Partnership relationship between teachers and parents

A Vital Partnership for Schools

Parents play a crucial role in facilitating their child's learning. This connection with learning is indispensable and continues through all aspects of a child's life, especially during their schooling years. According to Karen Mapp (2003) there is a renewed national focus within the last decade on the role that families and communities play in their child's educational development. This calls for the wider community to amplify their contribution to a child's development and enhance their learning experience. A public policy that addresses how schools and community/ parent partnerships can engage with learning is key to creating a positive learning environment for young people.

According to the National Research Council, (2001) and the U. S Department of Education (2000) " Family involvement in education has been identified as a beneficial factor in young children's learning" (as cited in Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry & Childs, 2004, p467). The significance of this research illustrates the vital importance of parent[1]and community engagement in the improvement of a students' self-esteem, well-being, school attendance, and behaviour at school (Queensland. Department of Education, 2018).

The Queensland Department of Education, Parent and Community Education Policy acknowledges the importance of parent and community engagement within the school environment. With students spending less than 15 % of their time at school, it is important to establish a policy where student's learning opportunities are developed through sustainable, successful and effective relationships (Queensland. Department of Education, 2018). These

partnerships contribute to strong and equitable bonds with schools, and bridges the gap between social, culture and economic diversity.

The Parent and Community Engagement Framework is committed to finding innovative ways to renew and strengthen parent and community partnerships. This is achieved through five essential elements: communication, partnerships with parents, community collaboration, decision-making, and school culture (Queensland. Department of Education, 2018). With positive parent and community engagement, these elements aim to improve the quality of student well-being and academic success.

Why are Partnerships Important?

According to Delgado-Gaitain (1991) and Epstein (1986) partnerships between home and school have long been recognised as promoting a sense of collaboration and shared responsibility in children's learning (as cited in Ashton & Cairney, p145, 2001). An important process outlined in the partnerships policy is collaboration with parents to identify ways to enhance their child's learning at home (Queensland. Department of Education, 2018) through verbal support and encouragement to complete work.

Therefore, possessing the requisite skills to understand a child's learning process can achieve positive results. Hoover-Dempsey Otto C, Bassler & Burow (1995) suggest that parents' consideration of children's homework, and their involvement in that work, was based on their understanding of their children's characteristics and abilities. When these practices are utilised, this can cultivate a respectful, diverse and meaningful learning environment at home.   This illustrates that how children react to their

parents' involvement in their home and school environment, serves as a motivational factor for continued parental support Mapp (2003) . When these relationships are nurtured, parents in return feel influential in their child's learning and the child feels supported.

Educational Disadvantage

It is widely recognised that the development of equal partnerships between teachers and parents can be difficult. According to Rumberger (1995), student family background is widely recognized as the most significant contributor to success in education (as cited in Jacobs & Harvey, 2005, p431). Although there is a plethora of research into the positive relationships between parents and communities in schools, it is important to consider that not all families and students benefit from these partnerships. This is where difficulty arises, interactions between parents and teachers can be challenging when it comes to families struggling with social and/or economic pressures. It is evident that students who do come from disadvantaged backgrounds generally do not succeed as well as students from stable socio-economic groups (Jacobs & Harvey, 2005). Much of the research on parent involvement as it relates to student's outcomes, has emphasized the relationship between specific parent involvement behaviours and their children's achievement (Frantuzzo et al., 2004). Perhaps, future policy should explicitly look at these challenging relationships and implement innovate ways to enable a more supportive education experience for these students'.

As observed, learning is not limited to the classroom. Parents and communities influence young people's educational pathways and personal development just as much as schooling does. The more effectively these partnerships work together, the better the outcome for students' well-being, happiness and academic achievement. To achieve positive outcomes, it is essential to nurture relationships between school, family and community to work together cohesively for a student's overall success. Future policies need to be able to provide strategies and procedures that optimise educational opportunities, and to strive towards nurturing these vital co-operative relationships to maximise learning and personal opportunities for all students.

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[1]Where the term ' parent' is used it refers to parents, carers, kinship and families.