

Encouraging Guardian Involvement Among ELLs

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Abstract

Guardian involvement is important in student's academic achievements however that involvement is not consistent across populations. Therefore, this capstone aims to examine the overarching research question: How can teachers foster positive relationships with students that promote parent involvement in the ENL classroom? To answer this question, it is important that teachers and school administration know the struggles families face. Some of these struggles may include language and cultural barriers, education levels of guardians, and the family's socioeconomic status. The professional development for middle school teachers and school staff will provide strategies and programs that will help increase guardian involvement. As a result of this professional development teachers will have strategies they can implement into their classrooms and in school to increase academic involvement with ELL families. In the future it is important that researchers continue to study the effects that programs such as community programs have on guardian involvement and how it impacts student academics.

Keywords: parent involvement, parent education, socioeconomic status, ELLs, school community

Chapter 1: Introduction

Throughout my experience in the English as a New Language (ENL) field, I have had many enlightenments, one of those being parent involvement. As many teachers know, parent involvement can be important in a child's learning process. Yeh (2019) states predicts that by the year 2040, over "one-third of students will be growing up in an immigrant household" (p. 41). This may not be the case for all schools, but it is an important topic that needs to be addressed. Many factors can affect parent involvement. Therefore, the overarching research question I will be examining in this capstone project is: how can teachers foster positive relationships with students that promote parent involvement in the ENL classroom?

Throughout this capstone project I will be using the following terms and abbreviations: parent involvement, parent education, socioeconomic status, English Language Learners. and school community. According to the Kalayci and Ergul (2020) parent involvement can be defined as the parents "dedication of a good deal or sources to the children's education," (p.1168) and can refer to how much the parents communicate to teachers about their child's education. Next, parent education refers to how much schooling the guardians of the child have had, this can involve primary schooling, secondary schooling, college or any classes or programs the parents have taken. According to American Psychological Association (2020) socioeconomic status refers to "the social standing or class of an individual or group," (p. 1) it is determined by the education, income, and occupation within the family and is often "measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation" (p. 1). English Language learners or otherwise known as ELLs are students learning English with varying levels of proficiency in the language. Lastly, The Glossary Reform (2013) states that school community refers to the people who are involved in a school including teachers, parents, administration, and other staff.

Many guardians of ELL students often work long hours and therefore do not have time to help students with schoolwork. Although the socioeconomic factors may play a role in the lack of parent involvement, so does the complexity of assignments and the disconnect between their first language and their second. Gilbert (2017) found that only 25% of Latino immigrants feel confident that they can speak English well. However, it has also been found that the education level of the student's guardian may affect students learning.

Iwanic's (2018) study reveals that parental education can affect student's motivation to learn. Interestingly, when the fathers and mothers of students had higher levels, the more motivated the student was and had higher “self-efficacy beliefs, ideal L2 self, English self-concept, instrumentally, and internal orientation” (p. 433) were different from those whose parents who were less educated.

Significance of the Problem

Although schools may understand the struggles that ELL students and families endure, they may not know how to facilitate help to those families, which can build positive relationships with parents and encourage parent involvement. It is crucial to encourage guardian involvement because it can significantly impact students and learning. For example, involvement can affect the students at a classroom, school, and district level. The classroom is often affected by guardian-teacher relationships because communication between the two parties is essential when communicating about strengths and improvements of the student. Guardian involvement is essential in many aspects of the school. Kaylayci and Ergul (2020) argue that guardian involvement can help foster the students second language and other aspects including “social, emotional, and academics” (p. 1167). Guardians are an essential part of a school community. This partnership can include more than parent-teacher conferences.

Wright et al. (2018) also suggests that in order for teachers to create culturally diverse curriculum it is essential that student, parents, and teachers are participants. As a school, teachers and administrators need to hear the guardian's questions or concerns about the school curriculum. At a state and district level, guardian involvement can be crucial. Not only must teachers advocate for ELL students, but their guardians should as well.

Parents need to be aware of their rights as well as their child's. Guardians can change school practices in many ways. Unfortunately, in some cases I have seen schools not send home a translated version of school newsletters even though it is required. However, if the school is not translating these letters guardians can speak to the school about the issue.

According to Kalayci and Ergul (2020) some strategies that can be brought up is the use of weekly messages including behavioral problems, and giving parents support when helping students with academics. By suggesting strategies like these, guardians can improve the state and district-level community. If guardians voice what they or their child needs, it can help the state and districts better educate ELL students.

Although parent involvement affects the school community in many ways, schools can also affect ELLs. For example, some of these challenges include adjusting to cultural differences and language barriers, lack of support and advocacy, and professional development for teachers. Often families must adjust to many cultural norms that may be different in their home country. For example, Housel (2020) explains that some countries may discourage parent involvement in the school setting, which is very different here in the United States, where parent involvement is expected. Adjustments like these can be difficult for families and may take some time to get used to. According to Housel, it has been found that parents often feel intimidated when speaking to school staff due to their language barrier and feel overwhelmed by rules or regulations put in

place by the state and need support when trying to understand them. Therefore, support and advocacy is needed to help ensure these guardians are aware of what is expected of them and their child. Housel states parent involvement is proving to be an essential aspect of a child's learning; therefore, more professional development is needed to help teachers implement a teaching agenda that encourages teachers to self-evaluate their teaching.

Purpose

The participants' of the professional development (PD) will include seventh and eighth-grade teachers. The PD presentation will focus on guardian involvement among English Language Learners. During the first part of the presentation, I will provide background on struggles ELLs and their families face. I will also include what may be stopping these parents from actively participating in their child's schooling based on the school community. Within this part of the PD, I will weave the literature articles I have read to support the groundwork information the material presented. Once I have covered the potential challenges ELL families may face and what may be stopping guardians from participating in their child's education, I will proceed with ideas to encourage guardians to participate in their child's academics. These will include strategies to help foster a positive relationships with guardians, as well as educating teachers about home visits and community programs.

