# Low SES/Ethnic Minority Parental Involvement in Schools

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I. What is Parental Involvement?

“Any parental attitudes, behaviors, styles or activities that occur within or outside the school setting to support children’s academic and/or behavioral success in their currently enrolled school” (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006).

II. Glossary

1. SES (Socioeconomic status): a combined measure of an individual's or family’s economic and social position relative to others, based on income, education, and occupation (reference.com).

2. Parental Involvement (PI): Any parental attitudes, behaviors, styles or activities that occur within or outside the school setting to support children’s academic and/or behavioral success in their currently enrolled school (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006).

3. Self-efficacy: A person’s sense of their ability to be effective in performing a specific task

4. Communitycentric Strategies: Parental Involvement strategies that involve reaching out to families’ communities; strategies that take community needs into consideration (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006).

5. Indigenous Resources: Resources utilizing one’s unique skills and abilities; resources already present in one’s community (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2000).
6. **Open Door Policy**: Policy that allows parents to freely to visit their child’s school and classroom at any time during the school day.

7. **Academic socialization**: “Entails communicating parental expectations for education and its value or utility, linking school work to current events, fostering educational and occupational aspirations, discussing learning strategies with children, and making preparations and plans for the future” (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

8. **Parenting Styles**: “The extent to which a parent demonstrates a supportive and helpful parenting approach” (Jeynes, 2007).

9. **Parental Expectations**: “The degree to which a student’s parents maintain high expectations of the student’s ability to achieve at high levels” (Jeynes, 2007).

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**III. Case Study**

Fraser Academy:

Fraser Academy was a failing school situated in a poor, crime and drug inflicted urban community. The parents rarely involved themselves in their child’s academic life and often exhibited frustration toward the school. This changed when a newly appointed principal, Ms. Winebiddle entered the school. Ms. Winebiddle strived to improve parental involvement because she believed this to be necessary in effecting positive changes in its learning environment.

Ms. Winebiddle began by first establishing a site-based decision-making team (SBDM) that allowed both teaches and families to determine the future direction of the school as well as how they would achieve their goals. For her staff, Ms. Winebiddle provided professional development, modeled proactive personal and professional behaviors, and provided her staff with resources and mentoring. For the families, Ms. Winebiddle respected, valued and educated parents. Ways in which she accomplished this included: personally inviting them to the school, getting to know the parents by
name, subjecting families to higher expectations in their child’s education, and notifying parents of helpful resources.

In addition, she allowed parents to get involved in ways that were comfortable to them and helped address important community concerns and needs. For example, she partnered with her families’ community to help the police shut down crack houses and helped the parents lobby for a crossing guard on a busy street near the school. After aiding parents in filling out and filing the necessary paperwork for criminal clearances, Ms. Winebiddle enlisted the help of parents in signing visitors in and out of the school. Ms. Winebiddle allowed parents to tutor students and teach special interest classes. Lastly, Ms. Winebiddle encouraged teachers to show parents how to help their children with their schoolwork as well as welcome volunteer parents in their classrooms.

Due to Ms. Winebiddle’s efforts, Fraser Academy was successful in increasing parental involvement and engagement. For example her school now had an active parent involvement committee (in school and in the community), and parents made up 20% of the membership of all the school’s decision-making teams. Overall, parents felt more welcomed, valued and confident in their roles as leaders in their child’s education (modified from Giles, 2006).

IV. Discussion Questions

1. What specific PI strategies mentioned in this presentation did Ms. Winebiddle implement at Fraser Academy?

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2. What barriers prevent low SES/ethnic minority parents from participating in your schools?

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3. What are your experiences in involving parents in your schools? What specific strategies have you used thus far? Were they successful?

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4. How will you use the information obtained from this presentation to improve PI in your schools?

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V. FAQ’s

Q: Many of the hard to reach families in my school are single parents. What does the research say about single family PI?

