

Training Teachers in Parent Engagement

Question:

1. What are effective practices for training pre- and in-service teachers in parent engagement?
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Report:

Following an established REL-NEI Reference Desk research protocol, we conducted a search for research reports as well as descriptive and policy-oriented briefs and articles in this area. The sources included federally funded organizations, additional research institutions, several educational research databases, and a general Internet search using Google and other search engines. We also searched for appropriate organizations that may act as resources on this issue. We have not done an evaluation of these organizations or the resources themselves, but offer this list to you for your information only.

Our Researchers have found that “when families, schools and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more” (Henderson, 2002; see resource below). “Teachers feel that their schools are not preparing them on how to involve parents. This needs to be addressed in a concerted and consistent manner. Professional development days need to be reserved for preparation for teachers regarding parent involvement” (Quigley, 2000; see resource below). “Teacher preparation has the potential to serve as an important forum for overcoming barriers to the engagement of parents in their children’s education...Studies of interventions in pre-service teacher education have reported improvement in candidate knowledge, attitudes, and skills for working with parents (Harris, 2004; see resource below). Overall, “school staff need more support in developing ways to reach out to families and use the resources available to them in the community...All staff, from principal to custodian, need opportunities to learn more about this area” (Henderson, 2002; see resource below).

Question:

1. What are effective practices for training pre- and in-service teachers in parent engagement?

- 1.1. Preparing Teachers to Engage Parents.** *Harris, M.M., Jacobson, A., & Hemmer, R.; November 2004; Harvard Family Research Project; 5 pages; ERIC Document # ED484762.*

Source: ERIC>Harvard Family Research Project

(<http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/preparing-teachers-to-engage-parents>)

From the ERIC abstract, “Teacher preparation has the potential to serve as an important forum for overcoming barriers to the engagement of parents in their children’s education. Nevertheless, parent involvement has yet to hold a central role in the teacher education curriculum (Chavkin & Williams, 1987; de Acosta, 1996; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Hiatt-Michael, 2001) and in continuing professional development for educators (Moles, 1993). Teacher candidates report the belief that they do not possess the skills to implement parent involvement strategies in the classroom (Tichenor, 1998). Studies of interventions in preservice teacher education have reported improvement in candidate knowledge, attitudes, and skills for working with parents (Katz & Bauch, 1999; Morris, Taylor, Knight & Wasson, 1996). The research reported here is based on the first year of field testing of six modules. Each teacher educator devoted one 80-minute class period to pilot-testing one module. The lesson plans provided included an introductory discussion of the topic, cooperative learning group discussion of one of the case studies, and candidate completion of an authentic or simulated teaching task. The authors addressed whether teacher

candidate knowledge of parent involvement increased with study of the modules in teacher education classes, how teacher educators reacted to use of the modules in their classes, and what suggestions they had for future development of the modules.”

1.2. Someone’s Most Precious Darling: Building Home-School Connection in Preservice Teacher Education Programs. *Power, B., & Perry, C.M.; 2000; The School Community Journal, vol. 10, no. 2; pages 9-19.*

Source: The Center on Innovation and Improvement> National PIRC Coordination Center>The SEDL National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools> The School Community Journal

(<http://www.adi.org/journal/fw00/PowerPerryFall2000.pdf>)

From the SEDL summary, “This paper describes the implementation of a school-family component as part of the Elementary Master of Arts in Teaching program at the University of Maine. The authors report several findings from the experience: that family played a crucial role in facilitating student learning, that building even small connections to their students’ homes affected academic programs in unexpected ways over an extended period of time, and that the experience helped the teacher educators reaffirm their understanding that what they do in their coursework with students has far more impact than what they say. Teacher educators at the university were interested in exploring three ideas: (1) that engaging families and friends of students in the Masters’ program would lead to greater learning, (2) that interactions with families and friends of students would cause changes in their own thinking about the teacher preparation program, and (3) that student experiences with in-service teachers building school-family connections would change the students’ perceptions of their own work with families in the future. The program had four components: solicited letters from family and friends, home visits, an open house, and roundtable discussions with parents of children at a professional development school site associated with the Masters’ program. This essay describes a unique model for pre-services teacher preparation.”

