

Study on the historical background of parental involvement



Although parents and teachers have interacted since schools were first formed in the United States, the concept of parental involvement has changed over time (Cutler, 2000). In the early nineteenth century, parents and the community greatly controlled the actions of the schools. The home, church, and school supported the same goals for learning and for the integration of the student into the adult community (Prentice and Houston, 1975). The community, including the parents and church, were in control of the educational system by hiring teachers, developing the curriculum, and addressing adulthood skills necessary for their environment.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a different pattern of partnerships began. Parental authority began to diminish and local school control could be seen in the increased authority of state, county, and district educational systems. During this time period the school began to pull away from the community knowledge and towards the educational expertise of the teachers. Up to this time, it was thought that anyone could teach (DeMoss, 1998). Parenting was supplemented by instruction and curriculum in schools (Berger, 1991). Throughout this shift, student coursework became enhanced in areas that the parents and community members did not have knowledge of or a background in. As a result, Epstein (2001) suggested that parents were expected to take on a different role-that of preparing their children for school by imparting values, responsibility, and other commonly held work ethics.

During the 1960s, educational theorists and the federal government began to endorse the passage of legislation supporting such programs as Head Start, Home Start, and Follow Through (Berger, 1991).

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As schools became larger and more impersonal, layers of school bureaucracy were added. This made it difficult for parents to become involved. The importance of enlisting parents and community members as partners in education has been on the forefront since 1965. In the 1990's, the U. S. Department of Education and Secretary of Education Richard Riley shined a spotlight on school, family, and community partnerships (Epstein, 2001). Currently, federal laws have required school districts to include parents to assist in educating the youth of America.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is a United States federal statute enacted on April 11, 1965 as an integral part of Lyndon B. Johnson's " War on Poverty". The enactment of the ESEA revolutionized the federal government's role in education. Prior to the law's passage, educational policy-making had been the near exclusive domain of state and local governments. The ESEA is the largest single source of federal support for kindergarten through 12th grade education. It was the first federal act to allocate money directly to poor schools, communities, and children. Although it did not have a direct connection with parent and community involvement, this federal act led the way to addressing the need for partnerships outside of the local school system.

The Coleman Report, also known as Equality of Educational Opportunity, was a research study commissioned by the U. S. Department of Education in compliance with the newly passed Civil Rights Act of 1964. Coleman's report uncovered the cause of disparity between Black and White schools in America. The paper stated that public education did significantly impact the ability of students to reach their full potential. The Coleman Report also cited <https://assignbuster.com/study-on-the-historical-background-of-parental-involvement/>

family environment as the substantial factor for the successful academic achievement among those children. James Coleman concluded that children who lacked support or a value of education in their home were at a disadvantage and could not learn at the same rate as those students emerging from wealthier families valuing educational instruction (Coleman, 1966).

In 1975, Congress passed Public Law 94-142 (Education of All Handicapped Children Act). In order to receive federal funds, states must develop and implement policies that assure a free appropriate public education to all children with disabilities. In 1990, Public Law 94-142 was renamed to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA was reauthorized in 1997. IDEA includes key principles to guide families and professionals to work together to enhance the educational opportunities for their children. IDEA requires active parent participation throughout the educational process, including the development of the child's Individualized Educational Program (IEP). The overall goal of this law is to maintain an equal and respectful partnership between schools and families (The History of IDEA, 2004). A notable impact on parental involvement is a result of IDEA by encouraging parents to advocate for their child and to provide input for the course of their child's education.

In the 1980s, the U. S. Department of Education as well as the National Association of State Boards of Education, along with various professional specialty associations, took leadership roles in developing models of successful parent-school collaboration programs (Berger, 1991). By the 1990s, politicians as well as parents were increasingly demanding <https://assignbuster.com/study-on-the-historical-background-of-parental-involvement/>

accountability from public education and both entities encouraged federal legislation to mandate such accountability. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) maintained that there was an increasing recognition within development, sociological, and educational theories that both the school and home were critical institutions responsible for the socialization and education of children.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was reauthorized with the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994. The focus of reauthorizing the ESEA was to change the way educators deliver instruction, encourage comprehensive systemic school reform, strengthen accountability, and promote the coordination of resources to improve education for all children. The comprehensive school reform in this act was predicated on four key principles: (a) high standards for all students, (b) better trained teachers to teach to high standards, (c) flexibility to stimulate local initiative along with responsibility for results, and (d) promoting partnerships among families, communities, and schools (National Education Goals Panel, 1995).

