

Promoting Parent Involvement with ELLs

by

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Abstract

This thesis aims to explore how educators can create a welcoming environment that promotes parent engagement. The research shows that parent involvement affects teachers, parents, and students. It highlights the challenges ELL parents face such as lack of resources, lack of communication, and language barriers. Teachers can help parents by creating a welcoming and inclusive environment that fosters collaboration and support. Teachers can invite parents into classrooms, communicate through various translation apps, and differentiate lessons to meet the needs of students. This capstone includes a professional development (PD) to inform parents and teachers on the benefits and barriers of parent involvement and the strategies to create a welcoming and inclusive environment. Additionally, the PD highlights the importance of communication to support students' learning and provides strategies and resources for communication between parents and teachers. The outcomes of the PD are for parents and teachers to work together to support students and to find ways to communicate. The implications of this thesis suggest that ELLs work better when parents and teachers are on the same page. It also discusses academic success and engagement when parents are involved. Further research is needed on how parent involvement affects ELLs socially.

Keywords: ELLs, parent involvement, inclusive environment, welcoming environment, sense of belonging

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Chapter 1

Problem Statement

Consider a classroom where parental involvement is high for every student except one, particularly an English language learner (ELL) student. The difference in engagement can significantly impact the ELL student's academic performance and sense of belonging. This engagement can be defined in various ways. Parent engagement can look like parents helping children with homework, communicating with their child's teacher, or coming into their child's school to help with class parties or school activities. The key terms in this capstone project include ELL for English Language Learners, parental engagement, parental involvement, family engagement, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, inclusive environment, effective communication, strategies for fostering parent-teacher collaboration, supportive educational environment, and sense of belonging.

Significance of the Problem

This capstone project seeks to address the overarching research question: How can educators create a welcoming environment that promotes parent engagement? Low parental involvement among ELL families can lead to several negative effects. ELL students may struggle with language barriers, cultural differences, and a lack of academic support at home, all of which can hinder their academic achievement and social interaction. Without proper parental engagement, these students might feel isolated and disengaged, making it harder for them to learn. Moreover, teachers and administrators often lack the resources and training to effectively connect parents. The research question is significant for ELLs and their families, who often face many challenges that can limit their involvement in their children's education. Aguas (2013) notes, "Many barriers stand in the way of parental engagement. One very dangerous barrier is a deficit view of ELL students and their parents. Deficit perspectives may lead educators to believe that

linguistically and culturally diverse students and their families lack the know-how to succeed in school and don't value education" (p.2). This mindset can further alienate ELL families, making it even more challenging to foster an inclusive and supportive environment. This issue is not confined to individual classrooms but is a significant concern at both state and national levels.

Purpose

To address this problem, this capstone project will focus on developing and implementing a professional development (PD) program for educators and parents. The purpose of this PD is to provide teachers, administrators, and parents with the skills, knowledge, and resources needed to foster an inclusive and welcoming environment that encourages parental engagement. This will be done over two days in two sessions. The first session focuses on parent and teacher interaction through various activities that promote engagement and collaboration. In order to promote parent involvement, it's essential for parents and teachers to understand how to work together. The purpose of this first day session is to get to know each other. The purpose of session two is to show teachers and parents how to communicate and the various resources to use.

Conclusion

The following chapter will provide an in-depth exploration of the existing research and literature related to parental involvement among ELL families. This literature review offers valuable insights that inform the next chapters. Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology employed in creating the PD program, followed by Chapter 4, which will outline its implementation and evaluation.

Chapter 2

Overview of Parental Involvement in Education

Parent involvement can be viewed in different ways by both parents and teachers. The way parents view involvement in schools is important to the understanding of how parents will treat the child's education. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) say, "Parents who believe that their role is only to get children to school, which then takes over responsibility for their education, will not be willing to be actively involved in either school-based or home-based PI" (p. 39).

Understanding how parents perceive their role in school involvement is crucial for fostering effective partnerships between parents and teachers. When parents have a better understanding of what involvement entails, then parents are more likely to engage meaningfully in school activities. It's also essential for teachers to understand parent's perspectives on involvement and how to address these issues.

Benefits

Family involvement in schools create many benefits for children. Rubin et al. (2017) discusses the positive outcomes when parents are involved in their child's education. Higher grades and test scores are just one of the benefits that were discussed by the authors. The article reports that there's a positive correlation between school attendance and school readiness. Behaviors are also better when parents are involved as well as students being able to face challenges, as the authors have found. School involvement was also mentioned by the authors and how it enables families to interact with other families within the community, fostering supportive connections and relationships. Rubin et al. then spoke about families of ELLs taking opportunities from schools to learn the language which will improve their confidence and their ability to interact with schools. The authors say how teachers also benefit from parent

involvement. Research states that teachers can learn through the parents on how to better support the child. When parents are involved there are many positive outcomes for students.

More benefits happen for children and their academics when parents are involved. Kigobe et al. (2021) studied parent involvement for a year on reading development where teachers and parents were trained to communicate better and get more involved in homework and reading. The authors suggest that parent teacher collaboration can help children develop reading skills and discuss goals. A desire to collaborate with particular goals for children's reading development should be shared by both parents and instructors as the authors claim. The authors also say instructors should recognize parents as important partners in their children's reading development. Regular communication, meetings, student diaries, and home visits can all help accomplish this as the study reported. The study included easy activities for parents from different backgrounds.

