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## Effects of Parental Involvement on Academics

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Effects of Parental Involvement on Academics

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Capstone Project: A School Improvement Plan

Northwestern College Orange City, Iowa

**Abstract**

A child needs their parents to be involved in their educational experience to support social emotional growth and academic growth during the developmental years of their life. It is no surprise that there are many issues that come from little parental involvement. In order to have the optimal parental involvement, educators must encourage involvement through a variety of ways based on the needs to the families in their classroom.

*Keywords:* optimal, involvement, encourage

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### **Parental Involvement in a Child's Life**

The importance of a parent's role starts when a child is very young. Parental involvement in a child's education is critical for many reasons. It has been shown that parental involvement helps with children's confidence, which in turn helps with all areas in school. It all starts with the support given from parents. Students whose self-confidence is higher have better math scores than those who struggled with self-confidence. Of those scores, students who had this strong self-confidence also had support from home (Yildirim, 2019). *If there is this correlation, why are we still seeing alarming rates of little parental involvement in their child's education?*

There is much research supporting the value of parental involvement in their children's education. Recent research findings show that home-based and school-based parental involvement is key in order to have success in academics and social-emotional well-being of kids (Wong et al, 2018). Struggles with academics, behavior, and social-emotional growth in school-age children could be reduced if educators did more to foster parents' participation.

The purpose of this school improvement plan is to help the teachers of my district properly communicate with our diverse population of parents to ensure they are fully involved in their child's academic experience. It is the author's goal to see different communication strategies employed to help meet this goal.

Research for this paper was drawn from Education Resources Information Center database, the WorldCat discovery tool through DeWitt Library, and Google Scholar. All articles were peer reviewed and published within the last ten years. The

author's focus was to find different teachers, parents, and students views on parental involvement in their classrooms and at home as well as studies revealing the effects of such involvement. Many articles gave information on the value of the variety of communication needed to ensure that all parents are involved in their child's education.

Research findings suggest that we will have higher rates of involvement when educators create more opportunities for parental involvement both home-based and school-based. This change will happen through teachers using different communication strategies to ensure that parents are given equal opportunity to be involved in their child's educational experience. Having a set form of communication will allow teachers to meet the changing needs of their students from year to year.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Academic Growth Connected to Parental Involvement**

Parental involvement both in-school and at-home, greatly benefits the growth of students in academics. A study conducted by Klemencic (2015) on 4<sup>th</sup> grade students took a look at student's reading assessment scores in relation to their own views on their parents' involvement. The data was collected from 54 of the 56 education systems in this study. The results showed that in more than half of the participants achieved higher scores when their parental involvement scores were greater. The results also showed a significant relation to higher test scores from students whose parents valued education. When comparing student feedback in relation to their results, the results suggest the high value that parental involvement brings to a child's educational life.

Research themes appear similar in many studies throughout the world. A study by Paul, et al. (2021) focused on children from India, studying the dropout rate when parents aren't involved. This specific study focused on parental involvement at an early age, and the dropout rates occurring later in their school careers. Data was taken at two different times: once when the children were from the ages 8-11 and again when they were ages 15-18 (taking verbal feedback in relation to drop out rates). The findings from a Human Development survey showed that children whose parents did not participate in PTA meetings, were not involved in their child's homework, or did not talk with their child's teacher had higher dropout rates. When parents are involved the child is more likely to have success in the long run. So, *why are there greater dropout rates due to parents not being involved? Why the correlation?* It comes down too many factors.

It is important to remember the different forms of parental involvement possible. These include involvement in the school and involvement at home. Chan (2018) did a qualitative study on 4,284 primary aged students and 3,346 secondary aged students to see the different antecedents and impacts of student engagement when parents are involved. This study took place in the country of Singapore, and the research was conducted through a profile analysis. This analysis was based on student surveys on parent involvement. The results showed that there was a slow incline in student success when parents are involved in some way. This involvement can be through parent volunteers in the school setting, or parents sitting down to help their child at home with the content being taught in school. These forms of involvement strengthen the relationship between home and school learning as well as validate the importance of what students are learning in school.

