

The impact of parental involvement



There is significant research over the last 30 years affirms that parental participation is a vehicle by which to raise academic achievement (Hara, 1998). Henderson and Berla (1994) reviewed 66 studies of parental participation and concluded, “ Regardless of income, education level or cultural background, all families can- and do contribute to their children’s success.” In the following excerpt from *The Evidence Grows: Parent Involvement Improves Student Achievement*, Anne Henderson (1987) summarises the conclusions drawn from 52 studies on the subject of parental involvement in secondary education:

When parents show an interest in their children’s education and high expectations for their performance, they are promoting attitudes that are keys to achievement, attitudes that can be formed independently of social class or other external circumstances. It is at this point that the school enters the picture. Schools can encourage parents to work with their children and provide helpful information and skills, thereby reinforcing a positive cycle of development for both parents and students. The studies show clearly that such intervention, whether based at home or at school, and whether begun before or after a child starts school, has significant, long-lasting effects... The opposite, of course, will also be true. If schools treat parents as unimportant, or as negative educational influences on their children, or if they discourage parents from becoming involved, they promote the development of attitudes in the family that inhibit achievement at school.

There is a direct link between parental involvement and children’s higher achievements in language and mathematics, enrolment in more challenging programmes, greater academic persistence, better behaviour, better social

and adaptation to school, better attendance and lower drop-out rates (Heymann, 2000, Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Cotton and Reed Wikelund (2001) identifies that all research studies which focused on affective measures found that parental involvement has a positive effect on students attitudes and social behaviour.

Parental involvement supports student learning, behaviour and attitudes regardless of factors such as parent's income, educational level and whether or not parents are employed. All parental involvement works and works well... indeed disadvantaged children have the most to gain from parent involvement programmes.

In a report on the Educate Together Ethos and Parental Participation, Nugent and Mooney (2008) they state that when parents have the opportunity to participate in their child's education, there are benefits for both the child's cognitive development and their performance as learners and their parents' attitude to school.

The benefits of parent involvement goes beyond education and includes social and economic benefits (OECD, 1997). These include improved health benefits, a reduction in dependence on social welfare and levels of crime (Wolfe and Haveman, 2002). The most interesting finding in the OECD 1997 Report highlights the relatively untapped potential of parental education in assisting parents from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds to support their children's learning more effectively. It was noted that parental participation can reduce exclusion and improve equality. " Education is a

powerful tool in the integration process” (OECD, The economic and social aspects of migration 2003 report).

Research within second level education would indicated that parents become less involved in their child’s education as the child gets older, there are many reasons for this: a more difficult curriculum, bigger schools – larger staff, location of the school, the child is more independent etc. Recent students indicate that American teachers and educational psychologist place great importance on parental involvement to elevate educational outcomes, particularly among disadvantaged students (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Jeynes, 2005a; McBride & Lin, 1996).

The benefits of parental participation are so great, parental and community involvement is used as a key strategy in school effectiveness. (Smit and Driessen 2007).

The question, therefore emerges: can parental involvement through the implementation of the Academic Intervention Model (AIM) really improve the educational outcomes of disadvantaged students within Fairhill Community College? More specifically, this question can be further defined into four separate questions that are applicable to the authors area of research:

To what degree is parental involvement associated with higher levels of school achievement among disadvantaged students registered on the AIM Programme?

What aspects of parental involvement help disadvantaged students the most:

Can the Home School Completion Programme/Home School Liaison Officer positively influence parental involvement of disadvantaged students?

Does the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement hold across racial groups?