I will present this PD during the summer in hopes that teachers can act on the ideas in the upcoming school year. If teachers incorporate these ideas into the new year, we may see an increase in guardian participation, and it is crucial to involve guardians before the school year even starts. If teachers and administration create a positive relationship before school starts, it will be more likely that the parents will feel more comfortable speaking to teachers about the child's academics during the school year. During the presentation, teachers and administrators

will be expected to actively listen to the findings of multiple studies and consider using the ideas in their classroom and school. It is also expected that participants ask questions they may have about the studies and or the solutions that are mentioned. This PD will be presented over a span of four days however I will continue to have meetings with teachers throughout the year to discuss the outcomes of the practices implemented.

I will conduct the PD I will present in the library. I will provide participants with a series of worksheets and information sheets that go along with each day. In this presentation, we will discuss the factors that may be affecting parent involvement, such as socioeconomic status and language/education barriers. I will present ideas to create a more supportive and engaging community for ELL families. These ideas will include home visits, community learning, and open communication with parents. At the end of the PD, I will ask participants to sign up for home visits or community programs in which they will participate in meetings about the programs throughout the school year. Teachers can mitigate the lack of guardian participation by creating positive relationships in ways that I have suggested in my presentation and in ways others have suggested.

Conclusion

Guardian involvement is an essential aspect of students learning development. Due to the language barrier, adjusting to a new culture, and a lack of support from schools ELL guardians may be discouraged to participate in their child's education actively. Therefore, teachers and school staff must create a welcoming and supportive system that helps encourage parents to be more involved. To help mediate this problem, a professional development presentation will be presented to school staff to help foster parent engagement. In this PD, we will talk about factors that may be affecting involvement and ways to overcome these difficulties.

Moving forward into the master's Capstone Project, you will find in chapter 2 a review of the literature on relationships between guardians/school staff and ways to encourage strong ties between the two. In chapter 3, one can find the professional development that will occur, including the handout, PowerPoint, and the monthly check-in sheet. In chapter 4 one can find the conclusion of this capstone. Here I will summarize my findings and discuss different implications that can encourage parent involvement, expected outcomes of the PD, and any implications for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As discussed previously in chapter 1, parent involvement can significantly impact a child's learning process. Therefore, the overarching question for this capstone project is: How can teachers promote parent involvement through positive relationships? Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory supports the notion that parents have a significant impact on student learning. The sociocultural theory states that people acquire language acquisition through social interactions. Therefore, if students are actively engaged in learning the language at home and school the more practice they will acquire. This can be completed through casual conversations or through educational practices.

Parent Involvement

As Wassell et al. (2017) states, parental goals in education should include "help with homework, a supportive home environment, attending school-based events, and raising money or resources for the school" (p. 1237). The research shows many English Language learners and their families face challenges every day. Some of these challenges include adjusting to cultural differences, language barriers, the amount of schooling the guardians have low socioeconomic status, and professional development for teachers. If teachers do not know what struggles these families face, then teachers can not properly advocate and encourage parent involvement. As Jennerjohn (2020) states, the school and family have a significant influence on student learning. Often guardians of children are the students' first teachers before going to school. Therefore, guardians must continue to support their children throughout their schooling years.

Language and Cultural Barriers

In this section it will be discussed how the language barrier between ELL families and teachers can affect the amount of parent involvement. Previous research on this topic will be

discussed giving many different perspectives. In this section I will discuss things such as how language barriers affect guardian-teacher relationships and how it can be helped.

One challenge ELL guardians can face language barriers and cultural differences. Wassell (2017) states that ELL guardians were found to communicate less to classroom teachers than native English speakers. Throughout the research, Gilbert et al. (2017) found that the language barrier between the teacher and the ELL guardian is a significant factor that influences guardian involvement including helping their child with homework. For example, Gilbert et al. found that guardians' fluency significantly impacts parent involvement in education. Gilbert et al. explains due to most conferences and school activities being held in English, parents are then expected to translate what is being said without help. This can affect the parent's confidence level and, therefore, affects how much they participate in school activities such as parent-teacher conferences. Guardians will have a more challenging time understanding what is expected of them and will impact the parent-teacher relationship. Due to the proficiency level of the parents being low, it can also affect stress levels within the home. It was reported that parents at a lower proficiency level are more likely to have significant stress and depression symptoms. The researcher also states that due to the added stress and depression, found that parents with lower proficiency levels engage in fewer academic activities.

According to Snell (2018) parents expressed the need for school staff that spoke their language. Parents explained that it is tough to understand what was trying to be conveyed and especially worried them about an emergency phone call from the school. During this study, a parent was questioned about the communication between the school and guardians. At this time, the parent mentioned that the school never communicated through their native language, and as a result, they did not understand what was being said. By not having translators that can help

guardians understand what is being said, it is often left up to the students to rely on the message depending on their proficiency level.

Although the language barrier between the guardians and staff may affect how much the parents participate in school activities, it is possible the quality of communication can be similar to those whose native language is English when a translator is provided. If proper accommodations are provided to guardians, it will provide a setting where their opinions can be heard, thus improving communication.

Cultural Differences

Cultural differences can be another factor that can affect guardian involvement. The research on this topic will discuss different beliefs/ view points from both teachers perspectives and guardian perspectives. Lastly one can find how to help illuminate the cultural differences that may be affecting guardian involvement.

In the Snell (2018) research, the following comment was made by one of the participating teachers, "I feel like sometimes the parents are too trusting that the teachers can handle everything" (p. 130). Although it may seem that ELL guardians are too trusting with teachers, it may not be a matter of opinion to the guardians.

Instead, many times ELL families may come from a country where all the educational needs of their children are met at school through the teacher. For example, Sanchez and Walsh (2017) explain that some immigrants may understand that their "role is to not interfere with the school's or teacher's work" (p. 26). Sanchez and Walsh, agree that cultural differences; while the immigrant family feels that not interfering with the schoolwork is being respectful, teachers can see it as disengagement. Vera et al. (2017) state "Latino communities, parents believe that they are responsible for teaching children to become moral, responsible individuals, but that teachers

are in charge of academic development" (p. 4). To eliminate this difference, teachers can ask families how they would like to participate in their child's academics. This can also provide an opportunity where teachers and guardians can discuss what is expected from each party. Once this is discussed, there is less likely to be misunderstandings, thus creating a positive environment.