Kigobe et al. also argues that any effort to support early literacy development should recognize parents as vital contributors to their children's reading progress. The authors suggest parents being involved in their children's reading development early on so that parents can monitor their progress. Additionally, the authors acknowledge that teacher-parent collaboration in the early years of children's reading development can start a connection between school and home, allowing teachers and parents to communicate important information about their children's reading progress. This makes it easier to identify and address any challenges the child has, as noted from the authors. The authors also add that this not only promotes smooth reading development, but also offers many benefits in preventing reading difficulties. When parents are actively engaged in academics, it strengthens the connection between home and school. This collaboration is essential to build early on and creates a positive academic experience.

Additionally, parent involvement also affects student performance. Sheldon (2003) looked at how well programs that connect schools, families, and communities affect how students perform on state tests using data from 82 elementary schools in the city. The study found that when schools actively addressed challenges to involving families and communities, more students achieved satisfactory scores on state tests. These findings show that involving families and communities in children's education can help students do better in school, especially in cities, if schools address the barriers to involvement effectively. The results provide support to the idea that school programs that engage families and communities are essential for students' academic achievement. After taking into consideration factors like poverty, student mobility, and school population size, the results indicate that each year, the efforts schools make to overcome barriers to inclusive parental involvement correlate with students' performance on state exams.

Sheldon also expressed some challenges with involvement such as boosting participation, communicating school updates to families with limited English proficiency, and helping parents who can't come to school support their children at home. Research indicates that schools neglecting these challenges are less likely to implement effective family and community engagement programs, which impact students' performance on assessments. It's important to analyze the positive and negative factors in parent involvement for ELLs.

Barriers

Although there are benefits to parent involvement, Hornby and Lafaele (2011) discuss various barriers that hinder parents from being involved in their child's education. Lack of confidence is just one way that parents will not get involved as stated by the authors. The authors also indicate that the lack of confidence can stem from parents not knowing the language or from having a negative experience in school. Family dynamic and work situations are also discussed

in the article as a challenge as well as age, since parent involvement declines as children get older. These barriers can affect how parents can get involved. It's important for teachers to understand these barriers and offer ways to help overcome them.

Furthermore, Worthington et al. (2011) conduct a study analyzing the challenges, resources, and strategies for serving ELL in a Head Start program. The authors conducted this study by interviewing 9 teachers which consisted of both main teachers and teacher's assistants. The results from this study indicated various challenges such as lack of support in translating and teachers not being able to identify if children have reached an understanding even when translators are present. Another issue that was discussed by authors was that many teachers do not know the language of the child which makes it harder to form relationships and connections with both the children and the parents. Additionally, teachers of the interview explained that children in their classrooms that were bilingual would help translate for the teacher when they were having trouble. While this is a helpful strategy, it does also place a power balance between children as the authors declared. These challenges make it harder for ELLs and their families to be involved.

Moreover, Kelty and Wakabayashi (2020) investigate parent, educator, and community members viewpoint on family engagement from preschool to grade 12. The authors found that strong relationships, inclusive opportunities, effective communication, parent education, and family activities are crucial for enhancing engagement in high-need communities. The authors discussed various themes that kept coming through participants answers to questions. It was reported by the authors that, when asked about what hinders effective family engagement, 50% responded with fear of judgment, and 21% responded with lack of communication. Families also expressed their concern for deportation and the need for more staff to understand the different

cultures of families in order to improve communication and relationships as the research described. Other issues were expressed by participants in the study such as feeling unwelcomed in schools, involvement decreasing as children get older, and important school documents not being translated to family's home language. Parents cannot get involved if they do not understand what schools are sending home. This is just one of the many barriers that ELL parents face. If schools provided families with proper translation, then parents would be more involved in their child's education.

Communication

Communication is another aspect that goes into parent involvement for ELLs and often comes with challenges. Shiffman (2019) examines how adult English learner parents handle communication with K-12 teachers. The study emphasizes challenges, supports, and the role of interpretation in parent-teacher collaboration. This study consisted of a survey for parents to answer questions about home- school communication, homework support, and speaking with the child's teacher. Results from parents indicated that when an interpreter was present at school meetings for their child, it helped ease their stress by running the meeting for them and helping with communication. While some parents prefer an interpreter, other parents expressed concerns about possible misunderstandings and the inability to correctly convey the intended meaning, as stated by the author. The survey also explained the problem with miscommunication especially for parents who struggle with grammar or pronunciation. The last issue that the author reported were parents not having enough time during parent teacher conferences. Due to translation services taking longer, teachers should set aside longer conference times for ELL parents. This will give parents time to understand what is being said and discuss any concerns that need to be addressed.

While face-to face communication can serve problems, Shiffman also discusses written communication. The author explains that children often receive letters home in English or in the parent's native language, but parents have difficulty reading in the home language. When this occurs, the author says parents need to wait to have face to face communication with the teacher, making it more difficult to have as the children reach middle and high school. This makes it harder for ELL parents to get involved when they do not understand the information that is being given to them. It's essential to have various ways to communicate with parents in a way that they are able to understand.

After written communication, Shiffman discusses electronic communication. Shiffman reported that many of the parents had smartphones but did not have computers or internet. Due to this issue, the author says parents were not able to access the proper resources that the school provides such as the parent portal or the school website. Although these are easy aspect to communicate, ELL parents do not have the proper tools to utilize these resources. This makes it more challenging for parents to communicate with teachers, resulting in less parental involvement.

