

Increasing Parental Involvement in ELL Families

by

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Abstract

Families of ELLs that attend public schools in the United States including schools in Washingtonville Central School District face many barriers that interfere with involvement in their child's education and school. The six main barriers identified by research include home language, immigration status, socioeconomic status, ELL families' lack of formal education, ELL families' unfamiliarity with how the educational system works, and cultural beliefs. The literature in this case study reveals that these barriers can play a negative role in students' success. However, strategies including schools providing more bilingual staff and/or translators, sending home translated information, conducting home visits, and teacher training can increase parental involvement in ELL families. In order to increase involvement from families of ELLs, all teachers at Taft Elementary in the Washingtonville Central School District will attend a professional development seminar where they will learn about ELLs, barriers that affect ELL families, and strategies on ways to increase their involvement in their child's learning and school. One proposed recommendation is for all schools to provide monthly professional development sessions. These sessions should focus on educating teachers about ELLs, barriers that their families face, and strategies to increase parental involvement.

Keywords: English language learners, parental involvement, barriers, professional development

Chapter 1: Introduction

The English language learner population in U.S. public schools has considerably grown over the past decade. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2023), the number of English language learners in U.S. public schools in 2010 was four and a half million and increased to five million in 2020. Many factors play a role in ELLs' success in schools including parental involvement. Research has documented many positive effects of parental involvement on student's learning, including promoting ELLs' second language (L2) development (Kalaycı & Ergül, 2020; Kim, 2018; Tinajero et al., 2023), having positive attitudes toward school, and increasing motivation and attendance (Kalaycı & Ergül, 2020; Vera et al. 2012).

Indeed, parental involvement is considered actions performed by parents that will help increase their child's academic accomplishments (Kalaycı & Öz, 2018). These actions include cooperation and communication with the teacher, partaking in school-related activities including, parent-teacher conferences, attending or volunteering in parent-teacher organization meetings or social events, and interacting with school personnel (Curtis et al., 2021; Premo et al., 2023). However, there is a lack of involvement from ELL families. ELL families face multiple barriers that prevent them from engaging in their child's learning and school. These barriers include immigration status, home language (L1) barriers, socioeconomic status, lack of formal education levels, unfamiliarity with how the educational system works, and cultural beliefs (Antony-Newman, 2019; Housel, 2020; Vera et al, 2017). These barriers can hinder ELLs academic achievements and the development of strong family-school partnerships.

As a teacher candidate that is part of the TESOL program at SUNY Brockport, I have had the opportunity to observe a certified English as a second language teacher's classroom. The

teacher I observed is Mrs. Shaw and she provides pull-out services to several groups of ELLs throughout the day at Taft Elementary. Taft Elementary is a public school that is part of the Washingtonville Central School District and two percent of the district's population includes English language learners. After several observations in Mrs. Shaw's class, I decided to conduct an interview after school and ask her questions in regard to the challenges that her ELLs have faced. Mrs. Shaw mentioned that one major issue that has affected ELLs is minimal involvement from families of English language learners. Although this problem can not be identified in the classroom right away, it is a significant issue. The lack of parental involvement from ELL families at Taft Elementary sparked my interest.

Thus, the purpose of this project is to identify barriers that interfere in ELL families' lives that prevent them from being involved in their child's learning and school and how these barriers affect ELLs academic and linguistic success at school. Its guiding question is, "How can educators increase parental involvement in ELL families? Next, Chapter 2 reviews the literature that explores the barriers that ELL families face that result in minimal involvement and some strategies to encourage and enhance ELLs' parental involvement. Then, in Chapter 3, I describe a professional development opportunity for all mainstream and English as second language teachers that provides information about English language learners, the importance of parental involvement, and tools and strategies on how to support and encourage ELL family involvement in schools. Chapter 4 concludes with implications and offers recommendations for further education.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This Chapter discusses several barriers that limit English language learner families' involvement in their child's learning and school, which negatively affect ELLs' academic achievement and success in school. These barriers include home language, immigration status, socioeconomic status, lack of formal education, unfamiliarity with how the educational system works, and cultural beliefs (Antony-Newman, 2019; Harper & Pelletier, 2010; Kalaycı & Ergül, 2020; Kalaycı & Öz, 2018; Parsons & Shim, 2019; Premo et al, 2023; Ramirez, 2003; Tinajero et al, 2023). In this Chapter, I draw upon the conceptual framework of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory, which reveal the importance of parental involvement and why parents must make an effort to be involved and engaged in their child's education. Next, I discuss the barriers that ELL families face that prevent involvement in their child's learning and school and provide strategies that educators can use in order to increase parental involvement for families of English language learners.

