

Parental Involvement between Two Different Urban Communities

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Statement of the Problem

Parent involvement is an integral part of a child's educational progress. In some cases, students' academic achievement can be directly related to the level of parental involvement exhibited in schools. Families' perception of roles toward parental involvement in schools may vary among groups from diverse cultures. In today's urban schools, the increasing diversity of cultures may contribute to differences in levels of parental involvement. The purpose of this research is to address the need to promote parental participation in the educational process of their children. This study will focus on three research questions: Are there differences in levels of parental involvement after participating in a program designed to assist them with their children's reading skills? Are there changes in the attitudes of families towards parental involvement after participating in the instructional cycle? Is there a relationship between the level of parental involvement and student academic achievement?

Theoretical Framework

Parental involvement has dramatically changed throughout the past two centuries in the United States. Originally, this involved supporting teachers and the schools' needs by attending meetings, school events, and helping with homework. Currently, the needs of children, teachers, and schools are different. This evolution has led to the question, what is parental involvement in today's urban community? Researchers define parental involvement in a variety of ways. According to Perroncel (1993), parental involvement must combine the home, school, and community together to support a child's educational process. Berger (1995) said, "The primary factor for children's educational success or failure is parent interest and support" (p. 43).

Notwithstanding, parents' and teachers' perceptions concerning parental involvement are often very different. Many parents believe that adequate participation includes the casual classroom visit, attending field trips and/or parent conferences. Oftentimes, both groups may not realize the potential of parental involvement to directly influence a child's academic achievement. Thus, more new interventions are needed aimed at determine how parental participation can be increased among members of various cultural groups in the nation's urban schools.

Method

This action research will be conducted in two urban schools in the Miami-Dade County Public Schools system. School A consists of a predominantly Hispanic student population, whereas school B is predominantly Haitian. The participants of the study are the parents from four elementary classrooms (kindergarten, first, second, and fifth grades). The intervention involves engaging families in a series of six two-hour workshops, each designed to improve children's reading skills, and provide parents with the knowledge and tools needed to reinforce reading instruction at home. The study involves a one-group pre/post test designed to assess changes in parental attitudes and levels of involvement resulting from their participation in the instructional cycles. The reading academic achievement of the participating children will be measured on a pre/post basis in order to determine the impact of the families' involvement.

References

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