When this bond is built at home and at school, the child sees the value in what they are learning. Children look to their parents to form their primary values when they are young. Many of the values a person portrays will carry over to adulthood, and these values originate from parents setting the values children follow. Some might change values with maturity and then people create their own ideas, but while developing, children watch, listen, and mimic their parents. These values include the value they place on academics. When a child sees their parent putting in the effort with school at home, students are more willing to see the value in school. Anthony, et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study on ECLS-Kindergarten aged students. This study gave feedback on school administered tests, parental survey questions, and teacher feedback on the parental role in their classrooms. The findings show that parental involvement in a child's early years significantly link to success. Forms of involvement include support in a variety of ways such as help from parents at home, verbal communication with the teacher, and opportunities for interaction in the school setting. Children's developmental process includes support from parents to get the optimal learning experience, therefore, we must have parents involved from an early age to build a foundation of the importance of school.

### **Children's Confidence in Relation to Parental Involvement**

When the value of school is instilled by parents from a young age, the child starts to build confidence in the ability to anything to which they set their mind. A study by Narlee (2014) went into depth on value parents place on academics in relation to student success in a qualitative study done in Australia. Interviews by a parent and his



three children were performed. The qualitative feedback showed that when the parent emphasized that learning is a part of the process towards success, the child found multiple ways to find success. Through the qualitative feedback, it was found that students are more willing to face challenges and have a love for learning when their parents model this posture.

A study by Dotter (2022) looked at parent involvement, expectancy values, and STEM outcomes among underrepresented adolescents. A total of 29 9<sup>th</sup> graders were randomly selected from 944 public and private schools for the qualitative study. Questionnaires completed by both the parents and students were used to gain the data regarding parental involvement in STEM-related activities. The findings show that parents stated that they were more likely to do computer activities at home than attend a science fair at the school. The research also showed that even if parents are involved in non-formal ways, students were more likely to still be involved in STEM classes at school, but to produce excitement in a child there needs to be that parental involvement.

Yildirim (2019) looked into the roles that socio-economic status, parental involvement, and self-confidence play in mathematic achievement. The study was a mixed qualitative and quantitative study done on 6928 eighth grade students and 239 school principals responses. Verbal feedback from a four-point system on the areas of parent involvement at home and self-confidence was used in relation to test scores. The findings show that students who scored higher on the self-confidence questions also had better math scores than those who had lower scores with self-confidence. Of those scores, students who had strong self-confidence also had support at home. A major finding of the study was that a student's self-confidence is the greatest predictor of

mathematical achievement, and their feedback stated that parental involvement attributed to this confidence.

Often parental involvement is thought to be parent's involvement in school. Cheung & Pomerantz (2015) did a qualitative study on student perceptions of the value of parental involvement in their academics and overall lives. The study was done on 825 American and Chinese 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade students during two 45-minute sessions of verbal feedback. The questions were on the child's perceptions of parental value, the child's value on school, and the child's engagement in school. The findings were that parental involvement in their child's learning was directly related to positive perceptions of involvement from that child. The value students placed on their education also had a direct link to their engagement in school.

No matter the age, parental involvement at home and in school directly correlates to the child's belief in their ability to perform. A child's confidence starts at home. This confidence is then built upon by the child no matter the challenges they face in academics and life.

### **Challenges to Parental Involvement**

The same can go when parents are too involved. Wong et al. (2018) looked at how children being over-parented can have a negative effect on a child's view of themselves and their ability to perform well. The qualitative study was on 507 Chinese students and their parents in kindergarten and then again in the third grade. The data for this study was collected from the tests of Chinese Language and Mathematics, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, Home-Based and School-Based Involvement

Scales, and Children's Social Engagement Scales. The researchers concluded that home-based parental involvement was associated with child's competence and well-being. Parents of the primary-age children reported more home-based involvement than school-based involvement, and it was found that there were no problems with a child's ability to play with others when there was home-based parental involvement.

