Advocating Successful Parent Involvement in Schools

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Having a good relationship with the parents of students can be very beneficial for any educational institution specifically when it comes to the successful education of the students. How does one define successful parent involvement? It can be attributed to the consistent active participation of a parent or primary caregiver in the education of his or her child.

There are many ways in which parents can show their involvement. At home, one is by reading with the children, helping with homework, and sharing stories about school events. In school, parents attend meetings and activities, volunteer in classrooms, and help during school activities and programs. The schools, on the other hand, involve the parents by engaging with them through regular communication and incorporate them into the learning process.

However, not all parents, and not all schools have successful parent involvement. What could be the barriers to this problem? One major problem is schools often do not engage parents because they think the parents will not get themselves involved anyway. This is a matter of perception. Some teachers think families do not want to get involved but the reason actually is that they just do not know how to be involved.

Parents, for their part, are hesitant because they think they do not have time or maybe they are not good communicators and are afraid they might just put their children to shameful situations. Another hindrance is that it could be that parents might believe they are not welcome. They might have had a not so good experience with their own schooling making them feel that being involved is not guaranteed to give them good experience now.

Bottom line, schools and parents would want the relationship to improve if only for the benefit of students. In a research conducted on 2003 of more than 25 public opinion surveys by Public Agenda, a nonpartisan public opinion research organization, 65 percent of teachers opined their students would do better in school if their parents were more involved, and 72 percent of
parents feel that children whose parents are not involved sometimes "fall through the cracks" in school.

What both parties can do to improve parent involvement is to go beyond the simple meanings of the word involvement. This entails not only counting the number of parents coming during meetings and family days but advocating to them that both parties have the same interest of becoming partners in the learning process and find concrete ways to enhance the partnership. Effective communication is key and warm engagement can be very helpful. Involve them in planning and do not just report to them what is going on, instead ask them and listen to them. Make them feel they are also important stakeholders in school particularly in the education of their children.

References:
