside the classroom. It’s really important to show interest in an early learner’s school work. Whether it’s sharing excitement over successes or providing encouragement during a difficult phase in learning,



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being involved by doing is essential. Examples: Do teacher-recommended activities at home. Reading with children, or reading storybooks to children, are perhaps the most famous examples to illustrate this category.

4. Communicate with Educators

Communicating refers to actively corresponding with educators on what help they might need or receiving advice on how to best support the child’s needs at home. Educators have an extremely demanding job, especially when it contains administrative duties as well on top of teaching. When parents pitch in to help relieve the workload from educators, it allows teachers more time to personalize the education for the children in their classes. Examples: Monitor homework. Discuss school days and events. Volunteer to help in school with time or resources.

How to Increase Parental Involvement with Connection.

Creating a supportive school climate is the first step to developing long-term student achievement. When students feel like they have someone to turn to with questions or concerns, they’re more likely to develop the confidence and motivation they need to succeed. And parental involvement is the most effective way to fostering that climate. Many parents would like to get involved with their child’s school but don’t know where to start. As an educator, it’s up to you to connect families with opportunities for engagement and student support. The more you can connect with each family on a personal level, the higher the performance rate for your entire class will be. Learn how to connect parents with the tools they need and how regular connection can revolutionize your school. (Waterford.org, 2022)

1. Offering Parental Involvement Opportunities in Schools

When teachers connect with parents using the same generic methods, parents tend to view them as authoritative and distant.[3] That’s why varying the ways you reach out can significantly improve parent involvement in education. Try these strategies to connect with parents in the classroom and establish lasting relationships. And, if you’re not sure which strategy would best fit a certain family, feel free to ask them.

2. After-School Activities

Most schools schedule parent-teacher conference once or twice a semester, but you can get creative with how you bring parents into your classroom. Open houses, school festivals, and holiday celebrations are a few ways to connect parents with the school community. If you want, you can even involve parents in the planning process to invest them in classroom activities. If you’re worried about a specific student, you can also set up an individual parent teacher meeting anytime during the year. Discussing any academic or social-



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emotional concerns with parents can nip any issues in the bud before they become a problem. You can also make a plan for improvement that involve the family’s values or goals.

3. Connection to School Resources

Putting parents in touch with school resources can make your connections with them meaningful and individualized. Keep an eye out for ways families or specific students are struggling and brainstorm ways your school could help. If a student’s falling behind in math, for example, suggest to their parents that they attend an after-school math lab. Or, if a family is struggling financially, connect them to the school counselor to discuss free or reduced lunch programs. This will help families realize how many resources are available to schools, which will encourage them to involve themselves and participate more often. It can also encourage parent teacher partnerships by showing parents that you care about their needs and are looking out for ways to help.

4. Parent Volunteering

Have a field trip coming up? Send out parent volunteering sheets to bring parents along! Families will feel more involved in the school community with hands-on involvement. Plus, taking parents along to special events can help them develop a positive perspective of teachers and their child’s class. Even if you don’t have any activities coming up, having a parent volunteer for 1 to 2 hours a week can take some pressure off your shoulders if you don’t have a teacher’s aide. If you can work together with parents in class, they’ll feel more comfortable coming to you with questions. And, the more time they spend at school, the better they can support their student’s academic progress.

5. Parent Trainings or Workshops

Even parents who want to be involved in their child’s academics might not know where to start. As an educator, you can facilitate parent trainings or workshops to teach them how. If parents can’t make it to training sessions, bring the workshop to them. Webinars can engage parents in a face-to-face way while also allowing for convenience and flexibility in location. And, unlike pre-recorded videos, you can still engage in face-to-face discussion on important topics.

6. Parent-Teacher Committees

When parents feel like they can make a difference in their child’s education, they’re much more likely to engage at school. If your school has a parent-teacher association, connect parents with sign-up information and meeting times during the first months of school. This will give parents an outlet to make their voice heard and keep them up-to-date with class events. If they involve themselves regularly with parent-teacher committees, they may even help you plan and implement these events.



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7. Expanding Connection Beyond School Events

Parent teacher connection doesn't have to stop with the classroom. With the help of technology or transportation, you can connect with parents from the comfort of their homes. Use these strategies to facilitate parent teacher relationships in a setting that works best for them.