Hyseni & Hoxha (2021) looked into the effects of school climate and parent support on academic performance in schools in Pristina, Kosovo. This qualitative study used feedback from students from different schools within the community. From student feedback, the following was learned: positive school climate is a great indicator of academic performance, family-related factors have an impact on the child's performance in school, and a school's views on parental involvement have a direct relationship with the relationship formed with the classroom teacher. Parents have a problem with some of the foundations of communication being built in schools that don't value parental involvement.

Preston et al. (2018) published a study on "Kindergarten Teachers' Notions of Parent Involvement and Perceived Challenges". This study gave ideas on different forms of communication that are beneficial. Sixty-two randomly selected participants were part of this qualitative study. They answered 50 questions on their views as educators on how to create parent involvement in their classroom and at home. The results were that parent involvement needs written communication such as newsletters, classroom blogs, emails, personal notes, and handouts. Parent involvement must also include their spoken language when these forms of communication are sent home. Another important result found that classroom participation from parents needs to be

important for educators to incorporate in their classrooms. The study recognized the following barriers to parental involvement: lack of time, school policies, transportation, and student behavior issues.

Ogg et al. (2020) looked at how children with ADHD affect parental involvement in education. The guiding question to this qualitative research was the following: Does inattention or hyperactivity/impulsivity moderate the relationship between personal and contextual motivators for involvement and parent involvement behaviors at home? A questionnaire was completed by 122 Kindergarten parents and teachers from the Southern United States and Eastern Canada as well as teacher observations. This qualitative study found that links between parent's involvement became stronger as levels of a child's inattention went up. Time and energy of parents dealing with a child with ADHA increased, which leads to less parental involvement. This study showed that parents who have students who portray ADHD characteristics show they are mentally tired; therefore, those students and families need the most support.

Language is a huge barrier to parent-school relationships. A study by MacPhee (2021) looked into parents of children in the six French Minority-Language Schools in Prince Edward Island. There were 34 parent participants in the focus groups, and four of them participated in individual interviews. The participants did not speak the same language as the school. The questions focused on characteristics of their backgrounds, beliefs of the parents, and involvement in their child's education. From the survey questions and interviews, it was found that even though parents knew the importance of being involved, they did not feel competent in helping their child learn because they didn't know the same language. Parents reported having no sense of belonging

because they did not speak the same language, but they wanted to be involved. The parents believed that if educators involved parents of all languages, then there would be more parental involvement in schools.

Perriell (2015) looked at feedback from parents and administration on parental involvement. This qualitative study looked at three different components of parental involvement: Its relationship to student achievement in mathematics, reading, comprehension, and social studies at the secondary level; the important components of parental involvement according to students; and, what are important components of parental involvement according to parents. This study included in-person interviews as well as a cross-sectional questionnaire to gain the data needed. Participating in this study were 367 students and 172 parents. Principals of those selected gave feedback. The findings are as follows: 83% of parents felt that supporting, encouraging, and helping their child with homework were important parts of being involved in a child's educational experience; 82% of children stated that their parents should provide this support; the relationships between parent involvement and student achievement were positively correlated; and administrations believed that this partnership is important.

Through these responses, it is evident that parental involvement is necessary. It raises the concern of why are we seeing a disconnect. Now the question remains, *how can educators encourage this strong relationship?*

### **Educators Role in Parental Involvement**

Calzada, et al. (2015) did a study looking into family and teacher characteristics as predictors of parent involvement in education during early childhood among Afro-Caribbean and Latino immigrant families. Researchers asked the following qualitative question: What factors play a major role in positive parental involvement of immigrant families? Afro-Caribbean and Latino immigrant families from 34 public elementary schools in NYC were part of the 636 parents and 152 teachers who participated in this study. Parents and students answered school-based questionnaires. The results showed children in schools serving lower socio-economic status and immigrants are at risk for receiving limited support for learning at home. Teachers who used many factors of communication with parents had more support from immigrant families, while teachers who didn't support different cultures had less involvement. This feedback demonstrates that teachers need to have extra communication efforts in place to ensure that all families are involved in their children's education.