Conceptual Framework

Both Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory emphasize the importance of parental involvement in a child's learning. The sociocultural theory reveals that children will learn more efficiently and receive more support in their learning when social interactions take place. Social interactions include parental involvement, which positively plays a role in children's development and language learning process. According to Yeh (2019), children's knowledge, ability, and higher-order thinking skills immediately increase when parents are able to socially interact and scaffold their child's learning. Parental interactions create an environment that allows children to learn how to interact, learn from those interactions, and acquire new knowledge (Javadi & Tahmasbi, 2020). Social interactions between parents and

English language learners can also assist in a child's L2 development (Alkhudiry, 2022). The more a child interacts using their home language (L1), they will eventually become proficient in their (L1), which will make learning a second language (L2) easier.

Likewise, Bronfenbrenner's (1978) ecological theory emphasizes the significance of an interactive environment between parents and their child's school. It suggests that strong and collaborative partnerships between families, children, and teachers can lead to successful academic outcomes (Harper & Pelletier, 2010). When parents are involved in school and at home such as volunteering at their child's school, attending parent-teacher conferences, actively participating in school activities, keeping consistent communication with their child's school, helping their child with homework, and reading with their child, it plays a role in promoting and improving cognitive development and academic success (Sengonul, 2020).

In principle, the sociocultural theory and Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory will help teachers and schools recognize the importance of parental involvement, especially for families of ELLs. Parental interactions are an important factor in a child's learning, therefore, teachers must provide multiple opportunities for families to collaborate and be involved in their child's education. Teachers must also make an effort to inform families about the importance of parental involvement, encourage families to be involved, and come up with strategies that can help families to become more involved in their child's education. Families must acknowledge that their interactions are essential because they significantly influence their child's academic success. When families are aware that their involvement in their child's education has positive benefits, it would motivate them to become more involved.

However, educators must be aware of barriers that limit ELL families' involvement in their child's learning and school. Next, I discuss these barriers: home language, immigration

status, socioeconomic status, parents' lack of formal education, unfamiliarity with how the educational system works, and cultural beliefs.

Inhibiting Factors for Lack of ELL Parental Involvement

This section discusses several inhibiting factors that can affect English Language Learner (ELL) parental involvement. Research has documented ELL parents' lack of English proficiency, immigration status, socioeconomic status, ELL parents' lack of formal education levels, and ELL parents' lack of familiarity with the education system and culture. It is important to note that these factors can vary based on individual circumstances and contexts. These barriers also affect students' success and achievements in school. According to Kalaycı & Öz (2018), Vera et al., (2017), and Yeh (2019), when there is a lack of parental involvement in a child's education it affects student performance, academic achievement, and L2 development.

Parents' Lack of English Proficiency

Several research studies reveal that the highest reported barrier that families of ELLs face is language. A lack of English proficiency can result in a lack of parental involvement. Harper & Pelletier (2010) surveyed 42 kindergarten teachers' views about ELLs' parent involvement and found that 55% of the teachers believed that parents of ELLs do not communicate as often and are not as involved as non-ELL parents because of their language barriers. Like Harper & Pelletier, other studies revealed that due to linguistic factors, families of ELLs struggle with communication, find it challenging to build relationships with school personnel, and overall have difficulty with being involved in their child's education and school (Antony-Newman, 2019; He & Thompson, 2022).

ELLs with families that are not proficient in English and show less involvement in their education and school are more likely to experience linguistic and academic difficulties (He &

Thompson, 2022). It is critical to note that ELL families are most likely learning English as their second language as well, which makes it difficult for them to help their child with assignments and determine whether their child is understanding and successfully learning English (Harper & Pelletier, 2010; Kalaycı & Ergül, 2020; Kalaycı & Öz, 2018).

Research has revealed ELL families limited English proficiency prevents them from participating in social events such as family night or cultural heritage night, interacting with their child's teacher, participating in conferences, and building parent-teacher partnerships (Curtis et al., 2021; Moorhouse & Beaumont, 2020; Tinajero et al., 2023). Tinajero et al. (2023) interviewed 31 bilingual teachers that teach ELLs and 30 ELL parent volunteers to gain insight into the challenges parents of the students they teach face that can interfere with their involvement. Tinajero et al. found a majority of the ELL families' answers revealed that they have difficulty communicating in English with the teacher or school staff, are not able to build strong family-school partnerships, cannot engage or be involved in the process of their child's learning English in school, and are less likely to be involved in school-related functions or activities. This finding is in line with other research (Housel, 2020; Kalaycı & Öz, 2018; Vera et al., 2017) in that limited English proficiency prevents ELL families from attending school workshops, parent-teacher conferences, or volunteering.