Although promoting partnerships among families, communities, and schools was a founding principle of the reauthorization of ESEA, congress did not include a formal goal focused on parental involvement until its reauthorization in 1994, when President Bill Clinton signed into law the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. This act consisted of eight National Education Goals for the year 2000. Goal 8 states: " By the year 2000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children" (National Education Goals Panel, 1995). Thus the goal of parental involvement had <https://assignbuster.com/study-on-the-historical-background-of-parental-involvement/>

changed from the provision of passive roles for parents in the 1980s to one of collaboration and partnerships between schools and parents in the 1990s.

The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, entitled the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), continues a legislative commitment to parental involvement begun in 1965. Central features of the 1988 and 1994 reauthorizations, such as school-parent compacts, parental involvement policies, and the parental involvement funding formula, remain predominately unaltered. However, the 2001 reauthorization represents a notable shift in the expected role of parental involvement in the schools. It includes new provisions increasing parental notification requirements, parental selection of educational options, and parental involvement in governance. The new law envisions parents not only as participants, but also as informed and empowered decision makers in their children's education (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2002).

Title I, Section 1118 is solely devoted to parent involvement. Title I provides the core elements that include many of the other parental involvement provisions of NCLB. Epstein outlined the four principles characterized by Section 1118: (1) parental involvement requires multilevel leadership, (2) parental involvement is a component of school and classroom organization, (3) parental involvement recognizes the shared responsibilities of educators and families for children's learning and success in school, and (4) parent involvement programs must include all families, even those who are not currently involved, not just the easiest to reach (2005). The first time in history of the ESEA, federal law contained a definition of parental

involvement, which is:

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the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities including: assisting their child's learning; being actively involved in their child's education

at school; serving as full partners in their child's education and being included,

as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the

education of their child (NCLB, Section 9101. 32, 2002).

The NCLB confirms the importance of parent involvement. The stated purpose of the NCLB statute is to “ ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (U. S. Department of Education, 2001).

In a 2006, Appleseed Foundation report entitled “ It Takes a Parent,” parental involvement elements of the NCLB were examined by a consortium of sixteen state and local organizations, in eighteen school districts in six states. There were three conclusions which emerged from the study. First, despite federal mandates and parental involvement research, school districts, and individual schools had not entirely encompassed parental involvement as a primary student achievement strategy. The Appleseed Foundation (2006) suggested that this lack of widespread parental involvement in schools had been the result of several causes:

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The lack of clear and meaningful assessments by which effective parental involvement policies and programs could be measured.

Limited awareness and training on how to involve parents.

A concerted effort to meet the accountability components of NCLB, such as testing and teacher quality, rather than parental involvement (Appleseed Foundation, 2006).

Second, there was still a need for existing parental involvement mandates to be fully understood, supported, and implemented. The Appleseed report (2006) recommended that state, district, and school leaders work to implement the laws that presently exist. Third, a number of promising parental involvement practices and models emerged during the study. The Appleseed report (2006) concluded that many parents did not receive clear and timely information about their children and their schools; that poverty, language, and cultural differences are barriers to parental involvement; and school leaders do not uniformly value that parental involvement as an accountability strategy.

Parental involvement continues to be studied by researchers, educators, and parents who understand that parental involvement is an essential element in the success of students and schools. High achieving schools recognize that parents are a necessary component of the educational process. Schools and teachers are still being encouraged to move parental involvement policies, programs, and practices from the side to the forefront of their achievement strategy (Appleseed, 2006).

Twenty-five years ago, Missouri pioneered the concept of helping parents embrace their important role as their child's first and best teacher. Today, Parents as Teachers continues to equip early childhood organizations and professionals with information and tools that are relevant-and widely applicable-to today's parents, families and children.

The Parents as Teachers leadership team and Board of Directors is engaged in a three-year strategic plan, which positions the organization as a valued partner to support the organizations and professionals who serve families and children, especially those most vulnerable.

The concept for Parents as Teachers was developed in the 1970s when Missouri educators noted that children were beginning kindergarten with varying levels of school readiness. Research showed that greater parent involvement is a critical link in the child's development of learning skills, including reading and writing.

Early childhood professionals suggested that a program to provide early detection of developmental delays and health issues, and parent education to help parents understand their role in encouraging their child's development from the beginning could help improve school readiness and parent involvement.

With funding from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and The Danforth Foundation, Parents as Teachers began in 1981 in Missouri as a pilot project for first-time parents of newborns. Recognizing the program's benefits and cost effectiveness, the Missouri legislature provided state funding in 1985 to implement Parents as Teachers programs <https://assignbuster.com/study-on-the-historical-background-of-parental-involvement/>

in all Missouri school districts. Since 1985, Parents as Teachers has expanded to all 50 states and seven other countries (Parents as Teachers, 2010).

The Parent/Family Involvement Resolution was adopted on November 14, 2005, by the Missouri State Board of Education. Within the resolution the Missouri State Board of Education believes that schools must create an environment that is conducive to learning and that strong, comprehensive parent/family involvement is an important component. Parent/family involvement in education requires a cooperative effort with roles for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, school districts, parents/families, and communities (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2005).

