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## Parental Influences on Their Child's Education and Their Success in School

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Parental Influences on Their Child's Education and Their Success in School

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A Capstone Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Master of Science Degree in  
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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CAPSTONE PROJECT

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Parental Influences on Their Child's Education and Their Success in School

This is to certify that the Capstone paper of

Rachel L. Crosby

Has been approved by the faculty advisor and the CE 695 – Capstone Project

Course Instructor in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Science Degree in

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### Abstract

The purpose for this literature review is to investigate the connection of parental involvement and their children's academic success and attitudes towards education. Based on previous research, all indicate there are numerous benefits for parents, schools, students, and the community if the parents become and remain involved in the educational process of their child. This literature review also explores the roles that schools influence on how parents become involved in the schools. Levels of parental involvement include little to no involvement, standard involvement, and extreme involvement will all be discussed. Extreme parental involvement in their children's education has been talked about more frequently in recent years; terms such as *helicopter parents* have been introduced. The educational system is one that is consumed by administrators, policy makers, educators, parents, and students, working as a team of collaborators with benefits for all parties.

*Keywords:* Levels of parental involvement, parental involvement, helicopter parent, parental influences

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### **Parental Influences on Their Child's Education and Their Success in School**

When it comes to parental involvement in child's education, parents often do not realize how much influence they have. According to Berger (1995), parental interest and support is a primary factor on children's success or failure in education. Likewise, Khajehpour and Ghazvini (2011) indicate that parental involvement and academic achievement are two constructs that are positively correlated.

The problem addressed in this literature review is that parental involvement or lack thereof in their children's education is heavily influenced on whether their children will have success or failure in education. Those influences impact all aspects of education such as attendance, test scores, involvement in extracurriculars, and postsecondary plans. Rucker (2015) proclaims that parents are the missing link in the chain of events that occur during the educational progression.

Through a review of literature, this author aims to explore the various levels of involvement parents have in their children's educational background. In addition, examine how those children may vary in educational success as compared to those students whose parents are less involved. Further exploration will also include the limitations parents may encounter that could affect their level of involvement, or lack thereof. Along with various levels of involvement and possible limitations, there is some responsibility the schools hold to ensure parents are given the opportunity to be involved. Investigation in ways schools can increase parental involvement will also be included.

### **Review of Literature**

Parental involvement has many positive advantages for students, the most important of which is enhanced student achievement (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Seefeldt, 1985;

Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1996). Likewise, Henderson (1981, 1987) investigated numerous studies in which parental involvement resulted in noticeable improvements in academic success. With previous research results proclaiming positive advantages and noticeable improvements, a generalization can be made that such advancements would include better grades, attendance rates, motivation levels, and postsecondary plans. A study conducted by El Nokali et al. (2010) state that previous research that focus on parental involvement during early elementary school years is seen as a static predictor of concurrent achievement or educational outcomes in later school years.

Researchers now are facing the significant challenge of deciphering whether parent involvement itself is truly beneficial to children or whether parents who are more involved possess characteristics such as internal motivation or intellectual competence compared to less involved parents (El Nokali et al., 2010). Essentially, what are the characteristic differences of parents who are involved in their children's lives vs. the characteristics of parents are who involved in their children's life and their schooling? Taking the time to fully comprehend why parents do or do not get involved in their children's education can assist in closing the gaps and eliminate common barriers parents face. In 2014, a research article specifies that parent involvement in their children's education showed substantial benefits for students, parents, educators, and the school (Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014).

Over the past three decades of research in regard to education, it is well established there is a direct correlation between increased parent involvement and increased student attainment (Baker, 2014). Compiling the previous research mentioned, it is clearly visible that parent involvement in education holds a great deal of influence on student achievement. Evaluating parental involvement and how it transpires, exploring the levels of involvement a parent partakes

in can imply how beneficial it will be for their child. Each level of involvement comes with their own set of limitations that could affect the students, parents, or educators. Identifying the levels and limitations in place, along with recognizing the school's role in parental involvement will be examined. The questions to answer are as followed: How is parental involvement defined? What are the differences in the various levels of involvement? How do the different levels of involvement impact the student's education? What limitations are present for parents in getting involved in their children's education? Can parents observe the benefits in becoming more involved in their children's education? And, what step can schools make to promote more parental involvement?

### **Defining Parental Involvement**

There are many factors that play into why a parent is or is not involved in their child's education, and there are many ways to define parental involvement and what it all encompasses. Flynn (2006) defines parental involvement in education with behaviors such as "regular monitoring of school progress, setting high expectations, stressing effort over ability, and establishing homework routines at home" (p. 12). An alternative definition stated by Jeynes (2007) declares parental involvement goes beyond their children's education by "parental participation in the educational processes and experiences of the children" (p. 88). There are many adaptations to define parental involvement, but for the purposes of this literature, parental involvement will encompass attributes of both previously stated definitions. Therefore, parental involvement will be defined as parents regularly monitoring their child's school progress, having high expectations, establishing routines, and having knowledge of their child's life outside of school.