The articles mentioned that language and cultural barriers are significant factors that influence guardian engagement. However, some might say that schools should not be expected to make these accommodations, and guardians can translate through various translation websites. Although many translating websites can be helpful when translating a newsletter, it is not always the case for audio messages or recordings. Therefore, having a human translator present in meetings and through phone, conversations can make communication easier and more precise to the guardians of the student. Using a translator can help teachers and guardians communicate what type of involvement guardians should have in their child's education and how it can positively affect their learning.

Academic Background and Socioeconomic Status

In this section one can find research on how guardian academic background and socioeconomic status can affect both the students and guardian involvement. One can find information conducted by many researchers and how the results of their findings can impact guardian impact.

As Vera et al. (2017) state, those who have a parent that is also English Language Learners are likely to have lower levels of education. Due to many first-generation immigrants not being educated in the United States, some may find the educational systems quite different. For example, Vera et al. (2017) mentions that because first-generation Latinos were not enrolled

in school in the United States, the guardians of the student may not know how to ask questions to gain more knowledge on issues and topics the school may mention. The authors go on to explain that parent leadership and involvement can potentially predict the educational success of the student. Vera et al. (2016) continues to explain that when a student has parents that have a lower educational level and have a low socioeconomic this "will often lead to lower academic achievements in Els" (p. 646). Although immigrant families value education and want their children to be successful it can be hard to further participate in their child's academics. Housel (2020) describes that for parents who have received interrupted education or lower levels of information may not feel comfortable asking questions or participating in school activities due to feeling they lack the proper knowledge needed to support their child in the education further. However, lower-level education may affect parents coming to school meetings; it can also affect student's academics at home.

Iwaniec (2020) explains that parent education and experiences can be linked to expectations of their child this can include "the amount of time spent on activities promoting achievement, such as reading or homework monitoring," (p. 429). However, highly educated parents are more likely to be actively engaged in the child's school and academics. Muslim (2020) explains that parents with high education seem to be more concerned with the curricular and extracurricular activities their children are attending. Although parent education can play a significant role in parent involvement, so does the family's socioeconomic status.

Socioeconomic Status

As identified by Sibley and Bradeck (2017), some immigrant guardians can have high levels of debt due to moving to the United States. To pay off their debt and provide for their families, oftentimes, guardians of parents have to work multiple jobs where it can be hard for

them to get time off. The authors explain that often guardians do not have the affordable and flexible childcare available to watch their children to attend meetings or school events. While Gilbert et al. (2017) explains parents not only have the stress of working long hours, but they have the added stress of immigration status. A pending status can be very stressful; however, it also brings financial stress to many immigrants. Pending statuses can be highly stressful because immigrants can risk deportation if they are not approved. According to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (2020), many applications identified as Immigrations Benefit Request can be quite pricey. For example, if a guardian comes to the United States with a child under 14, it will cost them approximately \$750.00 to apply for the I-485 request.

One may argue that all problems mentioned above can be easily fixed. For example, one may suggest that guardians go to classes at a community college to help with higher education levels. However, it is not as easy as it may seem many classes cost money and often ask if you are a citizen of the United States. If a guardian is not yet a citizen, it can create an uneasy feeling of expletion, thus making them hesitant to take the class. Not only does the social part of taking a class affect the guardians, but the money needed to pay for the class can also be an issue. One might argue that guardians can get another job; however, finding jobs is not always easy to come by. For example, Pozo (2019), states based on discrimination in employment, "that discrimination is getting in the way of Hispanics' success, which rises from 40% in 2002 to 55% in 2010," (p. 1305). Discrimination of immigrants and immigration status is unfortunately present in many aspects of their lives, affecting their employment.

Lack of Information for School Teachers

Throughout research it is evident that teachers feel that they need more information and educational resources to help encourage parent involvement. In this section teacher perspectives will be discussed and how these needs can be addressed to help encourage parent involvement.

According to Kalayci and Ergul (2020) explain that teachers know the impact that guardian involvement can have on students; however, teachers do not know what strategies to use to encourage guardian involvement. Based on the same study, 72% of teachers in the state the research was conducted in explained that they needed more training on parent involvement strategies. Although a high percentage of the teacher involved in this study agreed that they need more professional development on the topic the other 28% of teachers believed that had already tried everything to engage parents. One participant went on to say, "this kind of training should be better for the parents rather than me" (p. 1173). Although some teachers may feel this way, it has been proven that a teacher-guardian relationship needs both parties to engage parents actively.

Therefore, both parties should be self-reflecting and adjusting their measure to help the relationship. The lack of professional development on this topic can result in less participation among guardians. If teachers are not using the correct strategies that welcome families, guardians may not feel comfortable going to events at the school, such as parent-teacher conferences.

One may argue that professional development may not be provided due to budgeting reasons. However, there are many ways professional development can be provided without spending a lot of money. There is a variety of research that teachers and school staff can read in their spare time and implement into the classroom practices. Another affordable yet helpful

program that can be easily accessed for professional development is Head Start's Parent, Family, and Community.

Engagement Framework provides "guides for implementing relevant Head Start Program Performance Standards" for parent/family involvement (p. 21). *Head Start Training & Online Head Start Programs* will only cost approximately four hundred and ninety-nine dollars for 20 users, which offers over a hundred and fifty pieces of training to its users on various topics. However, teachers could also do this program individually for a cheaper cost. In addition, according to NYSED (n.d) legislation requires schools to train school staff to help teachers encourage guardian involvement.