As a result, ELLs' parents of ELLs became frustrated because they find it difficult to be involved in their child's learning and school. Kalaycı & Öz (2018), investigated 123 parents of ELLs that were in grades first through fourth that attended a private elementary school. The analyses of a questionnaire and an in-person interview with 10 parents revealed the participants believed that parental involvement is important and beneficial in their child's education; however, they are frustrated because they cannot contribute or participate in their child's English

learning or school. With low levels of English proficiency, they also become frustrated when they are unable to understand and respond to important documents, letters, or notes that are sent home with their child.

Teachers feel challenged when involving families of ELLs that do not speak English in their child's learning and school and often view ELL parents as uninvolved. In their study of seven teachers' perceptions of ELL families' involvement in their child's education, Wassell et al. (2017) found that the teachers believed that the language barrier among ELL families is the biggest challenge in teaching ELL students. One teacher stated, "I think ELL families are limited on how much they can be involved and help their child with academic work at home because of language barriers" (Wassell et al., 2017, p. 1237). Another teacher stated that it is challenging to involve ELL families with limited English proficiency and wished they had translators or interpreters to communicate with families of ELLs with low English fluency: "I need someone to translate during conferences with families or help with phone calls to students' homes" (Wassell et al., 2017, p. 1238).

A case study by Lee et al. (2007) interviewed an English as a second language teacher's perspective on ELLs and their families and revealed that the participant felt that communicating with ELL families is challenging. The participant stated that the ELL families she worked with "did not speak English... I always had to rely on translators. They didn't know the language, so we would have problems getting parents; to curriculum night and to parent-teacher conferences" (Lee et al., 2007, p. 44). ELL families' lack of English proficiency makes them avoid family-teacher events, prevents communication with teachers, and makes it difficult for ELL families to send back important notes to school in regard to their child's academics (Lee et al., 2007).

In addition, administrators believe that involving ELL families can be difficult because they experience many barriers. A study by Parsons & Shim (2019) surveyed 71 K-12 administrators in order to gain insight into how they engage and involve families of ELLs in school and findings revealed that the majority of them believe the language barrier interferes with ELL parental involvement. Administrators find that families of ELLs that do not speak English have low levels of engagement and are not often seen during school functions. Administrators believe there is a smaller chance that families of ELLs will be involved in schools or their child's learning because their low levels of English proficiency prevent effective communication, engagement, and participation.

Thus, schools must provide translators or interpreters to facilitate such crucial communication. In fact, one parent in Ramirez's (2003) study of 43 Latino parents of ELLs stated, "If teachers were unable to speak Spanish, an interpreter should be available" (p. 99). Another parent stated that "It does make it easier if the school people speak Spanish, but I would like it if an interpreter was present as well" (p. 99). However, little to no translators or interpreters in their child's schools adds to the language barrier that contributes to a lack of parental involvement (Kalaycı & Ergül, 2020; Ramirez, 2003; Vera et al., 2017).

These parents avoided attending open houses, parent-teacher meetings, and school functions until there were interpreters available because they were unable to communicate with teachers without an interpreter or translator present. With little to no translators or bilingual staff to assist families of ELLs, these families feel as though they are not receiving enough information in regard to their child's learning (Kalaycı & Ergül, 2020). Translators are able to translate important documents, newsletters, and emails to families in their native language. When there are no translators or bilingual staff available in schools, it limits parental involvement and

participation in school-related activities or events (Kalaycı & Ergül, 2020; Tarasawa & Waggoner, 2015).

Immigration Status

ELL families' immigration status is a barrier that prevents families from participating in school activities and events and makes involvement difficult. According to Newcomer et al., (2021), Parsons & Shim, (2019), and Vera et al., (2012), families of ELLs fear that if schools or the government discover their immigration status, they will be deported because they do not have documentation of legal citizenship. The administrators in Parsons and Shim's (2019) study believed that families of ELLs fear that their immigration status will cause them to be reported and that legal actions would be used against them. One administrator in Parsons and Shim's (2019) study stated:

A big barrier is the expectation for parents to fill forms out for registration online.

Although it is in Spanish, there is a belief that the system is connected to something outside the district - a government entity. This belief of a connection to a government entity underlies a barrier that I had not considered before, a family's immigration status.

We are affiliated with the government as educators. This affiliation is realized when many of our families are not citizens and fear issues of being reported and tend to

distance themselves, even after we have tried to explain why they do not need to. (p. 33)

Overall, families of ELLs documentation status limits involvement in schools and experiences in their child's learning. A study by Soutullo et al. (2016) interviewed 18 elementary teachers and found that the families of the ELLs they teach have one or both parents who do not have documentation of immigration status and fear that schools will ask for a background check so they avoid volunteering in schools. The participants in the interview believe that many families

of ELLs avoid completing online forms for fear that they risk exposure which will result in deportation. Participants also believe that even if families of ELLs want to be involved in their child's school, their immigration status prevents them from doing so. One participant stated"

First of all, we tell them to go register online. Right there, you are going to lose 10 people [in a class of about 18]. And so a lot of them are worried about their status, their immigration status, so anytime you ask them to register, background check, there's like—you're going to lose 50% of your interested people right there, and that's discouraging. (Soutullo et al., 2016, p. 233)

Thus, many families of ELLs fear that their lack of legal documentation will result in deportation or exposure to the government, therefore, they avoid being involved in their child's education and school for the safety of their family.

