

Grandparents: “The New Parents”

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Statement of the Problem

Over the course of the past decade, the number of grandchildren under the custody of their grandparents is steadily increasing. The majority of these grandparents lack the necessary skills to successfully attend to the academic needs of their grandchildren. The purpose of this action research is to provide viable answers for the following questions: Will grandparents feel more comfortable addressing school related issues after participating in programs geared towards their grandchildren’s academic success? Do programs geared towards their grandchildren’s academic success influence the grandparent’s level of participation in school related issues? As a result of the program, will grandchildren feel more confident seeking and receiving assistance from their grandparents?

Theoretical Framework

According to Fuller-Thomson, Minkler, and Driver, “proportionally, 4.0% of White, 6.5% of Hispanic, and 13.5% of African-American children are living in grandparent-headed homes” (1997, p. 72). Due to this overwhelming number of children being raised by grandparents, programs and strategies must be offered that will help these students be successful in the classroom. As stated by Pruncho and Johnson, “Support groups for grandparent caregivers may help relieve their sense of isolation and provide a forum for support, venting frustrations, and opportunity to compare coping strategies with others in similar situations” (1996, p. 66). Our action research will target this population of grandparents, who carry the sole responsibility of raising their grandchildren. As published in an article by the *U.S. News and World Report*, these grandparents are the “silent warriors” (Creighton, 1991, p. 88).

Method

During this action research study, several methods of data collection will be employed. First, a general survey will be distributed to the entire fifth grade student body, identifying those households that are grandparent-headed. Second, once our target population has been identified, grandparents will be invited to attend six weeks of two-hour workshops and seminars. During the first meeting, the grandparents will answer a family survey and questionnaire, which will provide us with socio-demographic information about these families. Pre and post-tests will be administered to participants in order to determine their general perceptions towards parental involvement and assess their level of participation in school related activities. The topics of the workshops will include FCAT Strategies, Effective Behavior Management Techniques, Tips for Successful Home Learning, and general information about Dade County services. The grandchildren will also be expected to participate in the workshops. Children’s attitudes toward their grandparents’ involvement in schools will be measured on a pre/post basis with a locally developed scale.

References

- Creighton, L. L. (1991). Silent saviors. *U.S. News and World Report*, 26(111), 88-89.
Fuller, B., Thomson, M., & Minkler, S. (1997). Grandparents as parents: A survival guide for raising a second family. *The Gerontologists*, 61, 67-75.

Pruchno, R., & Johnson, K. (1996). Research on grandparenting: Review of current studies and future needs. *Generations, 16*(21), 65-68.