Teachers have opinions when it comes to parental involvement. Sevcan (2020) asked 225 early educators questions on their views on parental involvement, different types of parental involvement that they use, and if educational experience helped in creating an atmosphere where parents are involved. This qualitative study took place in Finland and Turkey. The early educators answered a variety of questions that addressed these areas. The results concluded that the Finnish and Turkish people placed a lot of value on early childhood parental involvement; Finnish teachers placed a lot of value on seasoned educators having better parental involvement; and work plays

a big factor in why it is believed that parents aren't involved in their child's education. These results can inform the ways educators can encourage parental involvement.

Soutullo et al. (2019) interviewed five school psychology students. Researchers were guided by this question: How do specialist-level school psychology interns characterize the nature of their family-school partnership experiences over their internship? The psychology students did three different interviews during their year internship. The interns concluded that situations in leading and/or creating family-school relationships is key in classrooms. The interns also recognized the value in the families' willingness to have this relationship is an important factor to consider. Communication from both sides, the teacher and parents, is a valuable component in successfully building these partnerships.

Challenges arise when language barriers are present. Lee (2012) looked into the idea of parent involvement in school, comparing English-speaking versus Spanish-speaking families. There were 9841 parents of children ages 5-20 from civilian population in the United States that partook in this qualitative study conducted over the phone. Parents provided feedback on parental involvement in their child's educational and extra-curricular activities. The results indicated that parents believe educators must give support to all families, and there needs to be an importance placed on willingness to provide the appropriate communication by the schools. In other words, educators must go above and beyond to ensure parents are involved in their child's education.

There are many forms of parental involvement that can be used in the classroom. Chojnacka-Synazko (2016) examined the types of parental involvement in early

childhood development. The qualitative and quantitative study focused on 143 parents of children enrolled in the early assisted-development programs. Parental feedback reflected their experiences with parental involvement. Most of these parents, 62.9%, of parents “definitely” try to put the advice they are given from specialists into play. Less than half of the parents, 33.6%, “try” to follow the guidelines given to them. Most of the participants stated that they can talk to their specialists with questions or concerns about their child. Most of the parents, 94%, regularly put the practices given to them into play at home. Most of the parents also, 80.4%, say that staff takes their ideas and recommendations into account when helping their child, and systematic and long-term strategies seem to be necessary to ensure parent involvement. This study emphasizes the importance of parental involvement based on parents’ feedback.

It’s important to understand that some types of parental involvement instilled by educators does not have benefit due to not hitting the needs of all students. Therefore, multiple forms of communication must be used by educators. Zhang (2015) performed a qualitative study by interviewing parents and teachers with this guiding question: *What types of parental involvement are meaningful?* The participants of this study included 11 teachers and 12 parents from three early childhood settings in New Zealand. The questions focused on dynamics of involvement, activity of involvement, and impact of involvement. The results were that educators need to have multiple means of communication to make sure all parents have equal opportunity to be updated on their child’s educational experience.



## **School Profile**

### **School Characteristics**

Sibley-Ocheydan Elementary School is the only elementary school in Osceola County in Northwest Iowa. The school enrolls 300 students from preschool through 4<sup>th</sup> grade, with three sections in each grade. Along with the general education teachers, there are two title reading teachers, two special education teachers, one English language learner teacher, one school counselor, two intervention teachers, a talented and gifted teacher, specials teachers, and specialists from the AEA to support students with needs outside of the capacity of the teachers in the district. According to *Us News*, the school enrollment includes 44% females and 56% males. White students comprise 74.3% of the district, with students of other races being 25.7%. A majority of the district's teachers have more than three years of teaching experience.

### **Student Performance**

At Sibley-Ocheydan Elementary School, there are high scores from both FastBridge and Iready Assessments. Of the students, 87% scored at or above proficient in both reading and math. Comparing scores to other schools in Iowa, Sibley-Ocheydan scored above average in math and reading. Iowa's percentage of students at or above proficient is 68% in reading and 70% in math.

### **Students and Community Characteristics**

Sibley, Iowa has a population of 2,817 and is located in Osceola County on Iowa's border with Minnesota. According to World Population (n.d) , the demographics of Sibley consist of 93.61% white, 3.66% other races, and 0.81% Black or African American. There are 1,927 adults in the town, with the rest being children. The town

consists of 51.37% females and 48.63% males. The poverty rate of Sibley is 16.28%, with 100% of the poverty in the county being the non-white population.

