

Reading and Parental Involvement

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Abstract

This Research focused on the effect parental involvement has on student performance when parents are taught the skills necessary. Students whose parents had received advice on methods for reading to their children performed significantly better on a standardized reading test (Fitton & Gredler, 1996). The data illustrated that when parents and teachers unite, students reading scores improves.

Statement of Problem

The recent changes to Dade County Public schools curriculum require more focus on literacy in the early grades. As educators we wanted to find a way in which we can help our students become better readers, and at the same time involve their parents in the process. As teachers, we want to engage parents to support their children to be successful readers. Through this Participatory Action Research we want to find out the impact parental support has on a child's reading achievement through the involvement in reading activities? We believe there are many factors affecting parental involvement in reading, one of them being lack of home-school communication, lack of parental confidence when it comes to offering home assistance in reading, language barrier and students' attitudes towards reading.

Purpose

We implemented an after school reading club which teaches parents the skills they needed to help their kids at home. The workshops consisted of teaching parents different skills such as paired reading, phonological awareness activities, sight word activities, etc. We applied the I-DO, WE-DO, YOU-DO method during all workshops.

Literature Review

Parental involvement in children's education has long been associated with a range of enhanced student outcomes including academic achievement and motivation for schoolwork (Walke, Wilkins, & Dallaire, 2005).

After many weeks of researching parental involvement and reading we came across skills that have been implemented in classrooms and have shown to have success in reading. A family literacy program enhanced with parent education sessions designed to instruct parents how to support learning at home, found that children of parents who participated in the training scored higher in letter-word recognition and overall broad score and made larger standard score gains than students who did not participate (St. Clair, L., Jackson, B., & Zweiback, R. 2012). Since we are not able to reach all students during the school day, the idea of teaching parents to be their children's teachers became our best option. Research indicates that students whose parents had read to them at home and who had received advice on methods for reading to their children performed significantly better on a standardized test of reading than their peers (Fitton & Gredler, 1996).

Parental involvement can have a long-term effect on student's academic success. Early parental involvement increases school readiness, which significantly affects the academic careers of students (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff and Ortiz, 2008). In a study on finding effective strategies for home-school partnership in reading, researchers concluded there was an increased positive attitude on the part of both parents and students toward reading (Bevans, Brenda &Furnish, 2001).

Research Methodology

The research was conducted in a public K-8 center school located in a low socio-economic community in Homestead, FL. The school is a Title 1 school, meaning that more than half of the students are from low-income families. There were twenty students in total in the student/parent workshops. Out of the twenty students 70% were Latino and 30% were blacks. All the students were in the first grade between the ages of seven and eight years old. Fourteen out of twenty students are ESOL. We decided to focus our research on parental involvement but also on the parental involvement within the Latino community since most of the students and parents in the program come from a Latino background.

The workshops were conducted once a week on Wednesdays' afterschool for 10 weeks. Throughout the 10 weeks, we focused on different skills such as paired reading, phonological awareness activities, sight word activities, etc. We conducted face-to-face interviews with the parents that volunteered for the research project. We conducted a pre and post interview, which were conducted after the workshops or at their homes. The last instrument that we used was a reading assessment. We gave the students a reading assessment at the beginning of the 10 weeks and at the end of the 10 weeks.

In the post interview, the parents were very satisfied with the program and they suggested we hold this program throughout the whole year. They felt this program helped them become more their familiar with what their kids are doing at school and how they can support their learning at home. The answers to the questions were very positive. In the reading assessment, the data shows that students increased in all of the areas mentioned above. There was an overall increased total of 35%.

Results

At the conclusion of our 10 weeks of workshops we again interviewed parents; conducted a focus group and gave the students the post reading assessment. We have come to understand that many parents in our reading club feel that they have no support from our administration when it comes to helping their kids. The post-interviews were held in the classroom during a focus group. The parents were very satisfied with the program and they suggested we hold this program throughout the whole year. They felt this program helped them become more familiar with what their kids are doing at school and how they can support their learning at home. The answers to the questions were very positive. The reading assessments were given to the students by their homeroom teachers once at the beginning of the 10 weeks and one at the end of the 10 weeks as mentioned before. The reading post assessment focused on identifying and supporting details; arranging events in sequence, comprehension, identifying the characters, word knowledge and phonemic awareness. The post assessment showed great improvement in the scores. The data shows that students increased in all of the areas mentioned above, students increased by 35%.

Implications

This research contributed to bridge the breach between parents, teachers, and schools. The principal asked the parents in our reading club how the school can help them help their kids this year. Many parents agreed that they need more support from the teachers when it comes to homework and teaching their kids the skills they need for testing. The parents felt this program helped them become more familiar with what their kids are doing at school and how to support their learning at home. This type of programs should be implemented in every school, especially

those schools with high population of minorities. Teachers must expend extra energy and resources to successfully engage parents.

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