Another part of technology and communication are apps. Apps can be used to assist or hinder children and parents in learning English. Chik (2014) examines 90 apps on the iPad and distinguishes if the apps are meant for ELLs or not. The findings indicate that the apps portray themselves as a game, where children are rewarded for right answers, and makes it seem that young children can learn by themselves regardless of skill level. The author also discusses how parents use these apps to keep the children busy instead of interacting with the child. Chik places emphasis on the need for change in technology and how it shapes the world both in and out of

the classroom. With better use of apps ELLs and parents can learn together. This is just another way for parents to get involved in their child's education.

Strategies for Creating a Welcoming and Inclusive Environment

Providing a welcoming environment is essential for both ELLs and parents. One way to do that is through learning the language together. Quan (2017) studied the group called dialogos, which is an English/Spanish group that offers language classes to parents in a school in California. Quan claims that parents appreciate this group because of its commitment to building community through language learning and encouraging bilingualism. Quan then discusses how this group fights negative views on immigrants while also achieving success, emphasizing the connection to parent involvement. The results indicate how this group is inclusive to all families and promotes families to express traditions and experiences to the community. The author also says how the group opposes discussions that diminish bilingualism, specifically within the Latino community, and emphasizes strategies to include Spanish-speaking parents in the school community. Finally, the author highlights the importance of how the parents understand the language and come together to help each other. It's beneficial to provide parents with the proper resources to learn the language. When teachers do this, it creates an inclusive environment where everyone can learn from and succeed.

Technology and translation apps are another way to build an inclusive learning environment. An article discusses different apps to help children and parents with their communication skills. The authors mention the names of the apps which are Speak and Translate, Microsoft translator, and Google translate. According to Lake and Beisly (2019), these apps are used to help teachers communicate with families and build relationships. The first app the authors talk about is Speak and Translate and the authors say this app is easy for young students to use. The authors then explain how Google translate is helpful for students to translate

classwork but does not help with showing the conversations with their classmates. Lake and Beisly then discuss how Microsoft translator helps teachers check students' progress. After this discussion, the authors suggest ways to engage parents. This can be done by using these apps during meetings to help parents understand in their native language, as the authors reported. These apps are a great way for parents to communicate with teachers and feel included in their child's education. Without these apps, parents cannot understand and be involved.

Supporting refugee students is important in creating a welcoming environment. Zaidi et al. (2022) explore how teachers showing compassion can affect refugee families. The authors reported that showing care made it easier for families to deal with the changes of schooling and researchers worked with teachers, parents, and support staff. The authors note the struggles refugee families face with identity, making friends, finding a sense of belonging, and feeling safe in a new environment. This study encouraged conversations between Arabic speaking refugee families and their children's educators and support staff to identify ways to help these families. The authors reported key strategies which included helping families adjust to school and the new culture, keeping school staff available for help, and offering support to further build trust and relationships. Refugee families come to schools experiencing a lot of traumas. It's important for teachers to make sure they are helping these children during these hard times. Creating an environment where students feel safe and respected is just one of the ways teachers can show support.

Another article discusses the importance of creating an inclusive environment for refugee students. Block et al. (2014) discuss how the number of refugees is growing and how schools struggle to support these students who have no prior educational experience. The authors also note the challenges schools face at finding programs that are inclusive, until one was founded in

Australia. The evaluation shows that this program helps schools better support these students. Block et al. suggest several recommendations such as adapting workshops to better fit participants' needs to optimize time and providing free or funded substitute teachers to promote participation. The authors also state the importance of active engagement of school and department leaders in executing the program. The ongoing support from all involved is what makes it successful, as the authors highlighted. Although refugees experience hardship and lack of education, schools must come together to support these families. By creating this environment that is built on trust and support, families will have a stronger sense of belonging and students will receive the necessary resources to help them succeed.

Besides supporting refugee students, there are also ways to support teachers of ELLs in order to make an inclusive learning environment. Elfers and Stritikus (2014) analyze how school and district leaders support teachers working with multilingual students. The article focuses on the intentional supports leaders provide and their role in the educational efforts. The research, based on a case study of four districts with different EL populations, examines leadership actions through interviews, observations, and document reviews. The findings highlight five main themes which include improving instruction quality, combining district and school leadership efforts, clearly communicating goals, tailoring support for different education levels, and using data to enhance teaching. This study also demonstrates how leaders help teachers working with second language learners. The authors found that many educators in the districts worked to create high quality learning environments for ELLs by setting goals and providing resources to help staff meet students' needs. Across all four districts, administrators had strong knowledge about ELL students, with many having proper training and experience which was wrote by Elfers and Stritikus. However, the authors noted that some colleagues lacked experience or

commitment, which sometimes limited their ability to support teachers and students. The findings also indicate that a combined approach to district and school leadership is beneficial. Also in the study, Elfers and Stritikus show how district and school administrators collaborate well with one another to support ELL teachers by giving them guidance and materials. Research then stated that educators at all levels understand the complications and the importance of needing a wide range of staff. Staffing was a major challenge that the authors reported, specifically for schools with dual language programs and schools aiming to support students with staff from diverse backgrounds. When teachers have the proper resources and training, they are able to create an inclusive learning environment for students. When students feel included, this translates to parents feeling welcomed.