With the definition this literature review is following, this would adhere to the average level of parental involvement, or standard involvement. Parents having little to no involvement would be missing one or all aspects of parental involvement; parents showing extreme levels of involvement are described as the *helicopter parent* or the *lawn mower parent*. Both terms will be defined in their respected section. Each level of involvement comes with their own factors and limitations, these will also be examined.

### **Levels of Parental Involvement**

Teachers, administrators, policy makers, and our State and Federal government, continue to recognize the vital role of the parent in education (Baker, 2014). Despite the numerous advantages of parental involvement, concerns of families and school personnel continue to be present (Peña, 2000). The crucial role that parents play in their child's academic success and how much emphasis the United States puts on getting a well-rounded education, there are still limitations parents encounter daily in regard to getting involved. These limitations will be explored but can ultimately influence the level of involvement parents engage in.

A 2013 article mentions that although a student's brain power, work ethics, and genetics play a role in goal attainment, having a support system in the household is equally important (Pinantoan, 2013). Children are very intuitive beings. A child growing up in a household where their parents do not value a well-rounded education, they will sense this and do what is needed to get by but will not be motivated to do much more. For parents who hold this adverse mindset on education will affect their level of involvement, as well as influencing the attitude the child holds on education. This may be influenced on the parents own educational background, for example not seeing an importance for education, may not have gone onto college, or finished high school themselves. Contradictory, a household where grades are held to a high standard, the children

will be more motivated to meet those expectations held by their parents in order to avoid consequences or earn rewards. For parents who are more involved in their child's education may have gone on to college themselves to earn a degree, they believe education is important, or they hold their children to high standards when it comes to school. The purpose of stating the differences signify that parental attitudes towards education can impact how their children will view education.

Parental attitudes, beliefs, and their own education background heavily influence the level of involvement they partake in. Whatever the circumstances may be, all teachers, administrators, and school counselors want all students to succeed in school. Research has observed that parental involvement just may be the driving force. A longitudinal study conducted by Dearing et al. (2006) collected data on parent involvement and reading achievement to examine within-and between – family associations of parent involvement and literacy across elementary school. Their findings suggest that differences in levels of parental involvement within-families were both predictive of children's literacy skills and increasing parent involvement during elementary school improved literacy growth. Even though this study's main focus was on children's literacy growth, a generalization can be made in various subject areas covered in school.

There are many avenues that can be taken to getting parents involved in their child's education and schools have access to many resources within the community they serve in. Utilizing them in an appealing way to get parents involved is of extreme importance. What is to be discussed will be the outcomes of different levels of involvement, and how schools can increase parental involvement.

***Little to No Involvement***

There are many factors that may play into how involved parents are in their child's education. Previous research by Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie (1987) mentions that many parents feel limited in opportunities to get involved and have uninterested attitudes toward school personnel. Whereas Peña (2000) investigated parent's involvement or lack thereof and found that parents often felt intimidated by educational verbiage which leads to miscommunication of school personnel to parents. Other factors such as parental attitudes on education, parents educational background, and socioeconomic status (SES) may all be influential. Abdul-Adil and Farmer (2006) found that parents with low level of educational attainment are connected with lower levels of involvement when it comes to their children's education. Feelings of inadequacy on how to help their children with skills when parents themselves do not hold mastery level skills in an educational setting result in little to no involvement in their child's education. Furthermore, data collected by a National Parent Teacher Association (NPTA; 2006) survey discovered that 32% of parents felt they had nothing to provide to the educational process of their children.

Other forces at play may be having a negative experience with school and its administrators, single-parent households, parents' employment restrictions, or not feeling connected with the community may all be factors that influence a lack of parental involvement. Research by NPTA (2006) found that employment plays a significant reason for low levels of parental involvement, blaming work and family demands as the driving force for their lack on involvement. Therefore, a generalization can be made that parents with demanding jobs may be limited in the time they can be engaged in their child's education. Another limitation presented by Pruitt (2013) states that with the modern family household looking drastically different has

resulted in increased pressure on parents. With households no longer necessarily consisting of two parents, being responsible for all family supports such as financial, mental, and supports like organizing all member's schedules can increase stress for the parent making it even more difficult with getting involved in their child's education.

