Ways To Involve Parents In and Outside the Classroom

Katherine Bell and Leah A. Nillas*

Educational Studies, Illinois Wesleyan University

Purpose

Whether through home-based or school-based activities, parents can have a great influence on their students' academic achievement. Using different instructional methods, I provided multiple opportunities to incorporate parent's involvement in students' education. My goal was to explore how to involve parents in the classroom.

Methodology

Participants: 16 Kindergarten students (6 boys and 10 girls), 23 parents

Task: I created and implemented different activities incorporating various tasks for parents to participate in.

Data Sources: Lesson plans, parent and teacher questionnaires, and teacher journals

Framework: Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)

Literature

- A study showed that within elementary schools, the lower the grade level, the more likely the teacher is to use parent involvement, especially volunteers in the classroom (Epstein & Dauber, 1991).
- A report showed the importance of implementing subject-specific involvement strategies to increase subject-specific family involvement and results for students (Van Voorhis, 2003).
- Many teachers have reported lack of relevant knowledge and uncertainty regarding ways to encourage parent involvement (Lewis, Kim, Bey, 2010).

Table 1: Summary of Lesson Analysis

Parent's Role	Lesson	Results
Small Group Facilitator	❖ Language Arts ❖ Students used a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose four different pieces.	❖ A total of six parents came in to help with small groups, allowing for one adult to work with one group.
Observer-Learner	❖ Phonemic Awareness ❖ Students demonstrated understanding of spoken words, sounds, and syllables. ❖ Parents were invited to observe me as I worked with students using Michael Heggerty's phonemic awareness curriculum.	❖ A total of eleven parents came in to observe throughout the four months of my student teaching. ❖ Nine parents took notes while observing.
Class Reader	❖ With help from a parent, students designed and made a poster to share with the class. ❖ Students shared information about themselves and present their posters in class.	❖ Parents were asked to help students with their posters at home. ❖ Parents were also invited to come in during the week and read a favorite story to the class.
Homework Facilitator	❖ With the help of a parent, students completed at least three activities a week. ❖ These activities included practicing life skills.	❖ Parents were asked to do activities together with their child. ❖ They checked off what activity was done and signed the bottom of the sheet.
Whole Class Instructor	❖ Students counted to tell the number of objects. ❖ Students demonstrated their understanding of the relationship between numbers and quantities. ❖ Students classified objects and counted the number of objects.	❖ A total of two parents volunteered to teach students. ❖ Each parent was given a day to teach a 15 min lesson. ❖ All resources were given to parents along with instructions from the teacher.

Findings

Lesson Plans: The most effective method to involve parents was the role of a homework facilitator. In all activities, parents were eager to be invited to the classroom. Additionally, the Phonemic Awareness lesson had the most participants for an in class activity.

Teacher Journals: Students classroom participation increased when parents were in the classroom. Behavior and attention improved radically when parents were involved. Students also asked to write letters home inviting parents to come to class.

Parent/Teacher Questionnaires: Parents were very satisfied with the opportunity to observe and learn about Michael Heggerty's curriculum and be involved in the classroom. A majority of teachers expressed apprehensive feelings towards involving parents, though many were eager to learn various methods to increase parental involvement.

Conclusion

- My findings contribute to the professional knowledge base for teachers pertaining to parental involvement and student success.
- For future research, a study allowing for more time to implement a variety of parental involvement strategies would be beneficial.