Problem with Language Learning

Guardian Involvement can affect students in many ways. In this section, the effects of guardian involvement will be discussed using research to help support my claim. Hajar (2019) suggests that "it is a social process in which culturally and historically situated individuals are in active pursuit of both linguistic and non-linguistic objectives, chiefly related to identity formation and development" (p. 287). Parent involvement can be crucial for students and their learning development. Having family support outside of school will not only encourage language development but can help with language acquisition. Practicing language skills can help with the student's proficiency. In addition, Wassell (2017) states parents can support language development in many ways. The author proposes that supports that can be included are "parenting, communication, volunteering, home tutoring, decision making, and community-based collaboration" (p. 1236). However, Tompkins (2017) explains that supporting students in language can be done in many ways. One way that can help students with language acquisition is reading. Not only does reading to the child improve fluency, but it can help with word

knowledge. During these readings, it can also be helpful to ask their child open-ended questions. This allows students to practice their language skills and helps with comprehension of the text. Allowing for students to think deeply about reading, they can make a connection between their first language and second language. Using prior knowledge can significantly improve comprehension and helps students relate. Having parents interact with their students in an educational way can also help students make connections.

For example, when reading, if a child does not understand something, the parent and child can discuss the topic, thus supporting the student's language development. Quiroz (2021) conducted a study based on parent involvement and vocabulary development. This study was conducted with 421 participants, and most families were first-generation students from immigrant families, ranging from 30 months to 18 years old. Over this fourteen-week experiment, participants were evaluated by taking a vocabulary test. After completing the test, parents participated in a fourteen-week parent-child intervention. This program included twelve workshops which met for an hour and a half. During these classes, parents were taught different strategies to help with the child's language acquisition.

After completing the fourteen-week program that was modified for "Spanish-speaking families", parents and teachers were reevaluated (para.26). Comparing the results, it was found that student's vocabulary knowledge grew significantly. In fact, after looking at the results, the students exceeded the expected amount of vocabulary knowledge than expected for their age group. Quiroz states that research shows that when parents have a higher understanding of how language is acquired, the more likely students will have "higher emergent literacy skills" (para. 26)

Not only were there improvements in vocabulary development, but there was also improvement in parent involvement. Throughout the program, parents were taught numerous strategies, including praise and stimulation education. Strategies such as these have a positive impact on language development.

Problem with Socio-Cultural/Socio-Emotional Issues

Parent involvement can have a significant impact on social-emotional issues. In this section, one can find research on how parent involvement can affect the social-emotional aspects of a child's life.

Not only can parents affect language acquisition and student learning, but they can also affect a child's social-emotional health. Social-emotional habits do not just affect the student's home life, but they can also impact their academics. For example, social-emotional issue the student is facing can take the children's focus away from learning. However, other social-emotional issues can disrupt the class. This can involve acting out or refusing to do work.

Thomson and Carlson (2016) explain that many families want to improve their social-emotional health of adults and children. However, many families do not have the funds to do so. "Social-emotional competence, in particular, has been associated with positive outcomes in academic and social situations" (p. 419). Thompson and Carlson conducted a study with parents and children using a program to help those who wanted help with social-emotional needs. During an eight-week period, parents were educated on what a healthy social-emotional is and how to achieve it. Lastly, parents also learned effective strategies that would help support their child's social-emotional needs. The findings showed that participation significantly impacted the student's social-emotional behaviors. All participants except one scored over the level anticipated

meaning the child no longer needed social-emotional assistance. Another study examined home visits as a way to address socio emotional issues.

Wright et al. (2018) states that at-home visits can positively affect a student's attitude and motivation towards school. The research, found that 89% of teachers felt that at-home visits positively affected the student's attitudes as well as improving student attendance by 61%.

Creating positive relationships by helping families with social-emotional support and participating in at-home visits can improve student behavior and the student's mental health. When students have good social-emotional health, they will be more likely to focus on academics. Thus, improving their grades and their attitudes towards school.

Problem with testing/assessment

Parent involvement can play an essential role in testing/assessments. Depending on the student's proficiency level, they may have the option of opting out of tests such as the New York State Regents exam. Parents must know their students' rights all have all the information they need to make an educated decision. According to Sutterfly (2016), involving parents in the assessment process can help educators identify what supports will help their child in their child's continuing education. Sutterfly also stated that parent involvement can significantly impact student tests "including greater achievement in mathematics and reading, higher achievement scores in writing, and higher report card grades" (p. 147).

In sum, the research presented show that students who received home-based educational supports at home had higher performance levels. Students that receive academic help at home will have higher levels of success in the classroom, whether it is on a state or individual tests that the teacher may create. Some strategies to help students comprehend classroom materials at home could be using visuals to help make connections to new works that students are provided in

English. Parents can also work with students to translate the language to the student's first language to help with comprehension. Using strategies such as sentence starters and graphic organizers can help students in their ability to read, write and speak. All of these strategies can be used at home with the help of a parent, which can positively impact student test scores.

Implications for Guardian Engagement

In this section, one can find many suggestions they can implement into their schools. The following suggestions are based on research and will include how these implications have affected parent engagement.

Fostering a Positive Environment for ELL Families

One aspect teachers and schools need to incorporate into the school community is acceptance for all people. When guardians feel welcomed, and in a safe environment, they are more likely to participate in school activities. Sanchez and Walsh (2017) ways that schools can help ELL families feel welcomed and comfortable is by including the families first language into the school, participate in regular conversations with guardians, incorporate supportive programs for families, advocating for families, understanding family dynamics, fostering a relationship with the family and teacher, and encouraging parents to foster an academic role at home.

Acknowledging Parents

Family cultures and language can positively affect how guardians view the school community. There are many ways school staff can incorporate the family's cultures into the community. One way of doing so is by celebrating and acknowledging the holidays the family celebrates. Sanchez and Walsh (2017) explain it is essential to include and get to know the family's culture, and it should be represented in the school. However, Sanchez and Walsh state, school staff should also incorporate the first language by communicating and acknowledging the

family's first language. In many cases, this will require a translator; however, it can improve communication between staff and families. Thus, making the environment more comfortable for families to reach out to school staff and communicate about their child's educational needs.