Socioeconomic Status

Research has demonstrated that many families of ELLs work low-paying occupations and are more likely to work longer hours, work night shifts, or have multiple jobs in order to provide for their families (Antony-Newman, 2019; Curtis et al., 2021; Premo et al., 2023). These overly worked families of ELLs may have jobs that will not allow them to have additional availability to participate, be involved in their child's education and school functions, develop strong partnerships with school staff, and/or attend parent-teacher workshops (Giannikas & Nikitaki, 2022; Kalaycı & Ergül, 2020). Kalaycı & Öz, (2018) interviewed 123 parents of ELLs and the findings revealed that these parents do not have a sufficient amount of time to be involved in their child's school.

Families of ELLs often have occupations that interfere with their involvement in their child's education and school. One parent from the study stated that "Working the night shift

makes it impossible to participate in school events and functions, especially when these events take place at night" (Kalaycı & Öz, 2018, p. 842) and another parent stated that "Because of my job, I confess that I could not spare enough time to my daughter in terms of her education" (Kalaycı & Öz, 2018, p. 843).

Families of ELLs' work responsibilities play a critical role in their lack of parental involvement in their child's learning and school. Parents of ELLs with low socioeconomic status are not as engaged in their child's education compared to parents with higher socioeconomic status. Since ELL families are likely to work multiple jobs or long hours this can interfere with students success because families are not home when their child is. This makes it impossible for families of English language learners to help their child with homework, read and practice literacy at home, or monitor their English learning progress because families of ELLs are unable to devote much of their time to their child's English learning (Harper & Pelletier, 2010; Moorhouse & Beaumont, 2020; Vera et al. 2017).

ELL Parents' Lack Formal Education Levels

Parents with more education are more likely to be involved in their child's education. A study by Antony-Newman (2019) explored 40-50 immigrants parents from 11 different countries to understand the challenges that prevent them from being involved in their child's education. The analysis of interviews revealed that a challenge many families of ELLs face is a lack of formal education. Parents from the study lacked a formal education which made it difficult for them to be involved in their child's school experiences and academic life. Their lack of knowledge base or skills prevented them from supporting their child at home and school.

It is more likely that parents of ELLs have lower formal educational levels compared to non-ELL parents. According to He and Thompson, (2022) and Vera et al. (2017), many parents

of ELLs lack formal education levels because of their interrupted education. They have experienced an interrupted education from wars that occurred in their countries, migration, spending months traveling to a new country, occupations, or living in poverty. All of these interruptions made it difficult for ELL parents to consistently attend school and receive a proper education (Newcomer et al., 2021; Premo et al., 2023).

A vast majority of families of ELLs deal with the obstacle of unfamiliarity with the education system, which prevents parents from participating or helping their child navigate through the school system. ELL parents are unfamiliar with the rules, policies, grades, report cards, class schedules, or with their child receiving guidance counseling. The school policies are different in their country and because of new and different policies in their child's school, along with facing the language barrier, it often leads to families of ELLs to confusion and less involvement in their child's school (Antony-Newman, 2019).

ELL Parents' Lack of Familiarity with the Education System and Culture

Many families of ELLs are not familiar with the education system. According to Antony-Newman (2019), Moorhouse and Beaumont, (2020), and Premo et al, (2023), it is common for ELL families to be unfamiliar with the United States education system. This lack of knowledge about the education system of schools in the United States can affect the development of strong family-school partnerships. Unfamiliarity with the education system is another barrier that can interfere with families of ELLs (Vera et al., 2017). A study by Premo et al. (2023) surveyed 47 English as a second language teachers to understand families of ELLs' experiences with involvement and engagement in their child's education and how often the teachers communicated and collaborated with families of English language learners.

These findings revealed that teachers did not collaborate very often with families of ELLs and that they believed these families were disconnected from their child's learning because they are unaware of how the school system works. The teachers believed that these families lack knowledge about public school norms and culture. Since families of ELLs are unfamiliar with the education system, they do not have an awareness of their child's school's expectations, policies, rules, and curricula which makes it difficult to be involved because they are doubtful about how to be involved (Antony-Newman, 2019; Premo et al., 2023). This lack of familiarity can stem from cultural differences.

Cultural differences play a major role in families of ELLs communication and involvement. Cultural differences can affect the academic performance of English language learners (Cho et al., 2021). Families of ELLs come from many different cultures and countries; therefore, they have different cultural beliefs when it comes to their child's education. The families in Ramirez's (2003) study felt as though the traditions in schools are much different from theirs and that they are unaware of the traditions of school life. They would also feel uncomfortable and out of place if they were to attend a school function or go to their child's school because their traditions with involvement are much different.

