

Parental Involvement in Urban Schools: The Case of a Family Resource Center in Hartford

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Research Question:

- What are the methods that have worked in promoting parental involvement within the family resource center at Tate Elementary?
- What methods have failed?
- Why?

Clarification of Terminology

- **Parent** includes birth parents as well as, guardians, grandparents, and whoever else may be taking care of the child in their years as students
- **Parental Involvement** includes participation of parents within the school including attendance at PTO meetings, presence at parent teacher meetings, as well as attending various other school functions.

Background...

- “Actively encouraging parental and community involvement has been a part of the national education goals since 1994. The PTA introduced national standards for development and evaluation of parental programs in 1997. The 2001 NCLB legislation mandates written parent involvement policies.” The National School Public Relations Association

Significance to Educational Studies

- Association with student achievement
- Students, Schools and Parents are affected by the lack of involvement
- Who should be held accountable?
- The need for parent-teacher aides in every school, especially schools in urban areas

Significance continued...

- This specific study will show the successes and failures of an individual family resource center, hopefully my results will help provide insight on which methods are best for the recruitment of parents into this center.

Thesis

- The programs implemented that promote the participation of parents, their children as well as the teachers are the most successful at ensuring increased parental participation.
- The programs that fail are the ones which do not provide child care, are not well advertised, and allow for little to no contributions from the parents.

Methodology

- Qualitative Research Design
- Observations within the family resource center of Tate Elementary school
- Numerous informal conversations
- Interviews
 - Two formal interviews with Parent-Teacher Liaison
 - Two interviews with teachers, one female and one male
 - Two interviews with administrators
 - One interview with the school social worker
 - One focus group with five parents

Findings... Success Stories

- Caught Being Great
- 2nd Cup of Coffee
- PTO Meetings held in Cafeteria, dinner provided

Caught Being Great



I was caught being great today at Tate Elementary School. I helped my class earn 1 point!

Findings...

- “ In the past year the amount of parents attending the PTO meetings has increased by an average of 50 parents per meeting. The average last year was approximately 75 parents, and this year the average is 150! The increase is due to a number of reasons, the parents are talking to each other and seeing that Ms. Marquez is receptive and very understanding.”
Ms. Chandler, Administrator. 10.19.06

Findings...

- “I found that as my son grew older there was more letters coming home telling me about how I could get involved. Ms. Marquez started by sending letters home about this trip and that meeting but I could never make these things. I saw a letter about the 2nd Cup of Coffee meeting and because I drop my son off in the mornings I could go to this before work. Since then I have become very involved.” Ms. Trina, Mother of a 6th grader

Findings...

- “There is a positive convincing relationship between family and community involvement and improved student academic achievement...This holds true across families of all economic, racial/ethnic, and educational backgrounds” The National School Public Relations Association 2006

Conclusion

- The programs that were the most successful gave the parents a comfortable environment, with a focus on family, flexibility, as well as incorporating the parents' insight within the meetings.
- The programs that failed provided little to no encouragement for the parents to speak, as well as no childcare or emphasis on working together.

Breaking Down Barriers

- Provide child care or involve students in the meetings
- Provide assistance for cultural or language barriers
- Develop a parental involvement policy for the school
- Provide teachers with parental communication seminars
- Offer times when parents can express their feedback on policies openly, instead of waiting for the parents to come to the school

Bibliography

- Cary, Anne O. “How Strong Communication Contributes to Student and School Success: Parent and Family Involvement” National School Public Relations Association. 2006.