


Chapter 11

Planning Purposeful Parent Involvement: A Multi-Level Approach

Teresa Walker

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6544-9787>
Central Washington University, USA

ABSTRACT

The mission of this chapter is to establish intentional purpose in the ways educators connect, communicate, and partner with families. Traditional school/home communication approaches present concerns as they tend to be haphazard, historically focused, and lack holistic composition. Reframing parent involvement to promote purposeful interactions at the child, classroom, and school levels begins with identifying the underlying purpose of each. The extent of school/home partnership and commitment to the involvement opportunities is dependent on the educator to develop a positive rapport and establish mutual respect between children's families and teachers. Relationship forming is more than a haphazard result of interaction. The purpose of a family-teacher partnership is to express commitment to a productive relationship toward common outcomes. Meaningful relationships, when tended properly, are responsive and reciprocal in nature. They are formed around commitment to a common good – concern for the child.

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INTRODUCTION

The mission of this chapter is to establish intentional purpose for the ways educators connect, communicate, and partner with families during the elementary years. Traditional approaches to parent involvement present concerns because comprehensive planning is likely overlooked and may be haphazard, historically focused, and lack holistic composition. Reframing parent involvement in holistic composition includes attention at all levels of involvement: the child, classroom, and school. Considering the types, methods, and focus of involvement sets the stage for identifying and creating purposeful parental involvement at each level.

BACKGROUND

In the early 1990s, Joyce Epstein's Framework of Types of Involvement redefined engaged relationships for families, schools, and community. The framework defined six types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and community collaboration. Sample practices, challenges, redefinitions, and expected results readied the model for practical utilization. Using a Venn diagram, Epstein illustrated the power of intersecting interaction among and between schools, parents, and the community for greater student success. Epstein's model spans birth through high school services. "Well-organized partnership programs mobilize resources at school, at home, and in the community that will help all students do their best in school" (Epstein, 2019, p. 9).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995;1997) suggested methods of parent involvement through four action areas: encouragement, modeling, reinforcement, and instruction. They further stipulated parents' decisions concerning involvement are rooted in three general areas:

1. Beliefs about what is important, what is needed, and what is allowed.
2. Beliefs about the depths of positive impact.
3. Perceptions of desirability (if their children want their involvement and if their engagement is wanted and welcomed by the school).

Personal experiences and parenting beliefs determine involvement in the educational experience of their child. The interest, abilities, and skills of parents, guide their choices of which, and to what degree, school activities they shall get involved. To intentionally frame parent involvement, teachers must have time and availability in the week, specifically, for parent interactions (Jacobson, 1997, para

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