8. Apps and Websites

Parents appreciate when they can monitor their child's progress and connect with teachers when they have concerns. You can connect parents with this information through a variety of mediums. Online student portals, teacher parent communication apps, and emails are all easy ways to keep parents in touch. While in-person connections are always ideal, online tracking systems can help parents and teachers connect if transportation or scheduling issues arise. If you can, choose a medium that allows parents and teachers to message or otherwise collaborate online. Include notes about their child's academic and social-emotional progress, and check your messages regularly for questions from parents.

9. Parent Surveys

Send out a parent survey at the beginning of the year and after each quarter or semester. Parent surveys encourage involvement by showing that you value their opinions. AS you incorporate their feedback, families may also feel more comfortable in your classroom. You may be surprised at how insightful parental feedback is for improving your school culture. If possible, try to include a mix of both multiple-choice and free response questions. That way, you can take polls on simple questions while giving parents space to make their opinions heard.

10. social media

Young parents, particular digital natives, prefer and respond best to tech-based teacher connections. [4] social media in particular is a helpful and often underused way to inform parents about upcoming events and encourage communication. You can also help foster connections between parents as you build an online community. Facebook groups are the most popular way to encourage parent engagement, but you could also try Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, or whatever outlet parents are most comfortable with in your class. If you're not sure which medium to use, send a survey to determine the most popular option. If parents don't have the time to visit school, meet them in the middle and schedule a meeting at their home. A study conducted by John Hopkins University found that routine home visits can reduce chronic absenteeism by up to 24 percent fewer missed classes per year. Home visits can not only improve student, parent, and teacher relations, but give you a better idea of a student's home life. If parents are uncomfortable with meeting at home, be



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flexible. Meeting at a cafe or scheduling a “virtual home visit” via a web conference can provide similar benefits.

Parents and teachers form a support system for students throughout the school year. By taking simple steps every day to connect with parents, you can significantly improve your school climate.

The Value of Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education Academic skills

how do we promote parent involvement in the early childhood field? There is a fine line with this question because families are so busy in today’s world. The hours worked each week, the stress of relationships, the attention our technology receives daily and providing for our families have become a distraction from meaningful interaction and our children are paying the price for this. So, I went to the scholars to find support on the power of parental involvement in early childhood education and for meaningful ways to engage families in order to achieve this. I have found that parental involvement does not only affect the children’s emotions but also their success in schools. As educators, we must seek ways that will be effective in involving parents in their child’s education.

So how can we as educators support parental involvement so that our students feel supported in the classroom and at home? As an educator it is important to be understanding of the challenge’s families face in today’s world. We must establish a relationship with our parents that is based on respect and trust for one another in order to best meet the needs of the child. We must communicate with our families weekly to check in. Too often educators only reach out to parents to express concern for the child when we should be sharing positive thoughts and comments more often. We should ask parents to share their thoughts and concerns as well so that they feel that their insight and opinions matter and are valued. It is incredibly valuable to send home newsletters and personal notes to keep parents informed on what is going on in the classroom so that they feel involved. The most important step to building a bridge towards parental involvement in the classroom is open communication between the families and the teacher. It is incredibly valuable to a child’s education and well-being for parents to be involved in their academics. Parental involvement increases student success, social skills, problem solving abilities and interest in learning.

A valuable lesson to all is to take the time to slow down and enjoy the meaningful relationships with the people in our lives, despite how busy and exhausted we feel because our children are affected by the energy of all the adults in their lives. Building a relationship between their school and home lives will help to assist the encouragement and support that they feel daily. (Proudly powered by WordPress, 2022)



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Conclusion

Parents are busy. We have jobs, homes to run, and children to take care of. It can be quite overwhelming to manage everything, and so it is quite natural to welcome any and all help that is offered. Either by a family member, a friend, or an organization. In early childhood education, there is lots of help available for parents. In Head Start Programs in the US, preschools are free for parents. These programs take a two-generation approach which educates the child while nurturing the well-being of the parent. Greater parental involvement in these programs has proven to increase cognitive stimulation in early learners. There are also home-based options where visitors come once a week to the home to support parents and kids and co-develop strategies to help the child learn. There are also parent training programs that are designed to reduce family stress. They provide instruction in areas such as discipline strategies, positive involvement in a child’s life, skill encouragement, and problem solving. Basically, the programs aim to cover everything that a parent should know as they raise and educate their young children. Parental involvement on the other hand, is defined as the “ active participation of a parent or caregiver in the education of the child.” This perspective focuses on the parent initiating engagement—a regular and ongoing commitment of the parent to their children and to their school.

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