Creating a welcoming environment also includes differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all students. A study was conducted by Coady et al. (2016) investigating how mainstream teachers, specifically in early grades implement differentiated instruction for ELLs. The study assessed whether teacher training programs effectively prepare teachers with strategies for language development. Using mixed methods, the study focused on graduates from a program that included second language training. Results show that most used support strategies, but rarely used specific techniques to improve English language development. Coady et al. then discussed suggestions for educators focusing on second language instruction. The authors found that in a mainstream classroom, ELLs needs were not being met and teachers didn't have a plan to modify lessons. Coady et al. expressed how the teachers used the students home language to help assist with vocabulary at times, but this was not an intended plan to support English language learning. The authors report that during whole group instruction, teachers used visual learning tools, but did not adjust them to accommodate ELLs and their various language abilities.

The authors then claim that there was a lack of supervision during small group instruction, which resulted in ELLs not getting the proper English instruction that was geared towards them. The authors suggest that teachers need proper knowledge and skills to support inclusive classrooms. The programs for teachers must address the learning needs and specialized instruction for ELLs, and teachers should be able to make decisions about specific goals that benefit ELLs, the authors stated. Lastly, Coady et al. noted that teachers should use and evaluate teaching methods that help ELLs develop language and literacy skills. It's essential that teachers are modifying lessons to meet the needs of ELL students. Without proper modifications, students will feel lost during lessons. This excludes students and does not create that sense of belonging. It also shows parents that the child's needs are not being met and often times parents are not aware that children are struggling. This is why it's crucial for teachers to build a relationship with parents and discuss ways to help students succeed.

Dual language programs also offer a welcoming environment for parents and children. An article by DeMatthews and Izquierdo (2016) investigates how school leaders can create inclusive dual language programs to reduce the achievement gap between Latina/o and White students. The article analyzes interviews with principals, teachers, and parents, along with field notes and documents. The results show the importance of parents and teachers working together and having the right teachers and trainings for the programs. The authors also discussed the relationships between principals and teachers and how these colleagues can also work together to address student needs. DeMatthews and Izquierdo claim the most successful programs are ones where teachers work together over the summer to help struggling students. The last point the authors make is how important principals are to schools because principals provide support, build the school environment, and help meet goals. Principals are the backbone of the education

system and play an important role in advocating for students, parents, and teachers. It's essential that principals make an environment that is both welcoming and inclusive for all parents and students.

Allowing parents to come into classrooms is just another way to create a welcoming environment. Aguas (2013) explains various activities and events to do in the classroom that teachers can invite parents. The author discusses how math serves as a way to overcome language barriers with parents and suggests that teachers can support this universal language to engage ELL parents in classroom math activities. To avoid communication issues, the author suggests teaching the children how to play the game before the parents get there. Besides math activities, the author discusses two other ways to get parents involved in the classroom which were Cafecitos and publishing parties. Cafecitos "or coffee time, is used to connect and build a trusting and caring relationship with ELL parents" (p. 2). Aguas highlights how Cafecitos is meant for parents to learn from other parents about resources, ask questions, and gain insight into supporting students.

After the Cafecitos strategy, Aguas talks about publishing parties which are used when student's complete essays as a way to celebrate. According to Augas, "Although most parents did not understand what their children were reading, they were glowing with pride. Opening the doors of our classroom for special activities such as this makes parents feel welcome despite existing language barriers" (p. 3). This emphasizes the importance of inclusivity. Teachers should not let language barriers prevent parents from joining school activities. It's also beneficial for both parents and students to witness the accomplishments firsthand in the classroom. There are various ways parents can be involved with students, and the first step is for teachers to create a welcoming environment that encourages parent involvement.

Teachers' perception and attitudes are also what drive an inclusive and welcoming classroom. Dávila and Linares (2020) examined how four middle and high school ESL teachers recognize care in the relationships with students. The study shows how teachers use reflection and support translanguaging to foster empathy, trust, and how it shapes the teaching practices. The authors propose educators to acknowledge that the ways teachers think comes from experiences and surroundings. The authors report that teacher's identities were a bigger problem than training because three of the four instructors lacked experience in bilingual education and knowledge of translanguaging. Education programs should make sure that all teachers have chances to think about how personal identities influence attitudes and teaching methods in the classroom, as the authors concluded.

The results from the study indicate the significance of empathy in the classroom and how teachers found fulfillment in being valued and trusted by students. Davila and Linares then highlighted the need for principals to recognize and appreciate teachers. It's crucial for teachers to reflect on the attitudes and beliefs in order to make an inclusive environment for students. If teachers have a negative attitude, it will affect the way the lessons are taught and make it harder for students to learn. If teachers have a positive attitude, then this will make the lessons run smoothly and students will be able to enjoy learning and feel valued. Parents will also appreciate an environment where teachers are both helpful and supportive.

Building relationships and trust with families is just another way teachers can create welcoming environments. According to Cohan et al. (2019), "Relating to students and their families- and identifying their needs- leads to the important step of helping parents obtain the appropriate resources. Many schools use websites with multilingual translations to share information" (p. 37). The authors also discuss the use of an interpreter line and how it's similar

to FaceTime or Skype and can be used on the phone or iPad. The authors discuss how this is a tool teachers can use at school or during home visits to effectively connect with bilingual families. Effective communication with parents is crucial to fostering an inclusive learning environment. Research demonstrates how schools can be inclusive by engaging parents through different events such as sharing various resources such as books and even making instructional videos for parents to utilize. Cohan et al. also add emphasis on the importance of first impressions and engaging with the community. Positive school-family relationships are built when staff show genuine interest in the community, as highlighted by the authors. These strategies are all helpful in creating trusting relationships between teachers and parents. It also focuses on the importance of inclusive environments being built on collaboration, trust, and support.