### **Parent Involvement**

Parents are involved at Sibley-Ocheyedan Elementary School by attending Parent-Teacher conferences in the fall and spring every year. At these events, teachers share educational and social-emotional data with parents. During these conferences, student work is showcased to compare teacher comments to the data.

Teachers also communicate with parents through email, phone conversations, face-to-face meetings, and via technology throughout the year. There are many opportunities for parents to communicate with their teacher and see their child's growth throughout the year outside of Parent-Teacher Conferences.

### **School Mission, Vision, & Goals**

The mission of Sibley-Ocheyedan School is: "We build partnerships to challenge minds, to invest in community, and embrace life" (Sibley-Ocheyedan Community School District, 2023). The elementary has goals to make sure that students are safe, students follow the 6 Pillars of Character, needs of each student are met, and students know they can accomplish whatever they set their mind to.

### **Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**

The Sibley-Ocheyedan Community School district recently adopted a new curriculum for the elementary and middle school. The reading curriculum is Amplify reading. This curriculum was chosen based on reflections from scores on the Iowa State Testing Results. The curriculum offers in-depth resources for educators as well as

reading materials to align with standards. This curriculum encourages two hours of reading and phonics practices throughout the child's day.

Sibley-Ocheyedan's math curriculum is IntoMath. This curriculum was adopted a few years ago, and we have seen a love for math from our students built from this curriculum. The curriculum gives multiple resources to assist teachers in their lessons.

### **Teacher Work and Professional Development**

Professional learning and collaboration is an important element for teachers in our district. As a district, teachers create a professional development plan that they develop for every year. These plans are called SMART goals. The staff chooses what areas they want to work during that year. The staff meet with a supervisor a couple times a year to reflect on the goals and see how their SMART goal is being met. If support is needed, they have it.

Professional Development happens once a week based on the needs of the school and staff. These times include speakers, meetings, assessment reviews, teacher work time, collaboration with team, etc. The district ensures that all teachers are working on themselves through supporting and encouraging each staff member.

### **Needs Assessment**

Sibley-Ocheyedan Elementary School does an excellent job at executing the expected communication through Parent-Teacher Conferences twice a year and inviting open communication with parents. However, with the growing population of students who speak other languages than English, the district needs to ensure all parents have equal opportunity to participate in their child's education.

Sibley-Ocheyedan Elementary teachers need to expand out from their typical means of communication to encourage parental involvement. Teachers are doing the expected, but that expectation is not meeting all the needs that the district has and will continue to have in the future. The minority group in Sibley is growing, and many families who do not speak the same language are enrolling in school. The expectation is that all parents should be involved, but the district is not communicating in ways that keep all parents involved.

Sibley-Ocheyedan is a district that has a staff with a lot of experience. Often the experience leads educators not expanding on what they do when it comes to communication. These issues can be due to staff set in their ways, not seeing the need for change, or that there is simply not enough time for them to improve on their communication.

To better meet all the needs of parental involvement, expectations must be articulated by administration. To get all teachers on board, the district needs to work together on improvement. A plan for personal development needs to be required to communicate the importance of getting all parents involved in the district.

### **School Data & Analysis**

Data was collected to demonstrate areas of need surrounding parental involvement at Sibley-Ocheyedan Elementary. Data was collected from [greatschools.org](https://www.greatschools.org) and from staff surveys following Parent-Teacher conferences. Analysis of this data suggest the need for more forms of parental involvement.

Staff at Sibley-Ocheyedan Elementary school answered questions via a Google forum survey following the 2022-2023 Parent-Teacher Conferences during the school year. Each staff listed the total students in class, and how many parents participated in the conferences. The average for total parent participation is 92.04% in grades Preschool through 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Whereas these are great numbers, it is important to consider what went on prior to conferences to result in such high attendance. Teachers sent out an original sign-up sheet a few weeks before. A message via text was also sent. Then they sent out more reminders throughout the weeks in the language of their students whose families hadn't signed up yet. If conference week came and still not all students were signed up, teachers and translators made phone calls home. These steps by the staff were required by building principals. These different forms of communication to meet the needs of the families is what caused Parent Teacher Conferences at Sibley-Ocheyedan Elementary to be so successful this past year. Staff went above and beyond to meet the needs of communication for the important event. This example demonstrates that high parental involvement is possible when multiple means of communication are used.