1.3. Preparing Preservice Teachers to Partner with Parents and Communities: An Analysis of College of Education Faculty Focus Groups. *Flanigan, C.B.; Fall-Winter 2007; School Community Journal; ERIC; vol. 17 no. 2; pages 89-110.*

Source: ERIC (#EJ794786)

(http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/3d/b8/10.pdf)

From the Abstract, “At both state and federal levels, partnerships of schools, parents and communities have become an educational priority. Are teacher education programs adequately preparing preservice teachers for these partnerships? Focus groups of College of Education (COE) faculty from five Illinois Professional Learner’s Partnership universities were conducted to answer this question. This study is organized around key themes that emerged from the discussions: importance of including the topic in teacher preparation programs; difficulties with the topic regarding cultural issues; negative preservice teacher attitudes about parents; differences in parent involvement at elementary and secondary levels; mixed messages given to preservice teachers by experienced teachers; inadequacy of the traditional teacher preparation program and student teaching experience to provide students with enough parent and community partnering opportunities; and the necessity of stressing collaboration and communication in teacher education. The theme selections were based on how frequently they were mentioned by different participants. The focus group discussions generated rich data and offered participants the opportunity to share their concerns about the topic.”

1.4. Increasing Parent Involvement Knowledge and Strategies at the Preservice Level: The Power in Using a Systematic Professional Development Approach. *Ferrara, M.; 2009; Teacher Educator; ERIC; vol. 44 no.4; pages 268-274.*

Source: ERIC (# EJ856426)

Full-Text Available for Purchase From Routledge

(<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~content=a915279117~db=all~jumptype=rss>)

From the Abstract, “This study described various strategies used by a university educator to integrate parent involvement curriculum into pre-existing teacher preparation courses. This curriculum was not only effective in increasing preservice teacher knowledge, but also in raising course instructors’ level of awareness about the importance and necessity of parent involvement in student learning.”

1.5. Creation of a Collaborative Parent/Teacher Professional Development Program by the School-Site Coordinator. *Sepanlou, R.; 2009; Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol. 69 (9-A); 3513 pages.*

Source: Internal Search Database

Abstract Only- No link Available- Dissertation from Pepperdine University

From the Abstract, "This study addressed district concerns about student low academic performance through a focus on parent-teacher communication and the work of a federally-funded school-site coordinator for professional development. First, the study assessed the interest of administration, teachers and parents for on-site collaborative professional development programs involving parents and teachers. Second, the study analyzed the position of the school-site coordinator and capability to improve student academic performance through joint professional training of parents and teachers. This case study utilized action research. Three sources of data were collected for this study: site documents from 2004-2007, field notes from 2004-2007, and interview data from 2006-2007. A total of four types of site documents- the school's Single Plan for Student Achievement, training and development materials, meeting agendas, and student performance data- were collected. Near the end of the study, the researcher conducted 21 on-site semi-structured, long interviews with site administrators, teachers and parents. Significant findings included that teachers and administrators reported that persistent lack of parent involvement was their major concern and that this affected students' academic performance. This concern was further supported in that, after a repeated attempt to personally contact, in both English and Spanish, the parents of 300 low-achieving students, 67 indicated that they would attend but only 10 actually participated in one collaborative parent-teacher professional development session. The findings from the parent interviews revealed that their greatest concerns were lack of understanding of the school system's culture, difficulty to cross the language barrier with teachers, and need for a welcoming atmosphere in schools. Field notes indicated that parents' work schedules affected their opportunities to participate at the school. All of the students of the parents that attended evidenced improved academic performance, including one student whose grades changed from F's to A's. Analysis of the artifacts, field notes, and interviews supported the utilization of the school-site federally-funded coordinator as the faculty administrative position that would implement parent-teacher collaborative professional development. This individual knows the school site, possesses support of teachers and parents, has allocated time to work with parents, and requires no additional funding."