A: Research suggests that children coming from intact families have parents who are involved more in their education and thus have higher academic achievement. Single parents are not as involved in their child’s academic life mainly due to accessibility issues and inflexible time demands due to employment (Jeynes, 2008).

Q: I work in a culturally diverse school. What common misconceptions concerning low SES/ethnic minority parents should my staff be aware of?

A: One of the biggest misconceptions concerning this population is that they do not value their child’s education or are not interested (Cho & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005). This belief is a barrier to low SES/ethnic minority PI because school personnel may not make efforts to reach out to these families.

Q: I want to implement a parental involvement program in my school. Are there any parent-involvement specific grants out there?

A: There are many parental involvement grants available. These various grants support: resource centers for parents, innovative family engagement, underserved communities, parenting classes and family literacy. Many of these grants are state specific so you should check the parent-teacher association (PTA) reference guide (listed in the additional resource section of this presentation) to see what type of grants are available in your state (Belway, Durán & Spielberg, 2012).

Q: Are all schools required to involve parents?

A: Many states have laws requiring schools to involve parents (only eleven states lack parent involvement laws). Title I funding for qualifying school districts is contingent upon policies that address parent involvement (Belway et al., 2012; Department of Education, 2004).
VI. Annotated Bibliography


Dr. Jaleel Abdul-Adil and Dr. Alvin David Farmer are assistant professors positions in the department of psychiatry and the department of psychology respectively. This literature review examined strategies for improving inner-city parental involvement in elementary schools. The authors discussed in particular three specific strategies that research supported—empowerment, outreach, and using indigenous resources.

Empowering families consists of helping parents learn supplemental parental skills, promoting collaboration between parents and service providers, and implementing parent support groups that discuss a variety of topics (e.g. violence, drug, death, etc...).

Outreach involves reaching out to parents by promoting home-based parental involvement such as, providing child care so that parents can attend school-based activities and providing home visitations if a parent has difficulties attending activities held at the school. Lastly, using indigenous skills and resources that are already in the families’ community not only increases the ease participating, in terms of transportation and childcare, but removes barriers such as staff turnover and grant funding. The authors’ findings show that reaching out to these families plays a crucial role in encouraging parental involvement amongst inner-city African Americans. Principals can use some of these strategies to help support inner-city African American families. This can indirectly lead to improvements in African American parental involvement in their schools.
Carolyn Bunting is an education writer and consultant as well as a former teacher and public school administrator. This article discusses indirect ways in which school principals can help support teachers. One strategy discussed involves encouraging teachers to become specialists in areas of personal interest. Teachers can then pass on their knowledge to their colleagues, present said information during workshops, or publish their information. Other strategies include allowing teachers to present case studies of students with special needs, encourage teachers to create a diverse intellectual climate in their schools (e.g. participating in book clubs, hobby/interest groups, discussing politics, etc.), providing opportunities for teachers to exchange ideas, and lastly, giving teachers opportunities to talk amongst each other. Using these strategies, principals can help teachers build a sense of self-efficacy, think more creatively, and improve their teaching performance. The article also reported that supporting and encouraging growth in teachers has an indirect positive impact on the classroom. This article suggests that principals are in a great position to provide important opportunities for teachers. In regards to parental involvement, principals can give teachers opportunities to talk and exchange ideas on how to improve parental involvement in their classrooms. Also, principals can help foster self-efficacy in teachers by providing support. An increased sense of self-efficacy can motivate teachers to build positive relationships with parents.

Dr. Ané Maríñez-Lora works in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Illinois. Her colleague, Dr. Stephen M. Quintana works in the Department of Counseling Psychology at the University of Wisconsin. This exploratory study aimed to discover whether role construction, sense of efficacy, and sense of being invited were related to Urban African American and Latino parent’s school-related involvement (at home and in school). These three variables are a part of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s model of parental involvement. To test this theory, the researchers issued questionnaires and parent handouts on school and child rearing topics to 115 low-income African American and Latino parents who had children in kindergarten through eighth grade. The results of this study showed that only a sense of being invited to participate consistently predicted parental involvement for both groups. This study also revealed that Latino parents not only had lower parental involvement scores, but also lower scores in regards to perceptions of being invited to participate in school as well as at home. In addition, sense of efficacy in combination with perception of being invited was related to Latino parental involvement but not for African Americans. The results of this study suggest that it is crucial for teachers not only take the initiative to invite these parents to participate, but also to let them know that their participation is essential and welcomed. Principals can play a key role in helping to achieve this by empowering teachers to reach out to parents.