### *Standard Involvement*

Restating the definition that this literature review is following as the standard level of involvement is as follows: parental involvement includes parents regularly monitoring their child's school progress, having high expectations, establishing routines, and having knowledge of their child's life outside of school. Parents who regularly monitor their child's school progress often times includes having an adequate amount of communication with their school personnel. According to Epstein (1995), schools must "communicate with families about school programs and student progress. The school must also take the initiative to create a good communication system between the school and the home" (p. 15). Equally, parents hold responsibility to also communicate with school on matters that involve their child, in addition to communicating to them about the importance of education (Pruitt, 2013).

Studies continue to show a strong correlation between parental involvement and student success (Wilder, 2014; DePlanty et al., 2007; Larocque et al., 2011). Van Voorhis (2003) indicates that parental involvement has a positive effect on student achievement and creates a positive sense of self-efficacy. According to Centre for Child Well-Being (2010), parental involvement in their children's education improves a child's morale, attitude, and academic achievement across all subject areas, and also promotes better behavior and social adjustment (as cited in Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014). Parents that remain involved in their child's education

establish the ideals in them of responsibility, importance of education, and attitude all impact education, but also other aspects of their daily lives.

Parents who create home environments that promote learning, have high but realistic expectations, and become involved in their children's education and community activities are the most accurate predictors of student's achievement in school (Baker, 2014). Creating a learning environment for children within the home can positively influence their attitude towards education. Parental involvement benefits include higher grades and test scores, long-term academic success, positive attitude and behavior and more successful school and programs (Baker, 2014). When it comes to setting expectations for their children to meet in terms of academics, extracurriculars, and life gives the sense that one must work for what they want. This may ignite an internal motivation to meet such expectations set in place by parents.

### ***Extreme Involvement***

The most involved parent(s) are often labeled as "the helicopter parent" and it has become a widely known notion within the current era. Howe and Strauss (2007) summarized this parenting style as "always hovering, ultra-protective, unwilling to let go, and enlisting... 'the team' (parent, physician, lawyer, other counselors) to assert a variety of special needs and interests" (p. 1). Essentially, parents making sure their child has everything and everyone on their team to ensure their success whether or not the child is needing the extra support systems in place. Price (2010) describes style of parenting as suffocating and can ultimately delay a student's development of independence. Fingerman et al. (2012) also indicates that intense levels of support may have implications for both parents' and grown children's well-being. Such implications may include the child having developmental delays when it comes to taking responsibility for things, the inability to solve problems without any support from their parents or

*the team* or being dependent on others for everything. With the parents assembling *the team* to ensure their child succeeds in the classroom this can lead to altered relationships with educators and administrators with building rapport with one another.

Children as they go through school are supposed to make mistakes so they can grow as an individual and evolve as they age, with parents controlling every aspect of the child's education and other life activities may interfere with the child discovering their authentic identity.

The relationship that is established at the start of the first meeting between the parents, teachers, students, and administrators sets the tone for parental involvement, leading to children achieving more when their parents are involved in their schooling (Kersey and Masterson, 2009). If a parent is calling a meeting with school personnel to indicate their child is needing additional supports, not taking into consideration of teachers or other school's perceptions, this is the formation of a *team* for their child regardless of if they are needing the support and accommodations due to inability.

### **School's Responsibility**

Parental involvement is not always the parent's job to start the process, the school has to be an inviting and welcoming place for the parents to become involved. A school is oftentimes the focal point of a community and it is the school's job to provide opportunities for parents to become more involved. In order to do so, schools must communicate in a positive way to get parents engaged with the school, so the parents feel part of the school community. An article published in 2014 found many benefits a school can gain with parental involvement (Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014). Such benefits include parental involvement establishes a better reputation for the school within the community which leads to better community supports, and the development of more school programs within the school.

The NPTA (2006) survey found parents are often unfamiliar with the school system or curriculum, or just uninformed. Pruitt (2013) connects this with the idea parents may feel unwelcomed within the school, therefore leading them to take a backseat in getting involved. This brings up the idea schools are needing to provide more opportunities for parents to become involved in the educational process of their children. The level of parental involvement can influence a student's attendance ultimately affecting the school's achievement.

### *Effects on Attendance*

It is a well-known ideal that if students were to have very few school days missed their grades will be higher. Even though there are laws and mandates set in place that students are to attend school, this is sometimes not prominent enough to get students attending school. There are many extenuating factors that can play into whether or not a student is likely to attend school on a regular basis. A research article published in 2007 found that schools with a higher percentage of White students tended to have higher rates of student attendance in 2000 (Sheldon, 2007). Furthermore, this is not a clear picture of a majority of schools who have a greater diversity population. Additionally, the same article found that schools with higher rates of students receiving free and reduced lunch have lower rates of student attendance (Sheldon, 2007). The factors of diversity and low socioeconomic status (SES) come into play when it comes to attendance with extenuating circumstances.