1.6. Parent Involvement in the Northeast and Islands Region. *Agronick, G., Clark, A., O'Donnell, L., & Stueve, A ; April 2009; REL Northeast and Islands Issues & Answers Report No. 069; 66 Pages.*

Source: Institute for Education Sciences

http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL_2009069.pdf

"This report summarizes efforts to develop and pilot test a protocol for collecting information about parent involvement policies, practices, and programs being implemented at the middle and high school levels" (p.i). "While the benefits of parental involvement for academic achievement and other positive student outcomes are documented across grades K-12, less is known about how schools are engaging parents as their children move from elementary to middle school and then into high school and from the early years of high school to graduation. There is limited information on how states, districts, and schools select and implement parent involvement strategies at the secondary level and how they monitor and evaluate their efforts" (p.1). This report involves a "literature review of strategies that promote parent involvement," "protocol development to systematize procedures for collecting information on parent involvement," and "pilot testing of the protocol in nine districts in four states to chart what states, districts and schools are doing" (p.3). Pages 16 and 17 of the report detail ways in which states, districts and schools are using professional development opportunities to "prepare staff to work with parents. They include staff training and workshops to support parent involvement; curriculum and print material; and other professional development activities" (p.16-17). See report for examples in each area.

1.7. Parents and Teachers Working Together to Support Third Grade Achievement: Parents as Learning Partners (PLP) Findings. *Quigley, D.D.; 2000; Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing, CSE Technical Report 530; 91 pages.*

Source: The Center on Innovation and Improvement> National PIRC Coordination Center> The

SEDL National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools> The Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing

(<http://www.cse.ucla.edu/products/Reports/TECH530REV.pdf>)

From the SEDL summary, “The purpose of this study is to determine the effects of Parents as Learning Partners (PLP) on 3rd grade teachers’ practices, on parents’ involvement, and on students’ third grade achievement. Epstein’s (1995) six types of family and community involvement theoretically frame the study. Findings revealed that, over time, the cumulative effect of better attendance, more attention to studies, consistent expectations, and regular support improved achievement and grades. Twenty-nine schools in three School Families in Los Angeles County studied three primary areas in which parents and teachers can work together to support academic achievement: communication, parenting, and learning at home. The links between specific PLP activities, positive changes in parents and teachers, and student performance were not clear and needed further study. Teachers feel that their schools are not preparing them on how to involve parents. This needs to be addressed in a concerted and consistent manner. Professional development days need to be reserved for preparation for teachers regarding parent involvement. Teachers and school staff should engage parents in discussions about the benefits of parent education workshops, reading practices at home, and communicate with them more frequently about the progress of their child. Researchers suggest that the districts in the study need to reaffirm to their schools the need for significant, coordinated learning opportunities for teachers and parents to increase meaningful parent involvement in schools to support students’ learning.”

1.8. A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement. *Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K.L.; 2002: National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory; 241 pages.*

Source: EDC Colleague>Harvard Graduate School of Education: Karen Mapp> Southwest Educational Development Laboratory

(<http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf>)

“This fourth edition of Evidence confirms that the research continues to grow and build an ever-strengthening case” that “families have a major influence on their children’s achievement in school and through life” (p.7). “When families, schools and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more” (p.7). This report outlines the findings from over 80 studies and literature reviews and makes recommendations for practitioners and policymakers. Recommendation number four is to “Develop the capacity of school staff to work with families and community members” (p.64). The authors recommend to “increase opportunities for professional development on how to connect with families and community members” (p.64). “In several studies, an intervention was introduced to teachers or other school staff that shifted the level and nature of the contact between themselves and families. These shifts changed the way families felt about the school, affected their relationship with teachers, and influenced how they were involved in the educational life of their children. School staff need more support in developing ways to reach out to families and use the resources available to them in the community...Few teacher preparation programs include instruction on how to partner with parents and community. Such programs should be developed to include a focus on the importance of partnership with parents and community to improve student achievement. All school staff, from principal to custodian, need opportunities to learn more about this area” (p.65).

