

## **2020-2021 WTU Teacher Leaders' Program**

### ***The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly: How Does Parental Involvement Impact Student Achievement During the Early Grades?***

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#### **RATIONALE:**

Parental involvement in both primary and secondary school is strongly linked to students' academic success (Benner, Boyle & Sadler, 2016). When families are involved in their child's education, students are more successful in school, obtain better attendance, earn higher grades and test scores, and continue onto college (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Wood & Bauman, 2017). That being the case, this research examines the specific variables of race, socioeconomic status, and parent level of education as it relates to parental involvement and its subsequent impact on student achievement.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

Increasingly, family involvement has become recognized as essential to academic success. Building partnerships with families in urban settings, especially families living in poverty, is more critical and more difficult than engaging more privileged families (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Involvement of parents in education is considered among the most important factors in increasing the efficiency and quality of education because both home and school environments affect a child's development (Kuru Cetin & Taskin, 2016). In addition, a randomized study of low-income, African American parents also demonstrated that children of parents receiving home-based family engagement programs displayed significantly more positive academic self-concept than students whose parents did not receive this additional support at home (Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry, & Childs, 2004).

Teachers often misinterpret differences in family communication styles or reluctance to become involved in the schools as disinterest, rather than a need for the school to provide opportunities for families to interact in ways that are flexible and culturally sustaining for all families (Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2016). Studies have found that minority parents are the ones who are least likely to have high incidences of school involvement. However, they are also the ones who are more likely to have higher amounts of at home involvement (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Sy & Schulenberg, 2005).

Research has shown that the parent level of education influences their knowledge, beliefs, values, and goals about childrearing. These same parent behaviors are indirectly related to their children's school performance. For example, higher levels of education may enhance the parents' facility at becoming more involved in their children's education and enable parents to acquire and model social skills and problem-solving strategies conducive to children's school success (Awan & Kauser, 2015). In addition, research shows that parents' educational levels strongly influence educational and economic opportunities for their children (Dubow *et al.*, 2009; Kalil *et al.*, 2012; Benner, Boyle & Sadler, 2016). Further, while there are other intervening factors, increasingly young parents' education opportunities will have long-lasting positive effects on their children's educational and life-long outcomes (Egalite, 2016).

#### **DATA ANALYSIS:**

An online survey was drafted with 10 questions, which was widely distributed via the WTU Morning Brew, which generated responses from 37 teachers; and the highlights are as follows:

- 65% of the teacher respondents had more than 10 years of experience while another 32% had between 6-10 years on the job.
- Specifically, 30% of the teachers have worked more than 10 years for the District of Columbia Public Schools while another 35% of the teachers have worked between 6-10 years for DCPS; and 32% had worked for DCPS less than 5 years.
- Most of the teachers had either a master's degree (49%) or had earned additional credits beyond a master's degree (27%).

- All teachers' schools are located the District of Columbia. Wards 7 and 8 schools generated 22 teacher responses whereas the other wards combined had a total of 14 teacher responses, with no responses from Ward 2.
- Most teachers (51%) felt that race did not predict parental involvement; 59% felt that socioeconomic status did predict parental involvement; and 49% felt that the parent's level of education did predict parental involvement versus 30% felt that the parent's level of education did not predict parental involvement.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

These recommendations are geared toward helping school systems and/or the educational communities improve parental involvement and/or parental involvement programs in their individual schools. Recommendations are as follows:

- Conduct surveys among parents of elementary school children and school personnel to assess their relationships and/or experiences concerning their children's education.
- Organize parent/teacher meetings to discuss areas of concern and/or need for improvement.
- Incorporate a parent center equipped with a parent liaison, budget, and applicable resources in every elementary, middle, and high school to address concerns and/or issues unique to parents.
- Provide training and/or professional development for all school personnel that encourages parental involvement in schools.
- Evaluate parental involvement on a regular basis.
- Further research is needed.

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