However, teachers and other school staff should not only communicate with parents when an issue arises. According to Sanchez and Walsh teachers and families need to communicate regularly. Sanchez and Walsh states there are "differences between minority family and school cultures frequently become barriers that hinder effective communication and prevent schools and families from developing successful partnerships" (p. 23). Due to cultural differences, families and teachers must communicate what is to be expected of each party. One way to foster regular communication is to follow the steps recommended by Sanchez and Walsh:

- 1.) The authors recommend fostering informal conversations with families. This can be done in many ways during child drop off and pick up or by sending notes home that are translated to the family's first language.
- 2.) Teachers need to be flexible with meeting times. Many parents often work long hours and do not always have childcare for their children. Teachers and school leaders can incorporate flexibility into their parent's schedules by offering at-home visits or offering the families to bring their children with them. In addition teacher can keep in touch with families in virtual meetings or through other applications.
- 3.) Teachers should work with other professionals in the building to ensure communication can be delivered in a clear and understanding way. This can include speaking to school professionals to get a translator that can be present when communicating to parents.
- 4.) The teacher needs to reach out to parents in an informal and formal basis.

Creating informal communication can allow guardians to be more comfortable with the teacher on a personal level. In addition, once trust is formed, families will feel more comfortable when coming to more formal events such as parent-teacher conferences.

Another way to foster a positive environment that will improve parent engagement is by encouraging the school to form community programs and advocating for ELL families. It is important that families feel welcomed in the school environment and feel that their experiences are heard and acknowledged. One way to help support families in this process is through community programs. During these programs, the school can offer a variety of services to help families. During these programs, school staff would be present and would foster collaboration with families. According to Housel (2020) during these programs school staff will learn about the family's cultures, and families will get to know the teachers.

Advocating for and helping ELL families can help foster positive relationships that promote parent involvement. Schools need to provide services that can help ELL families when getting to know a new culture. These services can be conducted by school staff that are "knowledgeable in community resources that can help families" (Sanchez & Walsh, 2017, p 25). Advocating for ELL families and their needs will show parents that they are respected and are a crucial part of the school community. Once families feel they are appreciated, the more likely they will engage in educational activities.

Although advocating for ELL families plays an important role, teachers and school staff need to understand family dynamics. As mentioned earlier in the capstone, some ELL families may come from different cultural expectations of parent involvement. Therefore, teachers must ask how they have previously view parent involvement in school. This conversation can be a perfect time to communicate to the parents what kind of engagement the school expects from

families. According to Sanchez and Walsh (2017) explain that parents should be encouraged to ask questions and share their opinions about their child's education. Many times, families are not aware of what is expected of them in the educational field. Therefore, communicating these expectations and explaining them can lead to clarification. Some of these expectations can include participating in parent-teacher conferences, helping with homework, or effectively communicating between teachers and guardians.

Lastly, supporting families in their relationships with their children and encouraging parents to play an educational role. As Sanchez and Walsh explain, "a key to successful school, family, and community partnerships involves schools' efforts to assist families with parenting and child-rearing skills, understanding child development, and setting home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level" (p. 26). By fostering these relationships students will be more likely to be exposed to meaningful literacy development which can significantly impact a student's language acquisition thus encouraging parents to promote themselves as teachers in their home.

Teachers can encourage families to take on a teacher role by giving them helpful ideas on how to be involved in their child's education at home. For example, Sanchez and Walsh (2017) encourage teachers to make the following suggestions to help guardian involvement. These suggestions can include reading to their child, helping with homework, goal setting, and discussing the child's academics as a family. Wassell et al. (2017) agrees that there are many different types of parent involvement including communication, home tutoring, and collaboration with schools. Once teachers have made these suggestions, they can provide parents with helpful strategies to further help them with their children's educational needs. However, keeping a

welcoming environment that encourages questions can serve as a great resource to help families participate in their child's academics.

Home Visits

In this section, I will examine the literature on home visits and effect of parent involvement. Based on studies and research, one can find how home visits can adequately encourage parent involvement.

The study conducted by Wright (2018), which studied the effects of student behavior, academics, home visits, and parent involvement. In this study 7,362 students participated and split into two even groups. One group participated in home visits while the other group did not.

As a result of this study teachers were asked to complete questionnaires following their home visits. These questions include things such as student behavior, academic achievement, parent involvement, and effects on motivation and attitudes. The analysis of the questionnaires revealed that students that received home visits had significantly better behavior in the classroom compared to those who did not receive the home visits. In fact, over 70% of 269 teacher participants expressed they had seen improvement among those who were engaged in home visits.

Wright (2018) states at the end of the study one third of the teachers that participated found that student achievement increased inside the classroom. These teachers reported that the students were more engaged in their lessons and participated more in lessons. Next, research found that over half of the teachers that participated in the study found that parent involvement increased. "Parents felt comfortable in talking with me and were thankful for the personal approach to their child's education" (p. 83). As a result of the home visits it was reported that parents visited the school's website to view their child's work more then before the home visit

was conducted. Lastly, the study researched how home visits affect the child's motivation inside the classroom. It was concluded that over 40% of the teachers involved recorded higher levels of motivation among students and their attitudes towards school improved.

As a result of looking at the research it can be concluded that home visits can not only increase parent involvement and make guardian involvement, but it can also positively affect the student's academics.

Community Workshops

Community workshops can come in many different forms that can range from helping to navigate the school system and helping guardians learn English. One will find previous research as to how these programs can work in a school setting. There are a variety of topics that can be addressed in a community workshop for parents; however, it will be best to base these workshops on the needs of your school. Housel (2020) highlights specific components that can attract ELL families. Housel states some of these topics could include applying to colleges, how the school system works, school resources such as interpreters, community resources, and expectations for parent involvement.

Another great way to increase parent involvement is helping them close the English language gap that may be causing them to take a step back from engaging in their child's education. In this program, the author recommends guardians, and their children would attend a cultural and language program. Housel mentions that children often love to help their parents learn English; therefore, this can be an excellent way for teachers and guardians to build a relationship and the whole family. In addition, Housel states that teaching parents English can help them navigate the educational system by knowing what to ask teachers and communicating their concerns.

Not only will this program help those who struggle socioeconomically because childcare and food will be provided, but it can also help those who have little education. In addition, teaching parents about the American culture can help with the cultural barrier they are experiencing and creates a welcoming space where guardians can ask questions.

