RUNNING HEAD: Parental Involvement

EFFECT PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN EIGHTH GRADE HEALTH

By

Jamie Berry

Submitted to

Educational Leadership Faculty

Northwest Missouri State University Missouri

Department of Educational Leadership

College of Education and Human Services

Maryville, MO 64468

Submitted in Fulfillment for the Requirements for

61-683 Research Paper

Fall 2012

December 3, 2013
ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to see if there was a significant difference between student achievement, which would be measured by a student’s final grade, and the frequency in which their parent was involved with the education in regards to their health class. Students were assigned a number that determined how often they would be receiving reflection paper to take home and fill out with their parents. There were three different groups assigned. One group would receive reflections once a week, another twice a week, and the last group would receive reflections only every other week. Research shows that parental involvement will increase student achievement in schools. Various ways to involve parents in the learning process should be address to help students to achieve high levels of academic success. Findings of this study did not support the research in regards to parental involvement and student success.
INTRODUCTION

Background, Issues and Concerns

A small town school in the mid-west, referred to as CMS, struggles to get parents/guardians involved in student achievement and learning. In previous years, during parent/teacher conferences, CMS has experienced around a 20% rate of parent/guardians that were attending these conferences. CMS has started the transition to a Public Learning Community or PLC. As the school has implemented many policies to help get this program underway support for this includes a program with students to see how to get parents more involved. This project will include papers filled out by parent/guardians using responses given by the student. Once this project was complete frequency of the students’ reflection papers were compared that to their final grade at the end of the quarter.

Practice Under Investigation

The practice under investigation is how to get parent/guardians more involved in student learning.

School Practice to be Informed by the Study

This study will focus on the practice of how and when to contact parent/guardians and how it is significant to student performance.
Conceptual Underpinning

Every student has different ways of learning in the classroom. Research shows that student achievement increases the more parent/guardians are involved in the learning process. According to NEA’s Research Spotlight on Parental Involvement in Education, “students with involved parents are more likely to:

- Earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs
- Be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits
- Attend school regularly
- Have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school
- Graduate and go on to postsecondary education.” (“Parent Involvement,” 2004).

Joyce Epstein (1995) had developed the theory of overlapping spheres of influence. Based off this theory the three spheres of influence are the family, the school and the community. When these three spheres connect and work together, students benefit the most. Depending upon what strategies and opportunities we offer to get parent/guardians involved, together we can drastically improve student achievement.

Statement of the Problem

If there is a way to get parent/guardians of all socio-economic groups more involved in student learning, then all teachers should use implement a policy to help every student to succeed.
Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate if parent involvement can improve student performance in the classroom.

Research question

Is there a relationship between student achievement of 8th grade health students and parental involvement?

Null Hypothesis

Ho: There is no relationship between student achievement of 8th grade health students and parental involvement.

Anticipated benefits of the study

Eight grade students that have involved parents will not only do better in health class, but will also continue to do better in high school.

Definition of Terms

PLC: Public Learning Communities; a collegial group who are united in their commitment to student learning

NEA: National Education Association is the nation's largest professional employee organization that is committed to advancing the cause of public education
Summary

A study was conducted to see if there was a correlation between student achievement and parental involvement. If the correlation analysis determines that there is a direct relation between student learning and how involved their parent/guardians are, then teachers should be required to determine a tool for better involving those parents. Upon completion of this study, school districts will benefit by not only finding more ways to involve parents, but also give students every possible chance to achieve.
Teachers teach the future. They educate our youth to become well-rounded individuals, active members of society, successful adults, responsible citizens, and leaders that will someday be in control. While schools are expected to meet the demands and rigor of challenging students every day, encouraging them to set and reach high goals, ensure that they understand reading, writing, and arithmetic and providing them the tools needed to be great test takers, schools are only given 13 years to accomplish these tasks. Most situations a teacher will have a student with 20-30 of their peers that they are also required to meet the above demands. This is not an easy task nor is it a job that can be done alone. Not only do teachers have to work together with each other, but they must work together with the parents and members of the community. Research shows that when parents are involved in their students’ lives that the students are more successful in school, have fewer discipline issues, are more likely to further their education, and are also enrich the community. According to Graham (n.d.), parental involvement has been shown to result in higher grades, better behavior, improved education, increased confidence and also allows parents to feel more comfortable in the school and better about their own parenting skills. Parental involvement can occur in various ways, be done by one or both parents, and can have lifelong benefits on the student.