As stated prior, there are great scores on Iowa Assessments, but the question remains: *are we making the right progress?* The minority students at Sibley-Ocheyedan school district are not meeting the benchmarks set by the state of Iowa. According to Great Schools.Org, there is a significant number of students who are making less academic progress than students of the same age through the state of Iowa. The below average by schools in the state is an average of 34% while Sibley-Ocheyedan has 67% rate making less academic progress compared to their peers. On top of this statistic, the

Hispanic group of students are the ones who struggled with the 2021-2022 Science Standardized Assessment with 56% not meeting the benchmarks. (Great Schools, n.d) Although there is not data from parental involvement in these students lives, it would be something that the district can change to see if there is improvement with these scores and statistics. Therefore, these statistics show that we need to make parental communication between minority parents a priority to see if the district can bridge the learning gaps and delays that are present.

### **Implementation of School Improvement Plan**

#### **Timeline**

Activities for this school improvement plan will need to start before school begins to ensure that the plan is in place by the beginning of the school year. The principals and instructional coach will need to work together to approve/revise the following timeline and start the process before the school year begins.

*School Improvement Plan Timeline*

Step	Timeline	Responsible Staff
Pre-Implementation Survey Questions	During the first staff in-service meeting at the beginning of the year	Principal & Instructional Coach
Survey Responses Presentation and Class Dojo implementation expectation presentation	During the second staff in-service day meeting	Instructional Coach
Class Dojo meetings/ reflections with team during professional development	Once each month.	All Staff
Individual End-of-the-Year Reflection Meeting	In May before teacher check-out for summer	Staff, Principal, & Instructional Coach

**Resources**

To successfully implement this school improvement plan, a few resources will be necessary. The principal and the instructional coach will need to work together to create, analyze, and plan meetings for staff on the district’s implementation plan. Other resources include technology, examples of expectations with using Class Dojo, videos

of other school's implementation of given forms of communication, and a place to present this material.

### **Monitoring the Plan**

Monitoring of this school improvement plan will be the responsibility of the school principal. He or she will be a part of each Class Dojo classroom. Giving positive and constructive feedback while monitoring the classroom teachers will be an essential step in ensuring the expectations are being met. Principals will do this through emails or verbal communication on thoughts of the teachers follow through with the plan. This can include recommendations or praise. It is important to remember that this is a learning experience: teachers need time to learn and grow.

### **Potential Barriers**

As with any well-thought-out plan, there are potential challenges and barrier that can arise that allow for a plan to not be successful. One potential barrier is that some parents don't have the needed means of technology available to them. The good thing is that Class Dojo can be used with a computer or cellphone. While most families will have access to at least one of those tools, it is important to consider the possibility that not all will. In this case, our administrators must decide on a different way to communicate exactly what the rest of the families are accessing through Class Dojo to stay informed. There also can be staff hesitant to try something new. For example, Class Dojo may not be used as intended. To address this potential barrier, it is important for principals to watch how the app is being used and intervene in a positive manner if expectations are not being met. It will take a conscious effort of all staff to ensure that the app is being used correctly to engage all parents in their child's learning.



### **Conclusion**

Parental Involvement has a major impact on the success of a child. With the high need for different forms of communication in the district, it is important that all teachers meet the needs of their families when it comes to communication. The implementation of Class Dojo sets a school-wide expectation on how to communicate with each parent. This communication includes updates on classroom activities, reminders, and one-to-one communication with the classroom teacher. When all the staff commit to trying a new form of communication, the hope is to see a positive impact on students' social and emotional growth and academic success due to parents being involved in what their child is doing at school. It takes everyone involved to see a positive change that the district needs to see.

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