Empowering Schools and Family

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Purpose and Literature Review

According to the NEA Policy Brief (n.d.), research has linked "strong school-family-community partnerships with higher educational aspirations and more motivated students. The evidence holds true for students at both the elementary and secondary level, regardless of the parent's education, family income, or background (NEA,n.d., p. 1).

Lueder (2009) stated his belief that "the major parent involvement issue facing this country is that many parents are not engaged in the education of their children at home. It is the group of 'missing families' that should be the focus of involvement programs (p. 4)."

Time constraints, language issues, poverty, education, and not feeling like a member of the "team" are some of the common barriers many parents have reported as reasons for lack of involvement in their child's schooling (Arias et al., 2008).

Language issues include lack of English proficiency, which hinders their ability to communicate with school personnel. Comprehension is also impaired and further contributes to communication barriers(Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008).
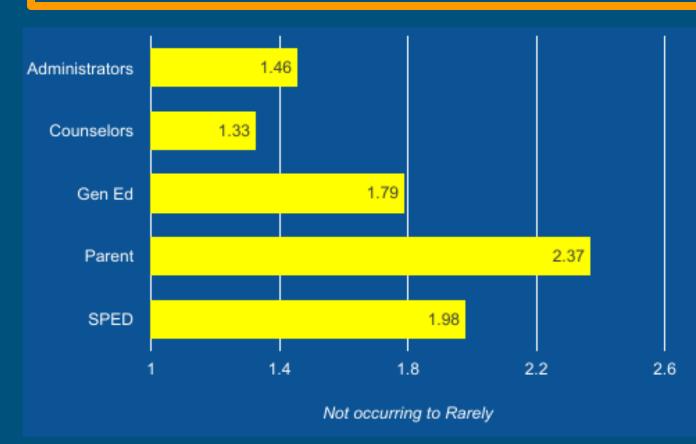
Parents also have stated not feeling as though they are a part of the their child's educational team. They do not feel welcomed by those in the school, feel intimidated by not only the school personnel but the setting as well, and often are unaware of how important their involvement in their child's education really is (Harris & Goodall, 2008).

A parent's level of education can also contribute to this feeling of intimidation. Parents with lower levels of education may be unable to comprehend some of the terminology being used in the school setting by teachers and other school personnel(Sheridan et al., 2010).

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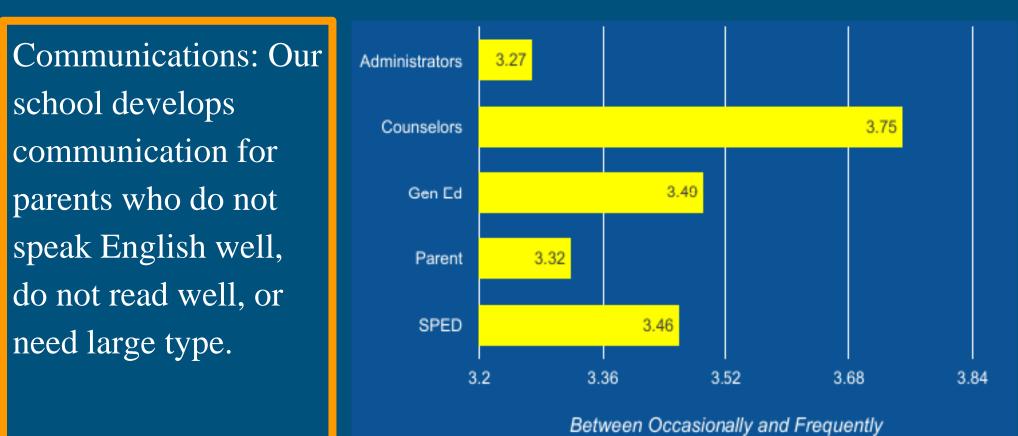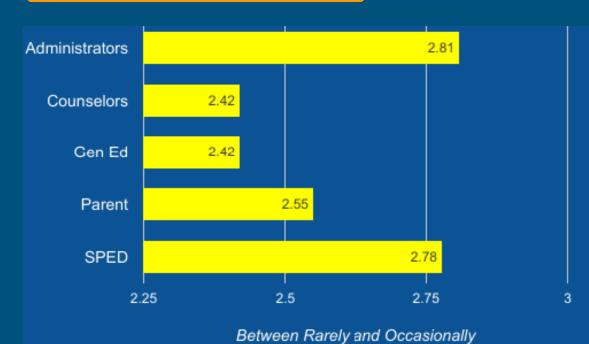*Forward thinking. World ready.*

Methods and Findings

Our collaborative group used a survey instrument developed by professionals at John Hopkins University to conduct research regarding parent engagement based on a framework of six types of involvement. "The Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships is an instrument designed to measure how your school is reaching out to involve parents, community members, and students in a meaningful manner" (Salinas et al., 1999, p.1). After receiving administration approval in their district, the graduate students compiled email lists of teachers, parents, and administrators involved to recruit participants. The email contained an explanation of the research study being conducted of parent partnerships for students with high incidence needs, along with contact information for professor Dr. Moore to answer further questions. Parents, teachers, and administrators participated in the research by completing the survey linked in the email. The survey instrument contained six sections with 53 questions based on a rating scale regarding parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with community. The rating scale allowed participants to rate each level of interaction from 1-not occurring to 5-extensively, except for the three open ended questions.

Administrators	1.46
Counselors	1.33
Gen Ed	1.79
Parent	2.37
SPED	1.98

Not occurring to Rarely

Volunteering: Our school provides a parent/family room for volunteers and family members to work, meet, and access resources about parenting, childcare, tutoring, and other things that affect their children.

Communications: Our school develops communication for parents who do not speak English well, do not read well, or need large type.

Administrators	3.27
Counselors	3.75
Gen Ed	3.40
Parent	3.32
SPED	3.46

Between Occasionally and Frequently

Administrators	2.81
Counselors	2.42
Gen Ed	2.42
Parent	2.55
SPED	2.78

Between Rarely and Occasionally

Volunteering: Our school reduces barriers to parent participation by providing transportation, childcare, flexible schedules, and addresses the needs of English language learners.

Next Steps

- Create more flexible meeting times to accommodate work and family schedules.
- Provide more language supports through interpreters and written communications in the parent's native language.
- Reduce the use of school acronyms and explain technical terms when communicating with parents.
- Invite families to attend school functions.
- Give prizes and other incentives for attending school functions.
- Provide child care at school functions so parents are able to attend.
- Maintain open communication between school personnel and parents by communicating positive and negative occurrences.

References

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