The next way teachers can create an inclusive and welcoming environment for parents is through trainings. Castillo and Gámez (2013) completed an 18-month study on parental involvement for young L2 learners with parents who are non-English speakers. The study “consisted of educating parents in what it means to learn an L2, and in training them and their children to tackle assignments” (p. 54). The results from this study found that this type of training can facilitate children’s L2 study, contribute to their literacy development, and improve the quality of communication between children and parents, the children’s written expression, and organization skills. The results show that children improved in literacy skills and participants had a more positive attitude toward learning. To help parents support children in the second language, the use of workshops, a website and a guide were used, as noted by the authors.

In addition, Castillo and Gámez found that training improved literacy and language skills and enhanced communication between parents, children, and the school. Results indicated

improved communication between parents and students about learning a second language at home. The authors state how they cooperated more and shared schoolwork, demonstrating that the program enhanced collaboration between schools and parents beyond just language learning. The authors suggest that schools should train parents on supporting their children's education by having trainings that cover general learning goals, strategies, and subject learning without diminishing the enjoyment of learning. This training should also include familiarization with technologies and resources supporting school learning, as mentioned by the authors. The authors also highlight the importance of parents not needing advanced skills in the second language to support children's learning but should understand general learning principles of the L2 learning. Trainings are a great way for parents and teachers to get involved and learn together. More trainings for parents can further strengthen their involvement as well as feeling included in their child's education.

Conclusion

In order to build a welcoming environment that is built on parental involvement, it's essential to understand the positive and negative factors that contribute. Through benefits, barriers, communication, and strategies, these components are the foundation of understanding how to build an environment that is inclusive. The struggles that parents face such as translation issues, not having the proper resources to be involved, and not feeling confident enough to attend meetings are all ways that parents will not include themselves in schools. Due to these challenges, it's crucial for teachers to find different ways to overcome these barriers in order to support parents. As research has shown, there are various resources teachers and parents can utilize to make communication easier. The next chapter includes the professional development that will help parents and teachers to create and maintain a welcoming environment for ELLs.

Chapter 3

This professional development (PD) addresses how teachers can create a welcoming environment that promotes parent engagement. This chapter will incorporate the necessary tools and resources to offer both parents and teachers. The professional development will be implemented for elementary schools in the summer and will have two sessions. The activity materials for this can be found on Appendix A- R.

Session 1

Session one and two are going to be implemented over two days. The sessions will be held at the end of August on a Monday and Wednesday before school starts. The times will be from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. For those who do not have child care opportunities, support staff and special area teachers will supervise and engage children in the cafeteria during the professional development sessions. In addition, the presentation will also be available for parents who cannot attend. The purpose of this PD is to get parents involved, build relationships with teachers, and learn how to communicate and collaborate with one another. According to Rubin et al. (2017), “Students need to know that families and teachers are on the same team rather than being pitted against each other. If a strong relationship exists with the family, teachers and families can work together to resolve problems” (p. 5). It’s essential parents and teachers work together in order to make students successful. Session one is going to be a day where parents and teachers get to learn about each other through various icebreaker activities. The goals of the PD are to create a welcoming environment where parents and teachers feel valued, respected, and comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions. The next goal is to help teachers and parents understand each other’s feelings, challenges, and expectations. The third goal is to provide strategies for communication between parents and teachers. Explaining the importance of communication to support students learning is another goal that will be addressed. The last goal

is for parents and teachers to feel comfortable using one of the translation apps and use it in the future to translate important documents for school.

All participants will receive an agenda describing the goals and activities (see Appendix A). After parents and teachers go over the agenda, a discussion about the benefits and barriers of parent involvement will be addressed. When parents are involved in their child's learning it translates to better behaviors, school readiness, achieving satisfactory scores on state tests, and strengthens the connection between school and home (Kigobe et al., 2021; Rubin et al., 2017; Sheldon 2003). Learning about the benefits will help parents and teachers see how involvement helps students.

Although there are many benefits to parent involvement there are also barriers. Lack of confidence, lack of support in translating and building relationships, and involvement decreasing as children get older (Hornby & Lafaele 2011; Kelty & Wakabayashi 2020; Worthington et al., 2011). Learning about the barriers will help teachers and parents gain a better understanding and help foster collaboration and trust.

Once this is addressed, strategies for creating a welcoming and inclusive environment will be made. Teachers can do this by creating a class where parents learn about languages and traditions (Quan, 2017). Creating an inclusive and welcoming environment also means educators in the district work to create high quality learning environments for ELLs by setting goals and providing resources to help staff meet student's needs (Elfers and Stritikus 2014). Teachers can also differentiate instruction and make decisions about specific goals that benefit ELLs in order to build an inclusive and welcoming environment (Coady et al., 2016). Additionally, inviting parents into the classrooms for special events and activities as well as teachers recognizing how to care for students is just another strategy that fosters collaboration (Aguas 2013; Dávila &

Linares, 2020). Lastly, using communication strategies such as interpreter lines, which are used like Facetime or Skype to connect with bilingual families can help build an inclusive and welcoming environment (Cohan et al., 2019). Learning about these different strategies will help teachers and parents become better partners and have a better relationship.