Shiffman (2019) suggests taking the time to get to know parents and the questions they may have about their child's education. Incorporating guardian questions into the program will help create a sense of community thus making everyone voices heard and acknowledged. Shiffman explains that "Adult learners often develop relationships with instructors and classmates—and those interactions in turn can provide important support, information, and connections to educational resources for children in K-12 schools" (para. 3). For instance, he recommends that ELL families feel welcomed into the school, by providing food and free childcare for those who participated. In addition, these programs would be in a less formal setting which would ease anxieties among those who attend. During these programs, teachers and school staff could discuss several topics.

Not only is it important for guardians to learn English and about the American culture, but school staff should encourage guardians to demonstrate their knowledge in their first language. Welcoming the guardian's first language will show acceptance and allow families and their cultures to be present in the programs. These programs are great ways to get to know families while helping them adjust to possible struggles they may be having.

Conclusion

There are many factors that can play a role in guardian involvement in their child's academics, these can include socioeconomic status, language and cultural barriers, and the education level of the guardians. Although these factors may affect their involvement there are

solutions that can encourage families to become more involved. These can include making accommodations, being flexible, participating in home visits, and conducting community programs. In the next chapter I present in detail how to implement these solutions in a professional development presentation for teachers at the middle school level which can help encourage parent involvement among ELLs.

Chapter 3: Professional Development

This professional development presentation aims to have teachers gain a deeper understanding of what could be affecting guardian involvement in academics. These factors may hinder the guardian's ability to attend parent-teacher conferences or other aspects of their child's education. Although these factors can play a significant role in guardian involvement, there are solutions that schools can incorporate into their school. These solutions can include teachers being understanding and flexible when working with families and should consider what the families may need to ensure a positive relationship with families that help foster academic involvement.

The presentation part of this professional development program will be conducted over four days. Each section of the presentation will be presented on a separate day to allow for the proper amount of time for discussions and group activities. These presentations will be conducted in early July, so participants have a significant amount of time to incorporate the strategies for the upcoming school year. On the day 1 of the presentation, we will discuss factors that influence parent involvement and corroborating research. On day 2, participants will learn how to build positive teacher guardian relationships. On day 3 participants will learn about home visits and how they can positively affect guardian involvement and student academics. On day 4, participants will learn about community programs where families will be encouraged to come into the school to participate in classes. Lastly, a committee will be created to meet informally every two months to discuss and implement new activities as needed. The participants and presenter will meet every two months to discuss the solutions they have implemented.

Day 1: Teacher Expectations and Factors that Affect Guardian Involvement

Once participants gather in the multimedia room, the presentations will begin with a review of today's work agenda, PD learning goals, followed by a discussion about guardian involvement. During this discussion, teachers will be encouraged to discuss what they are experiencing with guardian involvement. Examples of this can include attendance rates of guardians for parent-teacher conferences, guardian logins on the school website to communicate with parents. Next, everyone will be asked to create a list of what they expect from the guardians of their students using the "Day 1: Expectation List" worksheet which can be found in Appendix A. Some of these expectations may mirror Wassell et al. (2017) theory that parent involvement should include attending school meetings, tutoring, and creating an environment that encourages academics.

For this activity, participants will be given 5 minutes to complete the list and set it aside later in the presentation. Once the activity has ended, the presenter will begin the PowerPoint presentation. During this presentation, many factors may lead to lower attendance rates among families, throughout the PowerPoint topics such as language and cultural barriers like the ones mentioned in Wassell (2017) and Snell (2018). These issues will include the language proficiency levels of parents and the differences between their native culture and American culture. The socioeconomic and academic background will also be an essential topic discussed throughout this section, where I will report from Vera et al. 2016 and 2017 studies and many other significant studies from chapter 2 in this capstone.

At the end of the presentation, teacher and school expectations will be discussed on the PowerPoint. This will include perspectives from both guardians and teachers based on the

research. Once the slides are completed, the participants will be asked to take out the list they had previously made at the beginning of the presentation.

Next, the professional development group will use their guardian expectation list to lead a discussion about their expectations. As the participants explain their expectations, the presenter will write down each of the ideas onto a collaboration board. Once the collaboration board is complete, these expectations were communicated to guardians of the students in their classroom. From there, teachers will work together in small groups to create a way to present these expectations to the future guardians of their class. Once the groups have completed this activity, these ideas will be presented to the group. As homework the presenter will ask participants to think of the current strategies, they are using in their classroom to help encourage guardian involvement to prepare for Day 2.

Day 2 Agenda: Creating a Positive Relationship with Guardians

The PD will begin with a review of the agenda and goals for today's PD. The warm up activity will be for teachers to share how they currently build positive guardian-teacher relationship. These can include how they communicate with guardians, how they represent the family's culture, and how they provide flexibility to families. This can be done different ways, some that are mentioned in the Sanchez and Walsh (2017) article where they discuss in a great deal how to create a positive relationship with guardians of the students. At this point, the presenter will use a PowerPoint to inform the participants on researched based strategies to build positive relationships with guardians of their students. These slides will include examples of how to foster positive relationships with guardians, and some may include directions, or steps teachers can make to help guardians feel important to the school community. For example, the presenter will hand out the "Day 2: School Translator Information Sheet" that includes the names

of the school's translators, their office numbers, email, and what language they translate to. Next, the presenter will also provide the "Day 2: Google Translate Directions" worksheet to help participants navigate google translate, both of these templates can be found in Appendix B and C.

Providing teachers with these resources will help ensure that teachers make communication easier for families, which can positively impact guardian involvement, as stated in Sanchez and Walsh. These directions can be helpful when trying to translate a newsletter or any other important information that may not need the help of the school translator.

Lastly, once the presentation is done, the teachers will be given two exit tickets. The "Day 2: Fostering Positive Relationships Exit Ticket" can be found in Appendix D and E. However, one copy will be for the participant, and one will be for the presenter. On these tickets, the participants will write down at least two of the strategies presented to help create a positive teacher-guardian relationship. By writing these strategies down on the exit ticket, teachers will be expected to collect different samples of their work using the strategy they picked.