As students get older and move from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school, many schools report a drop in the level of parental involvement (“Parent Involvement,” 2004). Challenges lie in finding ways to get parents and members of their community active within the school. Many parents avoid taking a more active role in their child’s education because they are too busy working to provide for the family or they have had a negative experience while they were in school (Martin, 2007). The state of Florida actually tried
to pass a bill that held parents more accountable and would give teachers the opportunity to give parents a grade based on the support they were providing to their student as well as the teachers (“More parent involvement,” 2011). While grading parents is not the solution to the problem it does emphasis that parents need to be taking a more active role in the lives of their children with regard to their education. What options do schools and teachers have for getting parents more involved in education? According to a 2004 article published by Education Week schools can help families with parenting skills as well as to collaborate with businesses to provide resource and services for families, students and the community (“Parental Involvement,” 2004). The Lee County School District in Florida used special funding to open a Parent Assistance Center where concerned parents can go to get answers to any issues they may have about their student’s success and what they can do to help encourage high levels of achievement for their student. This center can also teach parenting and leadership skills individuals might be lacking (“More parent involvement,” 2011).

When parents take an active role in becoming part of their child’s education, research shows that those students are more likely to be more successful in their academics. Successful students set high expectations for themselves with the classes they take, the quality of work the turn in, the grades that strive to reach and the colleges they wish to be accepted to. This attitude toward success in school is connected to parental attitudes and what parents deem acceptable in regards to their child’s education (Dervarics, 2011). According to Martin, (2007), there is a direct relationship between a student’s academic success and their attitude towards schools. The first teachers children have are their parents.

According to Epstein (1995), there are six types of parental involvement behaviors: positive home conditions, communication, involvement at school, home learning activities,
shared decision making within the school, and community partnerships. The actions parents can take to accomplish these behaviors are varied. One way is by reading to your child. As a parent, every time you attend well child checkups you will be ask “Do you read books?” Reading is a vital tool for all children to have in order to be success in the school. It has been said that the fewer minutes a child is read to the lower their intelligence score will be. This is especially important in lower income households where children hear an average of three million fewer words by the time they are three years old compared to those from middle or higher class households (McGencey, 2011). In regards to reading test scores, students whose parents read to them, talked about things they have done during the day and told stories to their children have the highest margin in scores over students whose parents did not read to them, talked about their day or told stories to (Friedman, 2011). While this does not require the parent to step foot into the school this is still a form of parental involvement that can be the difference between students being successful in school and students that are not. Other ways that parents can increase the success of their child in education requires them to be engaged parents that don’t allow their children to miss school or be late, they teach them the alphabet as well as beginning math strategies (Bernstein, 2011). Schools should be using the resources they have to start building these relationships early and providing many different options for parents to feel welcomed in the school.

Ethnicity can be an important factor in determining the type of parental involvement that is needed. For African American parents the more common ways parents are involved are by setting clear and consistent rules in regards to the child’s behavior, partaking in frequent and meaningful conversations with their child, encouraging independence, assisting with homework, and expressing graduation expectations. Latino families respect the role of the teacher and the
school and are less likely to contact the school regarding potential problems (Bower, 2011).

Based off traditional definitions of parental involvement Latino families are not involved. It is important for schools to identify what parental involvement may look like and communicate these expectations to teachers and families. Young, (2013) has determined that there are four various categories of what parental involvement would “look” like to an administrator. Active engagement requires attending conferences, in-school activities, volunteering in the school, know what is going on during the school day, aren’t afraid to seek information about the school, participates in school decisions, understands the curriculum, and can work with other parents. For parents that have to work many hours to provide for their family, this form of involvement can be a real challenge because they won’t have the time to be at the school or volunteer their time. Parental support with home-based activities may be easier for these parents to take part in. This support could include making sure homework is done and there is a safe location for students to work on homework, promoting the importance of education, understanding how to best provide support to the child, develop partnerships with the school/teacher, being hands on with the child’s education, helping to guide and motivate to reach their academic goals, provide resources for the student, showing an interest in their child’s education, and work as a team to improve student achievement (Young, 2013).