Following the discussion of the strategies, the first activity will be conducted and will start as a whole group activity where parents and teachers complete a survey (see Appendix B, C, and D). After completing the survey, parents and teachers will participate in an activity by gathering in a circle and tossing a beach ball with various questions on it. Some questions will say “What's your name? What's your favorite color?” “How many children do you have?” “What cultural traditions are important to you” etc. These questions will be conducted in Spanish first. Parents will help teachers translate as well as interpreters. This is a way for teachers to understand how parents feel when language barriers are present. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) discuss these barriers such as how a lack of confidence can stem from parents not knowing the language or from having a negative experience in school. Teachers will be able to witness what Hornby and Lafaele discuss since many teachers do not know the language. When this activity is done, it will be implemented again, but this time in English. Translators as well as teachers will help parents with the questions. Asking questions like this is a great opportunity to get to know parents and teachers and build an inclusive environment. Also, having parents and teachers use a prop such as a beach ball is a great visual aid tool.

After discussing everyone's thoughts, groups will then break up into K-5 grade level and visit the classrooms of the teachers assigned to their child during the school year. This is a chance for teachers and parents to engage with one another before the school year together starts. At this point, teachers will have the opportunity to discuss the classroom organization, daily

schedule, and other important components of what the routines and practices parents should expect (Kigobe et al., 2021; Rubin et al., 2012). A checklist is provided for teachers to reference when going over the routines (see Appendix E). After going over the routines of the classroom, parents and teachers will play the game four corners with the help of visuals and translators (see Appendix F). The use of visual aids and translators are used to help parents and teachers complete the activities. There will be four colors displayed in four corners of the classroom. Parents and teachers will pick a corner to stand in and each time a corner will be called, participants will be eliminated until there is only one person left. When this game is over, parents and teachers will play the game this or that. This will be a way for parents and teachers to find common interests with each other which is beneficial for creating a welcoming environment.

The next game parents will play with teachers is a matching game. Everyone will receive a card with a picture on it and its name on the back (see Appendix G). Parents and teachers must work together to find the corresponding match. For example, a teacher has a picture of a cat with the Spanish word 'gato' underneath. A Spanish speaking parent has a picture of a cat with the English word 'cat'. The parent and teacher must find each other and put these pieces together. Once they put the pieces together, they will tell each other their name and one fact about them. Interpreters will help with this activity. Building a welcoming environment is built on communication, interests, and working together. These activities are meant for parents and teachers to collaborate and learn about each other.

Session 2

Session two will be implemented on Wednesday from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. Childcare services will still be provided for parents as well as online viewing options for parents who cannot attend. The participants will go over the agenda (see Appendix H). The session will start as a whole group discussion about the importance of communication and using apps. Research

has shown that many parents do not get involved because of communication issues such as lack of support in translating and teachers not being able to identify if children understand when translators are present (Worthington et al., 2011). This session will address these issues by going over the different apps and having parents and teachers practice using each one. Lake and Beisly (2019) note that apps such as Microsoft translator, Speak and Translate, and Google translate are ways to communicate with teachers and parents. Based on these findings, the PD will use these three apps. The authors claim these apps enhance their engagement, understanding of content, motivation, communication skills, and self-esteem in classrooms. Based on the claims made by these authors, this is why parents and teachers are going to use these apps in the PD. It's a way to get parents and teachers practicing their communication as well as building up their confidence.

When the whole group discussion is over, parents and teachers will break into small groups based on their grade level to go over each app. The first app that teachers and parents will use is Microsoft translator following the guidelines of a prescribed activity (see Appendix I). Using this app, parents and teachers will spend 10 minutes completing the translation activity then practice speaking with one another before switching to the next app. The next app parents and teachers will use is Speak and translate (see Appendix J). After five minutes of talking with one another, the next app will be used, which is google translate (see appendix K). Parents and teachers will then play the matching game from session one again, but this time choosing one of the translation apps to help communicate. Parents and teachers will have fifteen minutes to play the game before moving on to the next activity.

Moving on to the next activity, parents and teachers will respond to the reflective questions. For English speaking parents and teachers this can be retrieved in Appendix L. For Spanish speaking parents, this will be located in appendix M. The last app parents and teachers

will look at is Class Dojo. The class dojo link can be found in appendix N. This is used to connect parents and teachers by sharing important photos and information regarding students (Class Dojo). This app is a great way for parents and teachers to communicate with each other. For parents who have difficulty reading, this app is beneficial because the parents can speak into the app to translate. Teachers can also type out a class message and translate it into different languages. This fosters an inclusive environment where everyone is able to communicate and share their ideas or concerns.

To conclude the PD, teachers and parents will watch a video individually on parent engagement by Colorín Colorado, which is found in Appendix O. Parents and teachers will complete an exit ticket based on the video and how the professional development went. This can be found in Appendix P for teachers, Q for English speaking parents, and R for Spanish speaking parents.

Conclusion

The aim of this PD is to address the overarching question: how can educators create a welcoming environment that promotes parent engagement? The goal for session 1 is to have parents and teachers work together to promote collaboration, trust, and partnership. Additionally, the goal for session 2 is to provide strategies for parents and teachers to communicate. The following chapter will review the overarching research question and highlight the important findings from the research. There will also be key takeaways that will be discussed as well as how teachers can benefit from this question. Lastly, recommendations and final thoughts will be made.

