

How Does Parental Involvement Impact Student Achievement at the Secondary Level?

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Rationale:

Nestled in Washington DC is one of the district's oldest schools. It is home to 727 energetic scholars in grades 9th-12th. The school's population is comprised of mainly 48% African American and 51% of Latino students. Parental involvement is a vital component in the educational process. This requires schools to engage and collaborate with families to ensure student success.

The relationship between parents and schools has consistently been related to the success of both students and schools. Parents have always been critical partners as they strive to provide education and opportunities for their children. The COVID-19 pandemic has created greater importance for increased collaboration to support the success of our students. When it comes to schooling during these challenging circumstances, we need to build families' capacity in supporting their children's academic learning at home. Parents want their children to learn and succeed in school, but they may not know how best to help them. As school buildings closed and reopened throughout the past year, many families have had to take on the brunt of addressing their child's learning needs, often without training or support on how to do so. As educators, we are also trying to figure out how to transfer the dynamic process of connecting with families in the digital realm. The purpose of this action research is to determine the best pathway for my school to increase family involvement at our school to help student success.

Literature Review

Educators consistently agree that there is importance and value to parent and family engagement in promoting student achievement. *Funders of Parent University in Charlotte's Mecklenburg School showed an increase in achievement for students whose parents attended their parent university compared to students whose parents did not participate. Jeynes determined that parents' active role was associated with higher academic achievement. S. Wilder (2014) recognized that the collaboration between teachers, administrators, policymakers, and parents allows parents to take ownership of student achievement. This relationship is strongest if parental involvement is defined as parental expectations for their children's academic achievement limited to homework assistance.*

Data, Methodology and Analysis

With limited evaluation resources, this project was designed to leverage existing school data such as parent-teacher conference and other family meeting attendance, number of active parent user accounts in our Aspen online student report system, as well as the DCPS Panorama school-specific survey results. Panorama's Family-School Relationships Survey helps educators measure parent and caregiver attitudes towards and experiences with their children's school. This district-wide family survey is one way to collect robust data that can elevate family voices and experiences. I also gathered qualitative data that is not so easily captured by school data systems, such as the percentage of parents who feel welcome at the school. This data showed that out of the 727 students enrolled, only 11% of the parents responded to the survey. Of the 11% that responded, most were satisfied with the school, curriculum, and teachers.

DCPS uses the ASPEN Portal as a means of open communication between teachers and families. The portal provides families with more insight into what occurs in the classroom and helps them become better equipped to support their child's academic growth. Parents who utilize the ASPEN Parent Portal can see their child's grades, assignments, attendance, and student schedules. The ASPEN Parent Portal showed that 91% of parent ASPEN accounts were inactive.

I also evaluated the percentage of parents who participated in Parent-Teacher Conferences during Term 1 and Term 3 and compared it to the school's failure rates. During Term 1, Parent-Teacher Conferences were held in October of 2020, and there were 336 total conferences scheduled. At the March 2021 Parent-Teacher Conference, there were 395 conferences scheduled. This data showed an increase of 17.56%. Breaking this information down even further, in October, 100 parents scheduled meetings (either with one or more of their child's teachers), which equates to 32%. In March, 124 parents scheduled conferences with one of their child's teachers, which equates to 17.06% of the student population.

The School's Failure Data by Course showed that many ninth and 10th grade students failed during Term 1 & 2. In 11th and 12th-grade, failure rates indicate that about one-half of the student population for those grade levels failed during the indicated terms.

Data have shown that since the beginning of the pandemic, attendance at family engagement events has decreased drastically. At the beginning of the year, for the "Back 2 School" night, 431 of the 727 (59%) student population was in attendance; however, the attendance was extremely low for events after that. Other events, such as Principal Roundtables, averaged about 4.56 of parents attending these events. The number of parents attending monthly meetings for the parents of seniors' percentage was 18.46%, with the highest attendance being January 2021.

Recommendations

To better collaborate with our families to help them become more involved, we may need to identify the obstacles and challenges facing our families. More research is required to understand the full impact of parental involvement on academic success. These recommendations focus on assisting the school and community in helping improve parental involvement at the secondary level:

It is recommended to establish a school-based Parent University that will focus on the needs of the school population. The program will focus on academic learning tools to help parents help their child, parent workshops about finance, nutrition, technology, how to maintain two-way communication with teachers, helping both parents and students connect with community partners to address some of their needs (i.e., housing, transportation, medical assistance). To get more parents involved, the school must host events at a time that fits their schedule. With the theme of building trusting relationships, it is recommended to conduct regular "village" conversations among teachers, parents, and students to keep everyone abreast of academics and ensure that students are on target for grade-level advancement. Over time, providing these resources will decrease the student failure and dropout rate and increase attendance while building a trusting relationship between parents and educators, leading to more parental involvement.

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