As parents take active roles in supporting their child’s education they are creating partnerships that lead to enhanced communities where education is seen as important and members of the community collaboratively work to put the student’s best interest first. Collaborative communities offer students insight as to future options for careers and educations (School/Family/Community Partnerships, 2010). As parents and community members take active roles in what is happening within the walls of local schools they open doors for students to
see options in regards to their future. These options include college and career opportunities within the community. Students of involved parents are said to have developed a better sense of self-worth and see the importance of doing good.

As parents find ways to be involved in their student’s life community safety can also be enhanced. In an effort to improve safety at Eastgate Elementary School in Kennewich, Washington, teachers collaboratively put together and outreach program to help families of at-risk 4th and 5th graders. These students along with their families were invited to attend meeting for GREAT (Gang Resistance Education and Training) Families. Training was conducted over two weeks and included a meal where families were invited to sit with police and school personal. At the conclusion of this program staff members saw a decrease in student behavior issues as well as an increase in attendance rates (Molnar, 2013).

As parental involvement increases, discipline issues decrease. The Gainesville School District is currently working to improve five areas within their school: community outreach, home involvement in schooling, student and family assistant, crisis and emergency help and prevention, and classroom-based approached to enrich learning. While taking steps to enhance these areas disciplinary situations at the high school and middle school that required formal disciplinary actions resulting in alternative placements decrease by 48 percent between the 2008 and 2010 school years. At the elementary school they have seen a 75 percent decrease in disciplinary issues and a 50 percent decrease in referrals throughout the district in the past three years (Molnar, 2013). When parents either choose not to or don’t have the time or resources to be involved, children lack motivation and the need to be successful in school due to the fact that they fail to connect what they are doing in school with the importance of how it can help them to follow their dreams and become who they want to become when they are older (Cooperman,
It is known that the more a student sees what is being taught as irrelevant to them, the more likely they are to challenge authority at school and commit acts resulting in disciplinary actions.

By taking the time to educate teachers and families about what it mean to be considered an involved parent schools can eliminate the chance for confusion and misunderstanding in regards to what is expected of parents. Parents can take active roles in their child’s education in many different ways from volunteering in the school, making contact with teachers and communicating with them, assisting their student with homework, and attending school events (Bower, 2011) or by following Epstein’s Framework of Six Types of Involvement. Parent involvement benefits the child, the parent, the educator, and the school and community (Fuller, 2008). Children are more successful in school and set higher goals for themselves. Parents feel more comfortable in the school, better about their parenting skills (Graham, n.d) and have a better understanding of their child and relationship. Educators see an increase in work morale and job satisfaction, and schools receive more support from the community and have higher quality of programs (Fuller, 2008). By working together with parents, educators will gain tools to assist them in doing their job well resulting in student success, creating stronger communities, and safer school with fewer discipline issues.
Research Design

A post-post comparison study was conducted to see if there was a difference between parental involvement and student achievement. In conducting this study the independent variable was based on how often students would be receiving reflection paper to be taken home and filled out with their parent/guardians in regards to subject material being taught in the classroom. Student’s final grades were used as the dependent variable. If a correlation is found, teachers need to find ways to get parent/guardians more involved in the learning process to increase student achievement.

Study Group Description

In a small town community located at the center of the crossroads of the United States is a four building school district. This district is made of four schools, a P-4 building, a 5-8 building, a 9-12 building, and an alternative school that provides education for students in grades 11 and 12. The focus for this study schools around 540 children. Of these 540 students, 93% are white and 47% receive free or reduced meals. The attendance of students is the highest of all four buildings. Student attendance is at 95%. The middle school has a student-teacher ratio of 18 to 1.

Students in an eighth grade health class were randomly assigned a number. These students ranged from intellectually challenged to gifted individuals. The class was composed of sixteen students, eight boys and eight girls. That number determined how often students would be receiving reflection papers for their parent/guardian to discuss with them. These reflections were used as formative assessment tools for the students and me to conference about
misunderstanding on the subject matter. The frequency would be twice a week, once a week, or every other week.