Chapter 4

In this capstone project I sought to explore how educators can create a welcoming environment that promotes parent engagement. Parental involvement can be defined in many different forms. It can be as simple as communicating with a teacher or helping with homework. Other forms of involvement could be attending school meetings and field trips or visiting the classroom for special occasions. Regardless of how parental involvement is defined, many ELL parents face challenges when it comes to being involved in their child's education. Lack of involvement then affects the child in negative ways. Students' academic performance will decrease as well as their sense of belonging.

Conclusion

This overarching research question guiding this capstone project has some important takeaways. First, analyzing the barriers that parents face is essential to understanding why parents cannot get involved. Work situations and family relationships will affect how parents can get involved (Hornby & Lafaele 2011). Many parents live in single family households which makes it harder to attend school functions. This results in parents being viewed as not involved, when in reality the parents cannot take off work or do not have childcare. Communication is just another barrier that gets in the way for ELL parents. With translation services provided, parents remain concerned for miscommunication and translators missing important information (Shiffman, 2019). Shiffman also discusses the lack of resources for parents. The author notes how the lack of resources affects how parents can get involved. Without proper resources, parents cannot access important documents for their child.

The next takeaways were building a welcoming and inclusive learning environment. Using technology and various apps is a helpful way to communicate with parents and children.

Lake and Beisly (2019) discuss various apps to use such as Microsoft translate, Google translate, and Speak and talk. These apps were also used in the PD and are a great way for parents to build up confidence in speaking. By having these resources it builds an inclusive and welcoming environment where everyone can communicate and share ideas.

Implication for Student Learning

Students will benefit from having a welcoming and inclusive learning environment where parents are involved. A way to build a welcoming and inclusive environment is for teachers to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all ELLs. Coady et al. (2016) discussed when teachers did not have a plan to modify lessons the students' needs were not being met. It's essential that teachers modify lessons that support ELLs. By doing this, it creates a welcoming environment where every student succeeds and feels valued.

Furthermore, it's beneficial for parents to be involved in their child's learning. When parents are involved it increases student engagement and test scores (Rubin et al., 2012). The authors also claim that when parents and teachers are on the same page it helps children. Children need to see that parents and teachers have a positive relationship. This is why the PD focused on building relationships with parents and teachers. By encouraging these relationships, teachers and parents can build a support system for students.

Implications for Teaching

There are various ways teachers can benefit from parental involvement. Rubin et al. also expressed how teachers are at an advantage when parents are involved because teachers can learn from parents on how to support the child. It's crucial for teachers to utilize this valuable resource in order to meet the needs of students.

Additionally, teachers can benefit from building an inclusive and welcoming environment. Teachers can do this by inviting parents into the classroom. Aguas (2013)

discusses the importance of inclusivity and how beneficial it is for parents to see their child's work despite language barriers. Teachers allowing parents to come in is essential for building relationships. This is also why the PD had classroom visits. It was implemented so that parents can gain insight on what environment their child will be in. The classroom visits also allowed parents to ask questions regarding the setup of the room and any other concerns.

Also the idea of setting up communication with parents is beneficial for teachers.

Communication is an important component when it comes to building a welcoming and inclusive environment. As stated previously, Lake and Beisly (2019) discussed various apps that teachers can use. These resources are helpful for teachers to utilize in order to reach parents in a quick and meaningful way.

Recommendations

Although there was a lot of valuable research, there is still more that needs to be done. More data needs to be collected and analyzed on how parent involvement affects students socially. Are ELL students less likely to make friends if their parents are not involved in school? Is there a correlation between behaviors and parent involvement? Research needs to look at if students' behaviors are going to increase negatively if parents do not attend school functions such as field trips, parties, etc. There also needs to be more research on parent involvement with translators. Would parents come to the school more if translators were present instead of over the phone? Diving deeper into these questions will help parents and teachers.

Final thoughts

Parent involvement is important when it comes to children, but specifically for ELLs. Teachers building an inclusive and welcoming environment that is built on relationships and trust is essential. With the right communication resources and a teacher who understands the

importance of inclusivity and involvement, parents can overcome language barriers and support their child.

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Appendix A

Session one Agenda:

- Welcome and thank you speech
- Introduction and goals of PD
- Benefits and barriers of parent involvement
- Strategies for creating an inclusive and welcoming environment
- Survey
- Beach ball toss activity (Whole group)
 - Discussion
- Small Group sessions (K-5)
 - 4 corners
 - This or that
 - Matching Game
- Closing

Appendix B

Survey Questions for Parents (English):

1. What are some concerns you have for the school year?

2. What helps your child learn best?

3. What is your child interested in?

4. What is your experience with school? Positive/negative experiences?

5. What cultural traditions are important to you?

6. What is the best way for us to communicate? In person, over the phone, letters/email, or text?

Appendix C

Survey Question for Parents (Spanish):

1. ¿Cuáles son algunas de las preocupaciones que tiene para el año escolar?

2. ¿Qué ayuda a su hijo a aprender mejor?

3. ¿Qué le interesa a su hijo?

4. ¿Cuál es tu experiencia con la escuela? ¿Experiencias positivas/negativas?

5. ¿Qué tradiciones culturales son importantes para usted?