A research study published in 2002 mentions that past research has focused more on dropout rates rather than investigating what issues those students face that interfere with their attendance ultimately leading them to dropping out (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). The same article reported that poor attendance not only leads to high drop-out rates and chronic absenteeism, but also reflects poorly on the school and its students (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). With research on

the topics of truancy and absenteeism, there is research by Lamdin (1996) to suggest that students with better attendance receive higher scores on achievement tests than their frequently absent peers (as cited in Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

### ***Influences on Levels of Involvement***

The background information as to why some parents are heavily involved in their child's education whereas other parents have little to no involvement in their child's education does play a significant role in the child's overall academic success. According to Cotton and Wikelund (2005), parents who assert themselves more heavily into their child's learning see more benefits and effects on their overall achievement in school. Being heavily involved may include frequently monitoring their child's homework, checking in regularly with teachers, encourage them on their extra curriculars as well as postsecondary plans. The more parents are involved with school board or teacher associations, Khajehpour and Ghazvini (2011) found that this also benefits the child's achievements in school. Parents of higher SES are more involved in their child's education than those parents with lower SES and this improves greater involvement and attitudes towards school; benefits such as positive homework habits, reduced risk of truancy and drop-out rates, and higher achievement (Astone and McLanahan, 1991; Epstein, 1987; Fehrmann, Keith, and Reimers, 1987; Lareau, 1987; Muller, 1993; Stevenson and Baker, 1987, as cited in Sui-Chu & Willms, 2000). Some parents may not wish to be involved in the school yet remain involved in their child's education by doing homework and grade check-in, you may have some parents that want little to no involvement, or you may have parents that are willing to be involved but are having difficulty doing so due to extenuating factors such as time, work, or money. LeBahn (1995) suggested that the schools lack of understanding of non-traditional

families and the struggles each family member is impacted by may be a driving factor of lack of involvement in the school system.

### ***Ways to Increase Involvement***

There are many benefits with having parents being involved in their child's education, but this first starts with getting them involved with the school itself. The school is a common ground where community members, businesses, colleges, and educational organizations such as state standardize testing and ACT can all populate; if the school is seen in a negative light it is bound to have some difficulties with obtaining any involvement. Past research by Chavkin (1989) and Rich (1987) have found that increased parent-involvement contributes to the overall school-community relationship. Epstein (2001) has created a framework that schools can adopt to get families, educators, and the community more involved within the school; this framework consists of six types of involvement that include: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Each type of involvement leads to different results for students, teaching practices, parents, and school climates; therefore, schools can select which practices will assist with achieving the goals set for student success and for creating a climate of partnerships (Epstein, 2001).

The types of involvement that would be beneficial for a school to adopt would include communicating, volunteering, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Ideally forms of communication of school-to-home and home-to-school are to be equal, however this is not always the case. This type of involvement is the development of equal communication between both parties to communicate about student progress and school programs (Epstein, 2001). Volunteering centers around recruiting and organizing parent support for help through school events (Epstein, 2001). Giving parents the opportunity in making decisions in school and

developing parent representatives and leaders, Epstein (2001) mentions giving the parents a voice in school outcomes is crucial in the decision-making process. Schools that identify and implement services and resources from the community help strengthen family practices, school programs, and student development and learning is collaborating with the community according to Epstein (2001).

### **Application to School Counseling**

The role of the school counselor within a school is there to advocate for student success. Based on the research of this literature review, it is clear to see a significant correlation between parental involvement and student success. School counselors are in contact with parents for many things regarding their children. Things like academic success or concerns, behavioral issues, opportunities of interest to the students, and among other things to name a few reasons why school counselors contact parents. School counselors should be aware of the limitation's parents may be encountering when it comes to their level of involvement and provide support, encouragement, and opportunities for them to get or stay involved.

### **Conclusion**

Parents that become and remain involved in their children's educational career hold a substantial amount of influence on their children's educational success. Through an immense amount of research and literature, parental involvement is a driving factor both parents and educators can use to their benefit for student achievement. The education system puts an enormous amount of emphasis on a good education; however, schools, parents, and educators need to be a collaborative system to improve student attendance, test scores, attitudes, motivation levels, and opportunities for student attainment. Research suggests children benefit academically when parents and educators work together (Baker, 2014). Parents that are involved in their

children's education continue to have substantial benefits for students, educators, and parent relationships.

**Author's Note**

As a child I can recall my own parent's involvement in my education fell under the little to no involvement level. Since attending college however, my parents had become more involved in my education and I have seen a change in my own motivation and attitude toward education overall. When it comes to my role as a school counselor, I can see the struggle the educators and students encounter when parental involvement is slim to none. Nevertheless, I do understand the limitations parents may face when it comes to getting involved. Coming from a single parent household, I have seen the stressors firsthand. Therefore, as a school counselor and communicating with parents on student progress will include encouraging them to continue to be involved.

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