Parental Involvement Research

The common wisdom is that parental involvement and strong schools are inseparable-that you cannot have one without the other. Research indicates a strong link between parental involvement and student achievement (Hester, 1989). According to Vandergrift and Greene (1992), parent involvement has two independent components: parents as supporters and parents as active partners. Focusing on one of these components alone is not a sufficient approach to parental involvement. The ideal is the parent who is both supportive and active. Hester (1989) discusses parental involvement from the following perspective: parents as teachers, parents as supporters of activities, parents as learners and parents as advocates. Hester also emphasizes the importance of communication with parents as an important part of involvement.

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The research on parental involvement in the field of education addresses parents' activities in support of learning at home, in school, and in the community. Joyce Epstein, a leading researcher in the field of parental involvement, identified and studied multiple measures of parental involvement (Epstein, 1995). As a result of this research, Epstein and her colleagues developed a framework of six types of involvement with associated activities, challenges, and expected results.

Parenting: Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.

Communicating: Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.

Volunteering: Recruit and organize parent help and support.

Learning At Home: Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.

Decision Making: Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

Collaborating With Community: Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

There are many reasons for developing school, family and community partnerships. They can improve school programs and school climate, provide

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family services and support and increase parent's skills and leadership, connect families with others in the school and in the community and help teachers with their work. However, the main reason to create such partnerships is to help youngsters succeed in school and in later life (Epstein, 1995).

The National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) Board of Directors (1993) has endorsed three types of parental involvement:

Parents as the first educators in the home,

Parents as partners with the schools, and

Parents as advocates for all children and youth in society.

In 1997, the National PTA created and adopted the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs in support of establishing quality parental involvement programs that enhance student learning and achievement. These standards were based on Epstein's (1987, 1992, 1995) model of parental involvement.

As Fan and Chen (2001) found in their research, parenting styles, as a critical measure of parent involvement, have been linked to student performance.

Fan and Chen examined multiple measures of parent involvement. The researchers identified three constructs of parent involvement:

communication, supervision, and parental expectations. Communication refers to parents' frequent and systematic discussions with their children about schoolwork. Supervision includes monitoring when students return

home from school and what they do after school, overseeing time spent on <https://assignbuster.com/study-on-the-historical-background-of-parental-involvement/>

homework. Parental expectations were found to be the most critical of the three. These include the manner and extent to which parents communicate their academic aspirations to their children. Fan and Chen found that high expectations of parents and student perceptions of those expectations are associated with enhanced achievement.

The research evidence is now beyond dispute. When schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout life. In fact, the most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family is able to:

Create a home environment that encourages learning

Express high (but not unrealistic) expectations for their children's achievement and future careers

Become involved in their children's education at school and in the community (Henderson, 1994).

Impact of Parental Involvement on Student Achievement

Parental involvement is absolutely essential to student achievement in school and in life. The overwhelming studies and research indicate that there are positive academic outcomes stemming from parental involvement with benefits beginning in early childhood throughout adolescence and beyond (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Patrikakou, Weisberg, Redding & Walberg, 2005).

A child's learning is enhanced when schools encourage parents to stimulate their children's intellectual development. Numerous studies have shown that the home environment has a powerful effect on what children and youth learn, not only in school but outside of school as well. This environment is considerably more powerful than the parents' income and education in influencing what children learn in the first six years of life and during the twelve years of primary and secondary education. One major reason that parental influence is so strong, is because the children spend more than ninety percent of their time from infancy throughout their childhood outside school under the influence of their parents. Therefore, ultimately the parents are their first and most important teacher (Weinstein & Walberg, 1983; Peng & Wright, 1994).

Epstein (1987) found that schools also affect parent involvement levels and evidence shows that parents want to become involved but are not allowed to have open communication with the school. Conventional avenues for involving parents in school can be closed to parents due to specific cultural knowledge. Parents have a lot of difficulty adapting to the school culture especially in non English speaking communities, but cultural knowledge is power and it can prevent parents from participating fully.

Sheldon (2002) highlighted minimal resources parents acquire through social networks as one reason parents are less involved in their children's education. Eccles and Harold (1993) found that less educated parents shift their attention away from school because they feel inadequate to help their children with their homework.

Henderson has examined the effects of parental involvement and student success since 1981. Her initial report, "The Evidence Grows" documented 35 studies that showed significant, measureable benefits for children as a result of parental involvement.

' When parents become involved in the children's schooling, they promote the development of attitudes that are a key to academic achievement, attitudes that promote family interaction rather than its social class or income. If schools treat parents as powerless or unimportant, or if they discourage parents from becoming involved, they promote the development of attitudes in parents, and consequently their children, that inhibit achievement (Henderson, 1981).'