Day 3 Agenda: Home Visits

At the start of the PD, the presenter will first ask the participants if they had ever heard of or participated in-home visits. To begin the presentation, we will go over the agenda and learning goals for today's PD. The opener questions will be: Have you done or participated in a home-visit this past school year? Once the discussion is complete, a PowerPoint will be presented to the group. In this PowerPoint, we will discuss the results of Wright (2018) students, where there were found to be significant improvements among student motivation, behavior, academic achievement, and parent involvement. To help educators visualize and experience a home visit, the presenter will play a video. After the video, the participants will be asked to complete the

“Day 3: Home Visit Worksheet” which has a series of questions about the video. These questions will include: What are some positive effects that home visits can bring to guardians’ involvement? What aspects of the video would you like to include in your home visits and why? How would you encourage parents to participate in home visits? This worksheet will be available in Appendix F. Once the participants have adequate time to think and write down their answers, they will be discussed amongst small groups.

Once the participants have completed their questions there will be a group discussion about how the home visits can be conducted. To begin this conversation the presenter will explain how one can interest families in home visits. This can be done through a newsletter that is translated to the families first language or over the phone where a translator would be present. However, it is important that teachers also provide a virtual option for guardians. Once it is distinguished which option for the guardians would like to be a part of, they will receive calls and emails as reminders of their appointments. Once the teacher has a list of families who want a home visit and ones who want a virtual visit the teacher can begin planning their route. One day can be dedicated for virtual visits while the next day can be dedicated to home visits.

To help participants plan their home visits the presenter will show them how to plan out their route using google maps. This can help teachers create a easy route to their students homes. The route can be organized in many ways from closest to farthest away from the school to specific times the guardians have requested. Lastly, the presenter will show the participants how to print out the directions to their destinations.

Day 4 Agenda: Community Programs

Day 4 will be the last day of the professional development presentation. The PD will begin with a view of the agenda and learning goals for the day. Next, a video will be presented to

show how an example of a home visit. The presenter will discuss community programs and different ways of operating them. For example, participants will learn about different topics discussed throughout Housel (2020) article, which included school expectations, English language lessons, and lessons about the American culture. However, although these topics focus on the American culture to help ELL families navigate the school system and more, it is just as essential to get to know the guardian of the students. This can include their language, where they came from, how much education they previously had, and the culture and customs that are a part of their daily lives. As well as answer any questions they may have along the way. Shiffman (2019) explains that getting to know parents and answering their questions will create a trusting relationship between the school and ELL families. To finish the presentation a speaker from a near by community organization will be speaking about different aids they provide to ELL families. Once the visitor has left the group of participants will search the web on what other community organizations help ELL families and what aids they provide.

Once the presentation on community programs is completed, the participants and presenter will discuss all material covered in the past four days. This discussion can include any other ideas the participants may have and discuss them as a group to help encourage guardian involvement. After the discussion is over, the presenter will hand out the “Day 4: Sign-up Sheet” that will be passed to each participant. On this sheet, there will be two columns. The column will have the title of home visits the second column will have the title of a community program. This sign-up sheet will be provided in Appendix G. The participants will be expected to sign their names under the solution idea(s) that they will actively participate in. By signing their name, teachers will be expected to attend a meeting every two months to discuss how the solutions are working and implement any necessary fixes to the solution they are participating in. During these

meetings, participants will also be asked to bring their evidence of the strategies they have put into place to foster teacher-guardian relationships.

The components of this professional development course were chosen to help encourage guardian involvement among ELL families. As mentioned in chapter two, one factor that can affect guardian involvement is the lack of education provided to teachers about actively engaging guardians in their child's academics. For this reason, I have created a series of presentations that help fellow educators recognize and understand how guardian involvement is affected. Providing teachers with this information can help limit assumptions about why guardians are not actively engaged and propose solutions that can help counteract the negative factors that may affect parents.

Outcome

The outcome of this professional development is to provide research-based solutions that can help encourage guardian involvement among ELL families. To measure the professional development results, the presenter will meet with participants every two months to see how it has improved guardian involvement. During these meetings teachers will bring samples of the strategies they used along with a reflection. These reflections will not only help them self-reflect but it will help the rest of the group by discussing what could be done to make the strategies better. These samples will be created as a log which can consist of newsletters, emails, phone discussions, or journal writings the teachers have written based off interactions with guardians. As a result of this professional development, teachers and school staff will walk away with greater knowledge about factors that may affect guardian involvement and how they can implement different strategies and programs to illuminate the factors from affecting participation among parents.

Conclusion

Professional development courses are essential to help ensure educators are updated on new strategies that can help students and their families inside and outside the classroom. The first part of implementing these solutions is understanding the factors that cause the strategies to be needed. Therefore, combining all of the valuable information can ensure school staff knows how to implement the strategies properly and how to communicate to guardians. In the next chapter, one will find the conclusions of this capstone and how professional development has affected guardian involvement.

Chapter 4

Throughout my experience in the teaching field, it is clear that guardian involvement can affect student achievement. However, in some cases, guardian involvement seems to be declining. Therefore, how can teachers foster positive relationships with students that promote parent involvement in the ENL field? It is essential to reflect on what may be causing ELL parents to participate less and how schools can help eliminate those factors. In this capstone, we have discussed what factors may be preventing ELL families from being less involved in their child's academics and how to counteract those factors.

Conclusion

Throughout the research, one can conclude that parent involvement can affect many aspects of schooling. For example, in Shutterfly (2016) the author states that when parents are actively participating in their child's academics, school staff can see a significant increase in their math and reading scores and the student's achievement levels. However, there may be factors that affect guardian involvement. Research has proved that more than one factor can affect the involvement of ELL guardians.

Wassell (2017) it is explained that language barriers can considerably affect how much the guardian participates in their child's academics. While Gilbert et al. (2017) agreed that because most conferences and school events are held in English, it creates a barrier between school staff and non-English speaking guardians. Therefore, due to the language gap between guardians and school staff, the confidence among guardians can be hindering. Although language barriers are a significant factor that affects involvement among guardians, there are other factors such as cultural barriers.

Many cultural barriers can affect guardian involvement; however, quite prominent in the school community is the different expectations that schools have in the United States versus the families' home country. For example, Sanchez and Walsh (2017) explain that it is the teacher's sole responsibility to teach students academics in many countries. However, that is usually not the case in American schools. Commonly, American schools want the guardians of the students to be involved in the child's academics, including helping with homework and other activities.

Other factors that affect guardian involvement are the socioeconomic status and the academic background of the families. Gilbert et al. (2017) explain that many immigrant families have many stressors regarding their socioeconomic status. For example, many families come to the United States with high debt levels due to having to pay for applications for their citizenship. To pay off these debts and support their families, many guardians have to work long hours and often do not have childcare needed to attend school meetings. However, socioeconomic status affects guardian involvement so does the guardian's education level. Vera et al. (2017) explain that immigrants are likely to have lower levels of education. Due to the lower levels of education, Housel (2020) explained that this could affect the guardian's confidence level when asking and participating in their child's academics. Therefore, if parents do not have the confidence level, they are less likely to participate in school activities.

Lastly, research also shows that teachers feel underprepared when working with ELL students and their families. Kalayci and Ergul (2020) research shows that many teachers do not have the proper training with strategies that can help increase guardian involvement. Therefore, without knowing these strategies, teachers cannot effectively help encourage guardians to participate in school activities.

Although many factors can lead to lower participation levels among ELL families, there are many ways to encourage guardians to be involved. These can include participating in-home visits, creating positive relationships with guardians, and collaborating in community programs. Each of these solutions can help foster involvement among families and help create a positive school environment.

Implications for Student Learning

As previously stated, guardian involvement can significantly affect student achievement. To encourage guardians to be involved in their child's academics, the school can foster positive relationships with families. When families feel comfortable with school staff, they are more likely to be involved in the child's academics. To foster a positive relationship, teachers need to make an effort to get to know the families. This usually includes knowing cultural beliefs to knowing parental concerns about child's education. There are many ways to foster positive relationships, including translating notes that go home and having a translator present during meetings.

Another great way to increase guardian involvement is by participating in-home visits. In Wright (2018), parents felt more comfortable talking about their child's academics, but teachers also found that 40% of students had higher levels of motivation and achievement than those who did not participate in-home visits. During home visits, teachers can learn about the child's home life and what strategies can help them inside and outside the classroom. This can help teachers inside the classroom, but teachers can then relay those strategies to the guardians to do at home.

Another great option that would help increase guardian involvement in community programs. Shiffman (2019) explains that community programs where guardians can learn about different options are a great way to increase parent involvement. Not only is there a sense of

community among participants and fosters a positive relationship between teachers and guardians, but it can also counteract some of the factors that may decrease guardian involvement. These community programs can talk about school expectations, English lessons and can help provide valuable information to help families.

Implications for Teaching

The research provided in this capstone can help teachers and school administrators understand why guardian involvement is down. Schools must know what ELL families may be going through and how to best support their needs to help ensure guardians feel welcomed. Educating school staff about these factors can help teachers understand and help these families to the best of their abilities. To make teachers and school staff aware of the actors that may be influencing guardian involvement, the school must provide professional development of the manner and how to help the issue.

Professional development that centers on guardian involvement can help teachers improve strategies to encourage guardian involvement. Not only will these strategies help foster positive relationships with families, but they will improve involvement, thus leading to student improvement in academics. By showing teachers these strategies, they will be able to create a welcoming environment that can help students in a school setting and home setting with the help of their guardians.

Recommendations

Throughout the research, it is clear community programs can be beneficial for ELL families. However, more research needs to be done on how these programs can increase guardian involvement and how they affect student achievement. Once more research is done on this topic, more schools will likely incorporate this strategy into the school community. Which will help

create a welcoming and safe environment for all families, thus resulting increased amount of involvement among ELL families.

Final Thoughts

Throughout research it is clear guardian involvement is very important in academics and can significantly impact the child's grades and motivation. This capstone project research has shown why guardians may be hesitant when participating in their child's academics. However, research has also shown how teachers and school staff can encourage ELL families to be more involved in their child's education. Therefore, using strategies to encourage guardian involvement will help ensure students are receiving the help they need inside and outside of the classroom.

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Appendix A

Day 1: Expectation List Sheet

Name: _____

Day 1: Expectation list for Parent Involvement

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Appendix B

Day 2: School Translator Information Sheet

Language:

Contact:

Phone Number:

Email:

Language:

Contact:

Phone Number:

Email:

Language:

Contact:

Phone Number:

Email:

Appendix C

Day 2: Google Translate Directions

Step 1: Go to <https://translate.google.com/>

Step 2: In the left select the language the text is written in.

Step 3: In the right box select the language you want the text translated to.

Step 4: Copy and paste your text into the left box.

Step 5: Click translate.

Step 6: Copy the text inside the right box and paste it into a new document.

Appendix D

Day 2: Exit Ticket

Name: _____

Day 2: Fostering Positive Relationships Exit Ticket

Strategy 1:

Strategy 2:

Other Strategies I would like to incorporate:

By signing this exit ticket and returning it back to the presenter I acknowledge and accept that I will need to provide proof of this strategy being used inside my classroom.

Signature: _____

Appendix E

Day 2: Exit Ticket

Name: _____

Day 2: Fostering Positive Relationships Exit Ticket

Strategy 1:

Strategy 2:

Other Strategies I would like to incorporate:

By signing this exit ticket and returning it back to the presenter I acknowledge and accept that I will need to provide proof of this strategy being used inside my classroom.

Signature: _____

Appendix F

Day 3: Home Visits Worksheet

Name: _____

Day 3: Home Visit Worksheet

1.) What are some positive effects that home visits can bring to guardians' involvement?

2.) What aspects of the video would you like to include in your home visits and why?

3.) How would you encourage home visits among guardians?