6. ¿Cómo le gustaría comunicarse? ¿En persona, por teléfono o por carta/correo electrónico o texteando

Appendix D

Survey Question for Teachers:

1. What are some ways you engage with parents?

2. Do you use any apps to translate for parents and if so what?

3. What are some challenges that you have faced when working with families of ELLs?

4. What resources work for you?

5. How do you address language barriers with parents?

Appendix E

Teacher Checklist:

Classroom Setup:

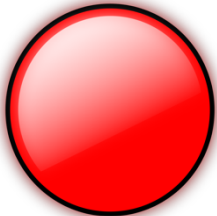
- Classroom Rules
- Morning Routines
- Seating arrangements
- Daily Schedule
- Classroom Jobs
- End of day Routines

Parent Communication:

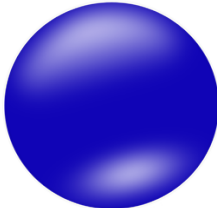
- Apps/written ways to communicate with parents regarding student progress and behavior
- Homework
- Field Trips

Appendix F

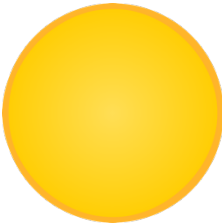
Four Corners Visuals:



1



2



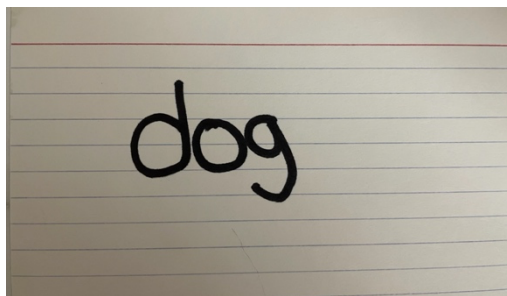
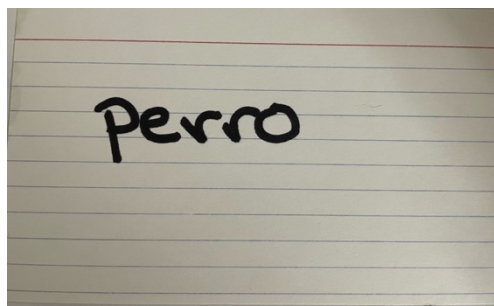
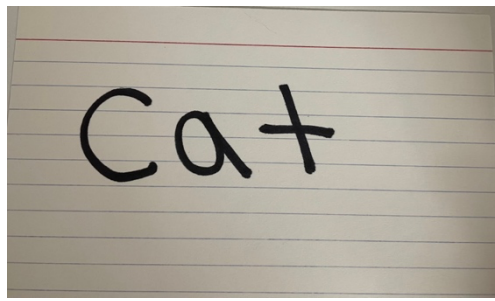
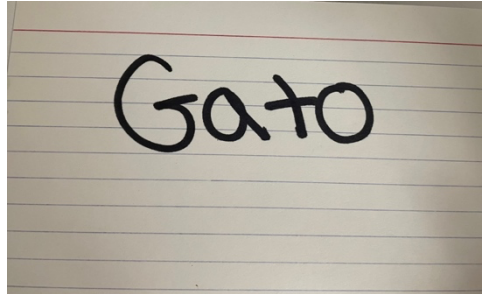
3



4

Matching Cards:

Appendix G



Appendix H

Session two Agenda:

- Welcome Back
- Importance of communication and using apps
- Different apps we will be using:
 - Microsoft translator
 - Speak and translate
 - Google Translate
- Using the translation apps to translate text
 - Discussion
- Matching Game using translation apps
- Reflective Questions
- Class Dojo app
- Conclusion video and Exit Ticket

Appendix I**Microsoft Translator:**

<https://translator.microsoft.com>

Message for Parents/Teachers to translate using the app:

Hello everyone and welcome to the PD! I hope you have found this PD informative and fun. We are excited to have both parents and teachers here working together especially on activities. Our goal is for you to be able to access important school documents using one of these translation apps. We hope this activity is easy for you to navigate as well as enjoyable. We are looking forward to your feedback!

Appendix J

Speak and Translate:

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/speak-translate-translator/id804641004>

Appendix K

Google Translate:

<https://translate.google.com/?sl=it&tl=en&op=translate>

Appendix L

Reflective questions on Apps (English):

1. Which app did you like the best and why?
2. Which app did you like the least and why?
3. Were there any challenges when communicating with each other?

Appendix M

Reflective Questions on apps (Spanish):

1. ¿Qué aplicación le gustó más y por qué?
2. ¿Qué aplicación le gustó menos y por qué?
3. ¿Hubo algún desafío al comunicarse entre si?

Appendix N

Class Dojo Link:

<https://www.classdojo.com/about/>

Appendix O

Video on parent engagement:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eoKVYcNwg_8

Appendix P**Exit ticket for teachers:**

1. What is something that you learned from the video that you can use in your classroom?
2. What did you like about this professional development?
3. What is something you did not like about this professional development?
4. What is something you learned from this professional development?
5. Do you have any concerns about the school year after completing this professional development?
6. How are you going to create an inclusive environment?

Appendix Q

Exit ticket for Parents:

1. What is something you learned from the video?
2. What did you like about this professional development?
3. What did you not like about this professional development?
4. What is something new you learned?
5. Are there any questions or concerns you still have after completing this professional development?

Appendix R

Boleto de salida para padres:

1. ¿Qué aprendió del video?
2. ¿Qué le gustó de este desarrollo profesional?
3. ¿Qué no le gustó de este desarrollo profesional?
4. ¿Qué es algo nuevo que aprendió?
5. ¿Hay alguna pregunta o inquietud que aún tenga- después de completar este desarrollo profesional?