Joanne Rooney is a codirector at the Midwest Principal’s Center. This article discusses how school principals can become more effective leaders. More specifically, this article is based off the notion that knowing what one is and what one believes are the most important aspects of effective leadership. The author also states that the belief principals hold about their teachers, students, and learning determines how effective their actions are. The author then goes on to provide tips for how principals can get to this level of effective leadership. Some tips include: selecting times for reflection, networking with other practitioners, taking risks, and publicly stating what they hold to be important.

Lastly, this article includes questions regarding areas of belief that are crucial in establishing essential priorities. Some of the questions involve exploring what their work is, exploring if their school culture reflects their beliefs, and determining if their leadership is embedded in relationships. This article reveals that good leadership directly impacts the relationships with and among teachers as well as student achievement. The author suggests that school principals can set examples in their schools by making it clear what they hold to be important. Keeping this in mind: school principals can take a step in improving/maintaining parental involvement in their schools simply by making it a priority to publicly state that their relationship with parents and the community is important to them. They can do this via encouraging and modeling proactive interactions with parents. In addition, they can take measures to insure that their school culture supports and encourages parental involvement.

Dr. Van Velsor and Dr. Orozco are associate Professors at San Francisco State University in the Counseling Department. This literature review discusses the importance of parental involvement in schools, barriers, and strategies for improving parental involvement in schools. The information the researchers obtained from relevant studies showed parental involvement to be related to school adjustment, engagement, academic performance, and behavior and attitudes. The literature also revealed that low income/minority parents participate less in schools than White and higher SES parents. Some of the barriers found included demographic barriers (e.g. inflexible works schedules, more than one job, lack of transportation/resources and language barriers), psychological barriers (previous experiences with racism/discrimination, lack of confidence in intellectual abilities, and mental health), negative teacher attitudes, and negative school climate. The researchers also discussed communitycentric strategies school counselors can use to improve parental involvement. These strategies include: learning about the children’s families and communities, aiding parents in addressing community concerns, providing on-site services for parents, offering in-service training for school staff, and utilizing parents’ cultural capita (e.g. seeking out parents’ knowledge, and utilizing strengths of parents). Addressing barriers and implementing strategies to improve parental involvement is crucial in helping the children of these families succeed in school. Although these strategies are aimed towards counselors, principals can play a role by supporting the efforts of school counselors in implementing
these strategies. Principals can even implement some of these strategies themselves (e.g. providing in service-training for staff and making it a priority to learn about the families’ communities).

VII. Additional Resources

**Professional Development: Cultural Diversity**

- This casebook (developed by students from University of Pittsburgh) helps prepare teachers to work with culturally diverse students and families.

http://www.lab.brown.edu/pubs/standards/stbstchcltdv.pdf
- Another great professional development resource that aids teachers in teaching culturally diverse schools
- Includes activities and discussion questions for staff

http://www.nccrest.org/Briefs/Teacher_Ed_Brief.pdf
- Provides tips on how to develop culturally responsive educational practices

**Parental Involvement Programs and Support Groups**

http://www.readyfreddy.org/about/history.html
- A great school readiness program. Parental involvement is a key element in this program
http://www.parentinvolvementmatters.org/resources/programs.htm

- List of parent involvement programs. Includes (but not limited to): workshops, professional development for staff, and parent training classes

**Parental Involvement State Laws and Grants**


State laws on Family Engagement in Education Reference Guide

- Includes current family engagement laws as well as available grants listed by state
VIII. References


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