Additional Organizations to Consult

- **Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP)**

(<http://www.hfrp.org/>)

“Since 1983, [HFRP] has helped stakeholders develop and evaluate strategies to promote the well being of children, youth, families and their communities.” HFRP works “primarily within three areas that support children’s learning and development- early childhood education, out-of-school time programming, and family and community support in education.” Visit the Publications & Resources section for more information about family involvement in education. For a direct link, click here: <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources>

- **The SEDL National Center for Families and Community Connections with Schools**

[\(http://www.sedl.org/connections/\)](http://www.sedl.org/connections/)

“The Center links people with research-based information and resources that they can use to effectively connect schools, families, and communities. It emphasizes connections that directly impact student achievement in reading and mathematics as well as connections that contribute to the students’ overall success in school and in life. The Center reviewed emerging findings and research to develop an online database, annual conferences and annual reports to help advance procedural knowledge and to link research findings to practice. “

- **National Coalition of Parent Involvement in Education (NCPiE)**

[\(http://www.ncpie.org/\)](http://www.ncpie.org/)

The mission of the NCPiE is “to advocate the involvement of parents and families in their children’s education, and to foster relationships between home, school, and community to enhance the education of all our nation’s young people.” View the resources section for resources that “help build and facilitate effective family-school partnerships.” For a direct link, click here: <http://www.ncpie.org/Resources/>

- **Family Friendly Schools**

[\(http://www.steveconstantino.com/\)](http://www.steveconstantino.com/)

“Family Friendly Schools is dedicated to helping schools and districts around the country to increase student achievement by developing networks of integrated relationships between leadership, staff, and families that creates a culture of high performance and learning outcomes.”

Key words and search strings used in the search:

“parent” OR “parent involvement” OR “parent engagement” OR “family” OR “family involvement” OR “family engagement” AND “professional development” OR “teacher training” OR “faculty development”

Search databases and websites:

Institute for Education Science Sources: Regional Educational Laboratory Program (REL); What Works Clearinghouse (WWC); Doing What Works (DWW); National Center for Education Statistics (NCES); Institute for Education Sciences (IES); IES Practice Guides

Other Federally Funded Sites: The Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center; The National High School Center; The Center on Innovation and Improvement; The Center on Instruction; The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality; Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS); Center for Data-Driven Reform in Education (CDDRE); National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing; National Center for Performance Incentives; Access Center for Improving Outcomes for All Students K-8; Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement; Education Commission of the States

Additional Data Resources: The Campbell Collaboration; Data Quality Campaign; Education Development Center; WestEd; American Institutes for Research; The Education Trust; ERIC; EBSCO Databases; <http://www.google.com>; <http://www.google.com>; general internet search

Criteria for inclusion:

When Reference Desk Researchers review resources, they consider, among other things, four factors:

1. **Date of the publication:** The most current information is included unless in the case of nationally known seminal resources
2. **Source and funder of the report/study/brief/article:** Priority is given to IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols);
3. **Methodology:** i.e. Random control trial studies, surveys, self-assessments, literature reviews, policy briefs, etc. Priority for inclusion is given generally to random control trial study findings; however, the reader should note at least the following factors when basing decisions on these resources: Numbers of participants (just a few? Thousands?); Selection (did the participants volunteer in the study, or were they chosen?); Representation (were findings generalized from a homogeneous or a diverse pool of participants? Was the study sample representative of the population as a whole?)

4. **Existing knowledge base:** Although we strive to include vetted resources, there are times when the research base is slim or non-existent. In these cases we have included the best resources we could find, which may include newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, organization websites, etc.

REL Northeast and Islands

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