Statistical Analysis Method

A post-post comparison was conducted using ANOVA to determine if there is a significant relation between parental involvement and student achievement of eight grade health students. The independent variable would be the frequency of which parents are involved, how often they were receiving reflection papers to go over with the student, and the dependent variable would be student achievement which would be measured at the end of the quarter using their final grade for the course. Vassarstats software was used to compile the statistical calculations in this study. Spearman Rank order and Microsoft excel were also used to gather the data needed to complete the research.
FINDINGS

ANOVA was used to determine if the frequency in which parents and students discussed academics from the day would change the student’s overall grade. This study was conducted over an eight week period of a 9 week long course for 8th grade health students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Samples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \sum X )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \sum X^2 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std.Dev.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std.Err.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANOVA Summary</th>
<th>Independent Samples k=3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>SS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>14.5412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[between groups]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>1767.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1.* As shown in figure 1, no significance difference was shown when the Anova analysis method was applied. 0.95 was much larger than the alpha value of 0.10.
When involving parents in 8th grade health class, there was no significance between the number of times parents received reflection papers to discuss with their children. Looking at the final average scores from each group there was only a 2.2%. The group that demonstrated the widest gap between high and low average final scores was group two where the standard deviation was 14.2267. Group three demonstrated the smallest standard deviation at 6.9785. Group three was the only group that did not include a student or students that failed to return their evaluations on time. The ANOVA summary indicated the Sum of Squares (SS) were 14.54 for the treatment and 1767.6 for the error, the degrees of freedom (df) were 2 for the treatment and 13 for the error, the mean squares (MS) were 7.27 for the treatment and 135.97 for the error, and the Fisher Ratio (F) was 0.05. While the p-value was .95, much larger than the alpha level of 0.10, this supports the null hypothesis that parental involvement does not influence student achievement. It would be beneficial that additional research be conducted to determine why students receiving reflection papers twice a week had the lowest scores.
The bar graph above displays the average of each group’s final score in comparison to how often they were given reflection papers to take home and discuss with their parents. While there is a slight difference in average scores it is not significant enough to prove that the frequency of reflection papers are the best form of parental involvement to be used to increase student success and achievement. Group A acquired the highest average final score of 89.2 and were being given reflection papers twice a week to fill out with their parents and return. Group

Figure 2. As shown above, the average of student scores did not show a significant change in performance based on the frequency of reflection papers that were sent home.
B received the lowest average score of 87 and were required to take reflections home twice a week. Group C had an average final grade of 88.8 and received the fewest reflections of the three groups. Group C was given reflections every other week.
Conclusions and Recommendations

The outcomes of this research show that there was not a significant difference between the frequency in which parents were involved in students schooling and student’s final grade for a nine week health education course. Sixteen students were studied and broken into three different groups to determine how often they would be receiving reflection papers to take and discuss with their parent/guardian. When using ANOVA to conduct findings and compare result from the nova analysis method, 0.95 was much larger than the alpha value of 0.10. These results strongly support the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between student achievement of 8th grade health students and parental involvement.

The conceptual underpinning of theorist Joyce Epstein is strongly challenged with these results. Her theory of overlapping spheres indicates that when schools, families and communities come together to support learning and achievement, children benefit (Epstein, 1995). As seen in the review of literature, there is much research to support this theory. Parental involvement leads to student success in the classroom, less disciplinary issues and stronger communities that are centered on student success. While the conducted research does not support this theory it is not strong enough to challenge it.

Upon conclusion of this study parental involvement can’t be measured by the number of reflection papers a student is required to fill out. Nine weeks course is too small a chunk of time to successful measure how involved a parent may or may not be. Had this study taken place with a handful of students over the four years results may have been stronger and more supportive of Epstein. If so the next step would be to find the best strategies for involving parents and
implement those policies starting from day one of fifth grade health and ending on the last day of
eight grade health.

After learning about the various ways parents may be involved, the challenges parents
may face in regards to being involved, and the many misconceptions between what schools,
teachers, and family consider as acceptable ways to be involved, school districts need to spend
time making sure that all community members are on the same page in regards to what may be
expected of them. This might also mean that schools need to support teachers in finding tools
and strategies to support the various ways parents could be involved, (webpages, newsletters,
parent nights, conferences, support efforts with home, etc.).
REFERENCES


