

Parents' Comfort Level: Does it Reflect in the Help They Provide Their Children During Home Learning?

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Statement of the Problem

In recent years the literature on parental involvement and how it affects children during home learning has emphasized the relevance of promoting student achievement through parental involvement. Research points to a strong connection on the positive effects for families, children, and school when schools extend themselves to parents and involve them to support their children's development and learning (Olsen & Fuller, 2003) Consequently, the purpose of this research is to attempt to investigate if parents' comfort level with reading reflects the help that they provide their children at home with their home learning. Our goal is to increase parents' level of efficacy in relation to helping their children with home learning as it relates to the reading benchmarks.

Theoretical Framework

There is growing evidence connecting parental involvement with students' academic achievement (Kelley, 2003). Parents are their children's first teachers and play an important role in shaping their children's attitude about education (Kelley, 2003). According to Becher (1986), parents who are involved in child care and educational programs develop positive attitudes about themselves, increase their self-confidence, and often enroll in programs to enhance their personal development. A nurturing school culture helps establish a positive relationship with parents who may feel uncomfortable and intimidated in the school setting (Kelley, 2003). Many parents need training and support in academic skills in order to help their children at home. There are many ways to awaken and tap the special abilities and concerns that parents have regarding their children's education (Peterson, 1989). In addition to promoting families to attend teacher-parent conferences, P.T.A. meetings, and open houses, which are relevant, teachers and schools should reach out to parents in other ways. The home environment, more familiar and less structured than the classroom, offers what Rich (1985) calls "teachable moments that teachers can only dream about" (p. 93). Yet, as Ascher (1987) points out, certain family characteristics often contribute to academic achievement of students. These include households in which the parent or parents do not often interact with their children, households where the composition frequently changes, non-English speaking households, and families whose cultural traditions sharply vary from the schools.

Method

This action research project involves two schools from the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) system, in Miami, Florida. In school A, over 75 % of the student population enter the school as new immigrants to the United States. Approximately 98 % of the students are non- English speakers. The school currently serves pre-kindergarten through fifth grade students with an enrollment of 805 students. School B is located in a predominately low socioeconomic area. Over 98% of the student population is African-American. The school currently serves pre-kindergarten through fifth grade students with an enrollment of 240 students.

The intervention will involve offering workshops to families on how to assist their children in their home learning. The classrooms that will be involved in this action research project are a kindergarten, third and fourth grade classes at the aforementioned schools. The

research utilizes a pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design. Participants will be observed on a pre/post basis in order to determine changes in their comfort levels toward assisting their children in home learning and measuring levels of involvement.

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