

Family Engagement in Early Childhood Settings: A Focus on Language Minority Families

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Historical Context: Then

- **Two Major Immigration Patterns**
 - **Late 1800s to early 1900s**
 - **Last 25 years**

Children of Immigrants: Now

- **More than 20 % live in immigrant families**
- **90% are citizens**
- **More than 25% live in poverty**
- **30% have parent with less than a high school diploma**
- **40% are of Mexican heritage**

Benefits of Family Engagement

- **Grades, Test Scores, Attendance, and Behavior;** (Blank, Berg, & Melaville, 2006; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2005a; Corcoran & Christman, 2002; Darling-Hammond, Hightower, Husbands, Lafors, Young, & Christopher, 2003)
- **2. Self-efficacy and Educational Aspirations;** (Auerbach, 2007; Burrueco, López, & Miles, 2007; Duchesne & Larose, 2007; Fauth, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn, 2007; Glick & Hohmann, 2007; Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007)

Benefits of Family Engagement

- **3. Relationship with Teachers, Adjustment to Educational Setting and Teachers, and Social Skills both in and out of school;** (Duchesne & Larose, 2007; Junttila, Vaurus & Laakkonen,2007)
- **4. Graduation Rates from High School and Higher Education**

Overview of Presentation

- **Three lines of Research**
- **Underlying Assumptions about Families**
- **Some Promising Practices**
- **Recommendations**

I. Parent Involvement Programs or Strategies

- **Epstein's Framework**

- **1. Parenting**
- **2. Communicating**
- **3. Supporting School**
- **4. Learning at Home**
- **5. Decision Making**
- **6. Collaborating with Community**

II. Intervention Studies

The role of family and the home context, including the home language, is often associated with the success or failure of the intervention.

III. Parent Leadership Models

- **Goal of programs is to empower families to assume leadership in improvement of schools and in the education of their children.**
 - **Parent Institute for Quality Education**
 - **Head Start**

Barriers

- **Misconceptions about language minority families**
- **Deficit Perspective**

Promising Practices: Building Communities of Learners (McCaleb, 1997)

- **Questioning Assumptions about
Language and Literacy**
- - **1. Families' SES and Culture**
 - **2. Home Language**
 - **3. No Literacy Practices as Home**

Promising Practices: Funds of Knowledge Approach (Moll & Gonzalez, 2005)

- **Alternative to Deficit Perspective**
- **Work with Teachers**
- **Learn Directly from Families**
- **Identify Intellectual, Social, and Emotional Resources**

Promising Practices: Posture of Cultural Reciprocity Framework (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1999)

- **Identify Cultural Values Embedded in Professional Interpretation**
- **Find Out from Family How their View Differs**
- **Acknowledge and Give Respect for Cultural Differences**
- **Adapt to Value System of Family**

Recommendations

- **1. Question Own Assumptions**
- **2. Develop Authentic Relationships with Families**
- **3. Infuse Family Voices Throughout**
- **4. Create a Context for Genuine Family Leadership**

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- Hence, our work with parents must be understood as one of the most significant revolutionary acts that we can carry out as teachers. In carrying out this emancipator political project, our faith in the capacity of parents as subjects of history is every bit as important as the faith that we extend to their children in the classroom. Without such faith, we risk the danger of objectifying parents and falling prey to the infantilizing parent discourse of public school institutions and the disingenuous manner in which parents are often treated, either by dismissing their concerns or coercing their participation in limiting and other repressive ways.



Antonia Darder