A study by Curtis et al. (2021) surveyed 210 ELL parents about their involvement in their child's school. The findings revealed that the parents are part of cultures, for example, the Chinese American culture, that believes that interfering with a teacher's teaching is considered disrespectful, so they avoid being involved. Parents in the study believe that teachers are responsible for their child's learning so they are to play a less active role in their child's learning experiences at school. One participant from the study revealed that in their culture, school is a place for learning, and it is not necessary for parents to be involved in school because teachers

are in charge of their child's education. There are cultures where parents highly respect teachers and find it disrespectful to question a teacher or interfere with the way their child is learning or assessed (Vera et al., 2017). Many different cultures have different beliefs about education, which often limits involvement in their child's school (Harper & Pelletier, 2010).

Strategies to Increase Parental Involvement

Without a doubt, there are many barriers that prevent families of English language learners from becoming involved in their child's education and school. It is important for teachers and administrators in all schools to become aware and understand the life experiences and challenges that families of English language learners face on a daily basis. Once educators and administrators understand the lives of ELL families and the reasons why these families might not be as involved in their child's education, they can start to gather ways that can help increase their involvement and engagement in their child's learning and in school.

Teachers must not assume that families of English language learners are not involved because they do not value education or are not willing to be involved (Vera et al., 2017), but because of the many barriers they face that interfere with their involvement including linguistic barriers, immigration status, socioeconomic status, unfamiliarity with the education system, lack of formal education, and cultural beliefs that were previously mentioned in this chapter.

Many families of ELLs in the studies (Kalaycı & Ergül, 2020; Wassell et al., 2017) indicated that the language barrier interferes greatly, and it is difficult for them to communicate or understand information about their child's school and learning because the schools in which their child attends have very little to no bilingual staff or translators. When there are no bilingual staff or translators available to help families of English language learners, it is likely that parent communication and involvement will decrease (Vera et al., 2017).

In order to increase parental involvement of ELL families, schools must provide more bilingual staff and/or translators. Translators must be present during parent-teacher conferences, CSE meetings, workshops, and school functions so that teachers and families of English language learners will feel more comfortable and be able to communicate more efficiently. Translators should translate all written and oral information so that parents and teachers are able to understand one another (Premo et al., 2023).

Schools can also allow volunteers that speak Spanish or other native languages to come to school and help parents of English language learners that are not yet proficient in English to communicate and understand important information from the school (Quioco & Daoud, 2006; Ramirez, 2003; Vera et al., 2017). Translating services are essential for every school to offer for families of English language learners. Schools must advertise that translating services are available during and after school hours so that all families of ELLs are aware that they exist. Families of English language learners who might have trouble or do not feel comfortable communicating in English will benefit tremendously from translators or bilingual staff as they will assist them with communication which will increase involvement.

Educators can increase parental involvement in families of English language learners by sending home weekly newsletters, personal notes, documents, and e-mails in English as well as translated into Spanish or in the families' native language (Kalaycı & Öz, 2018; Parsons & Shim, 2019; Premo et al., 2023). Teachers need to keep consistent contact with families of English language learners. Consistently sending translated information to ELL parents keeps them informed about what their child is learning in school, how they are doing in school, and events and activities that are occurring in school (Kalaycı & Ergül, 2020). In the weekly bilingual newsletters, teachers can include events or volunteer opportunities for families of English

language learners to participate in. With translations, ELL families will understand the invites for each event sponsored by the school or district (Parsons & Shim, 2019). Teachers can promote school-based involvement by inviting families of ELLs to partake in family social events, parent-teacher conferences, and/or bilingual events such as heritage and culture nights (Parsons & Shim, 2019; Premo et al., 2023).

Families of ELLs might find it difficult to attend school events or participate in volunteer opportunities such as field trips, volunteering to read a book in their child's class, or being a guest lecturer because they work multiple jobs. Families of ELLs might also work hours that do not align with when events in the school are taking place (Parsons & Shim, 2019; Premo et al., 2023). Therefore, one way that teachers can increase involvement from ELL families that are unable to attend school events or volunteer opportunities is by calling ELL families at home to schedule a time that would work best for them to meet (Kalaycı & Öz, 2018). Once the teacher and parent choose a time that works best, teachers can meet with families of English language learners by conducting home visits (Kalaycı & Ergül, 2020; Parsons & Shim, 2019). Teachers can bring an interpreter during the home visits so that they can assist with effective parent-teacher communication, help teachers understand English language learners' families and their involvement in school, allow teachers to explain to families the importance of parental involvement and how it benefits their child's learning, and encourage ELL families to participate in school (Vera et al., 2017).

Teachers need proper training on parental involvement (Kalaycı & Ergül, 2020). Training will help teachers grasp strategies and techniques that they can utilize in order to increase parental involvement and engagement in families of English language learners. Training must also provide information that will help all teachers understand the experiences and challenges

families of ELLs face and information on ways to meet the needs of English language learner families and their children. Teachers must learn about culturally responsive practices and learn to apply them in the classroom so that English language learners and their families feel welcomed and appreciated in the school environment.

Having families of English language learners feel welcomed is another way for teachers to increase parental involvement because it will allow families to feel comfortable and more willing to be involved in their child's school (Parsons & Shim, 2019). These strategies to increase parental involvement in ELL families will be part of the PD described in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Description of the Product and Tools

Research from Chapter 2 reveals that barriers including home language, immigration status, socioeconomic status, families of ELLs lack of formal education, families of ELLs unfamiliarity with how the educational system works, and cultural beliefs prevent families of ELLs from being involved and engaged in their child's learning and school (e.g., Antony-Newman, 2019; Kalaycı & Ergül, 2020; Parsons & Shim, 2019; Premo et al., 2023; Ramirez, 2003; Tinajero et al., 2023). Schools must become aware of these barriers in order to understand why most families of ELLs are not involved. With an awareness and understanding of these barriers, schools can search for ways to increase involvement from families of ELLs.

Thus, I will discuss a professional development intended for all Kindergarten through fifth-grade mainstream and English as a second language teachers. The purpose of the PD is for all teachers to learn about English language learners and their families, to develop an awareness of ELLs families' lack of parental involvement, and to learn about strategies and approaches that can help increase parental involvement, particularly in ELL families.

Agenda of Events

The professional development will take place at Taft Elementary School which is part of the Washingtonville Central School District. The Washingtonville Central School District has a total of five schools, three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school with a total of 315 teachers. Taft Elementary School has approximately 48 teachers, five of which are English as a second language teachers. The district provides teachers with PD on superintendent conference days; therefore, this PD will be introduced on the first superintendent conference day of the school year, on September 5th, the day before school starts. It will take place in the school's cafeteria because this room is large enough for all the teachers in the school to fit

comfortably. The PD will be given in one session and will be approximately 60 minutes long. One-day professional development workshops results in new teacher knowledge (Cavazos et al., 2018). The teachers are expected to participate and work together with their colleagues during activities.

The content they will be learning focuses on increasing parental involvement.

Throughout the PD, the teachers will be given a KWL chart, a marker, a poster board, a case study, and an exit ticket. The objectives for the lesson include (1) Defining and identifying who ELLs are, (2) Explaining the barriers that prevent parental involvement from ELL families, and (3) Demonstrating strategies that increase parental involvement. The reason for this PD is so that teachers will gain insight into barriers that ELL families face and learn about strategies that they can use to increase parental involvement within these families.

Activities

During the one-session PD, teachers will be working independently as well as collectively with their colleagues. The PD will start by introducing the topic of the presentation. The PD will be presented using Google Slides (see Appendix A). The first activity teachers will participate in is a KWL chart. Teachers will individually fill out the first two columns of the KWL chart and write what they know and want to know about ELLs, ELL families, and barriers that ELL families face (see Appendix B). After the teachers complete the K and W portion of the chart, they will be asked to share what they wrote out loud with the group. Next, teachers will sit through a Google Slides presentation (see Appendix A) where they will listen to a discussion about ELLs, watch a short Youtube clip (Colorin Colorado, 2012) that discusses the language barrier, and listen to a discussion that introduces multiple barriers that families of ELLs face which prevent involvement in their child's learning and school. A video about the language

barrier was chosen to give teachers insight into the highest reported barrier that ELL families face (Harper & Pelletier, 2010). Next, teachers will complete the last column of the KWL chart and turn and talk to a partner to discuss what they learned. Teachers can then volunteer and share what they learned out loud with the group.

Vygotsky (1978) and Bronfenbrenner (1979) believe that social interactions, such as parental involvement is important for a child's learning. The theories claim that collaboration between teachers, children, and parents promotes positive and successful academic outcomes (Sengonul, 2020), therefore, because of the benefits of parental involvement, teachers will work in a group of four to share ideas with each other about strategies they think would increase parental involvement in ELL families. They will each have markers and a poster board and write down their ideas. Once the groups are done, they will share their thoughts with the other groups.

The Google Slides presentation will continue, and the teachers will listen and learn about strategies and tools that they can use in order to increase parental involvement in families of ELLs. Next, teachers will complete one last activity. They will return to their group of four and read through a case study about an ELL family. Within their group, they will discuss and determine what barrier the family is facing and come up with a strategy on how to increase the family's involvement (see Appendix C). Once the groups discuss, they will share their case study, their thoughts, and the strategies they propose with the whole group. At the end of the presentation, teachers will receive a handout with the strategies they learned during the PD for increasing parental involvement (see Appendix D).

I created this PD because parental involvement is essential for student learning. Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes the importance of parental involvement which promotes a child's academic and linguistic success. Therefore, I hope that teachers use their takeaways from the presentation

to encourage families of ELLs to become involved or use the strategies to help families volunteer in schools, participate in school functions or activities, and attend parent-teacher conferences (Premo et al, 2023).

Summary

The activities in the PD include teachers completing the KWL chart, working in small groups to write down ideas on a poster board about strategies that can help increase parental involvement, and completing a case study. These activities will help teachers understand why families of ELLs have difficulty with involvement in their child's education and identify ways to help solve this issue. I felt as though these activities were necessary in order for teachers to gain an awareness of barriers that families of ELLs face and utilize the strategies they have learned. The closing activity will include teachers handing in an exit ticket in which they will write one thing they learned from the PD.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to identify the barriers that prevent ELL families from being involved in their child's education and school and how those barriers affect students' success in school. There is a positive relationship between a child's academic success and their family's involvement (Harper & Pelletier, 2010). When parents are involved, it positively influences students' motivation, cognitive and emotional development, and behavior (Antony-Newman, 2019; Curtis et al., 2021). A lack of parental involvement can interfere with a child's academic, social, and emotional achievements.

Thus, research was conducted in order to identify the factors that prevent parental involvement. The questions that lead to this research include (1) What barriers prevent ELL families' involvement? and (2) How can schools increase parental involvement? To increase parental involvement in ELL families, I created a PD session plan in Chapter 3. In this Chapter, I first summarize the major findings of the project. Next, I discuss some implications for learning and teaching, followed by providing recommendations.

Summary

The literature has identified that home language is a major barrier that inhibits ELL families from actively participating in their child's education and engagement with the school (Harper & Pelletier, 2010; Tinajero et al., 2023; Ramirez, 2003). For example, if ELL families are unable to communicate in English, they may face difficulties in establishing connections and forming relationships with their child's teachers. Also, fearing immigration status hinders the involvement of ELL families in their child's school (Newcomer et al., 2021; Vera et al., 2012). The concern that their immigration status may be disclosed, potentially leading to deportation

due to lack of citizenship documentation, often causes the families to distance themselves from school events and activities (Parsons & Shim, 2019; Soutullo et al., 2016).

In addition, many ELL families struggle to make ends meet and support their households, compelling work long hours, night shifts, or multiple jobs. Therefore, participation in school activities can be impeded by their work schedule (Antony-Newman, 2019; Curtis et al., 2021; Premo et al., 2023). Their participation in school activities can be also impeded by limited formal education. Research has demonstrated that families' knowledge and education can restrict their ability to provide support and involvement in their child's academic growth and school experiences (Antony-Newman, 2019). Many of these families are also unfamiliar with the educational system, policies, rules, and curricula, which turns families away from being involved (Moorhouse & Beaumont, 2020; Premo et al., 2023).

In essence, these barriers negatively affect ELLs success in school. Therefore, a professional development seminar was created in order to bring light to the barriers that ELL families face. This professional development seminar aims to teach about who ELLs are, the challenges facing them and their families, and strategies that can increase families of ELLs involvement in their child's school and education.

Implications for Learning and Teaching

Participating in a professional development (PD) program that imparts knowledge about ELLs benefits both the students and their teachers. Teachers gain a deeper understanding of their ELLs, enabling them to adjust their instruction to meet their learning needs. PD sessions also equip teachers with strategies to increase parental involvement in their student's families, which can enhance students' academic and linguistic success. It is important for teachers to become aware of barriers and learn about ELLs to have a better understanding of their students and their

families. In essence, parental involvement is an important part. Teachers implementing the strategies from the PD are more likely to promote success among ELLs in school.

Recommendations

Various barriers including home language, immigration status, socioeconomic status, lack of formal education, unfamiliarity with how the educational system works, and cultural beliefs, are prevalent in many schools and districts. Future research should focus on helping schools in identifying these barriers and any potential obstacles that may hinder the engagement of families of ELLs attending the school. Research can also play a role in developing approaches to assist schools and these families, as well as strategizing ways to increase their involvement in their child's education and the school community. In addition, ongoing professional development is essential for teachers and schools to stay updated to increase parental involvement. PD sessions can provide educators with the latest research, and best practices to engage and collaborate with families of ELLs. Ongoing PD ensures that teachers remain well-equipped to address the varying needs of ELL families and foster meaningful partnerships between schools and parents.

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Appendix A

Google Slides Presentation

<https://voicethread.com/share/23289055/>

Appendix B

KWL Chart

Name _____ **K.W.L Chart** Date _____

Topic _____

What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Have Learned

Appendix C

Case Studies

Case Study #1

Roberto is a third-grade newcomer and moved from Mexico to the United States with his family a month ago. He struggles to understand content and does not participate in class. When he does participate in class he usually speaks in his native language (Spanish). The teacher wants to learn more about Roberto and his background in hopes to help him in school. The teacher has tried several times to contact his family for information but the family never responds.

What barrier might Roberto’s family be facing? _____

What strategies can you use to increase Roberto’s family involvement?

Case Study #2

Maria is an entering ELL in 9th grade and has experienced an interrupted education because her family has moved several times during the school year. She struggles socially and academically and is having a hard time adjusting to school. She does not engage or participate much during class. The teacher wants to reach out to Maria's parents to learn more about her and how to engage her in class but hasn't been able to connect with them. The teacher has attempted to reach out to her parents/caregivers via email and telephone with no success. The teacher has spoken to Maria about her home life and she has mentioned that her parents are not usually not home till late at night.

What barrier might Maria's family be facing? _____

What strategies can you use to increase Maria's family involvement?

Case Study #3

Juan is an emerging ELL in 5th grade. He is struggling with reading comprehension, therefore, his teacher wants to reach out to his parents to discuss how he is doing in school. Whenever the teacher sends emails and letters or makes phone calls, his parents never respond. The teacher also notices that when important documents are sent online for parents to fill out in regard to their child's education or volunteer opportunities, Juan's parents never fill them out.

What barrier might Juan's family be facing? _____

What strategies can you use to increase Juan's family involvement?

Appendix D

Exit Ticket

Name: _____ Title: _____

Exit Ticket

What did you learn today?

140704130208

140704130208

Appendix E

Handout

20 Ideas for Increasing Parental Involvement

<p><u>Open House</u> Welcome your parents at the beginning of the year in style. Have well planned activities for parent/child that help you learn about the family.</p>	<p><u>Online Connection</u> Create a blog to share information with your parents. If email works well to communicate, collect addresses to share a weekly newsletter of events and class fun.</p>	<p><u>Share</u> Let your parents and students know about you, your family, your pets, your hobbies, and your goals for the year.</p>	<p><u>Photos</u> Collect and share photos of the kids in action. Keeping a class photo album helps parents feel involved in the daily happenings of your room.</p>
<p><u>Sign-Ups</u> Have sign up sheets with your needs available for your parents to see at school events. Sign up Central is a great way to involve your parents and remind them.</p>	<p><u>Keep it Fun</u> Arrange social events for your class where families can get to know each other. It can be a simple meet at the park or a Sideline Party for sharing a Reader's Theatre students have practiced.</p>	<p><u>Phone a Family</u> Try to phone your families to share positive news periodically throughout the year. Parents love hearing positives.</p>	<p><u>Parent Involvement Projects</u> Plan family projects that are simple and fun, but that are inclusive. Keep in mind work schedules so that they aren't overwhelming to the family.</p>
<p><u>Buddy System</u> Pair up your students for times when they have questions at home and need a quick answer. They may also be carpooling partners for times a student may need a ride to school for fieldtrips.</p>	<p><u>Notify</u> Be sure to give plenty of notice for special events. Schedules can be hectic, but with advanced planning most can arrange to be there.</p>	<p><u>Be Inclusive</u> Each family has unique needs and may not have had the same prior experience with school. Make them feel valued no matter how they may or may not be involved. They may decide to become involved with encouragement.</p>	<p><u>Thank You Notes</u> Be sure to thank parents when they attend events and/or volunteer for you. A personal message means a lot.</p>
<p><u>Team Building</u> Send out a survey to each family to see what interests and skills your parents have to offer. Have the list available for times you need to call on help.</p>	<p><u>Get Techy</u> Today, many parents use Facebook, Twitter, and other social media. If able, create a shared group where you can post messages and reminders. There are apps available to send messages en masse to groups, one that will help parents keep informed.</p>	<p><u>Spread the Love</u> Instead of one room mother, let parents sign up to lead different events. That way, one parent isn't overloaded.</p>	<p><u>Special Events</u> Plan special events to help parents help at home. Consider offering childcare, food, and transportation to make it easy on the family to come.</p>
<p><u>Parent Perceptions</u> Invite the parents to be involved and ask them what would make it easier for them to do so.</p>	<p><u>Student of the Week</u> Assign each student a week to be special. During that week, highlight her/him on a bulletin board and have the parent come for lunch.</p>	<p><u>Story Reader and Art Helper</u> Set aside a 20 minute block of time for parents to come and read to your students. If time is short, alternate between readers and art help.</p>	<p><u>Inform</u> Share research with parents about the importance of being involved. By doing this, you are sending the message that you want them to be part of your team and value them.</p>