Parent Involvement for Marginalized Families
If not us, who?

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Robin Quick, D.Ed
Mareeta Durney

College Preparation for Teachers
Educational courses prepare new teachers well in the areas of:
• curriculum
• child development
• classroom management
• content area instruction
• assessment

However...parent involvement is often not a priority in higher ed curriculum.

Marginalized Families
• single parent
• divorced parents
• foster parents
• aging grandparents
• young parents
• ethnically-mixed parents
• siblings as guardians
• immigrant families
• homeless families
• same-sex partners
• absentee-parent families
Issues for marginalized families

- low socio-economic status
- limited education
- poor health
- substance abuse
- mental health issues
- lack of resources
- limited ability to speak English
- discrimination
- negative prior school experience

Scenario #1

Two little boys from China need to enroll in Kindergarten. They have lived in China from birth and arrived in the U.S. in June. The mother works at a Chinese restaurant, understands little English but wants her children to do well in school.

- What issues will arise for this family?
- What is the teacher’s role?

Parent Involvement - Obstacles - Home

There are many different types of obstacles to parent involvement:
- Transportation
- Embarrassment by lack of education
- Feelings of intimidation
- Non-English speaking
- Cultural differences
- Apprehension

(Dollars, 2005; Jacobson, 2003; Politis, 2004)
Scenario #2

Peyton lives with a foster family. This is his 5th placement. Developmental assessments indicate that Peyton may have a learning disability. The teacher decides she wants to talk with the parents about his progress and some behavior issues in her classroom.

- What are the issues/obstacles for this family?
- What does the teacher need to know before she moves forward?

Parent Involvement Obstacles - School

Some of the obstacles may be on the part of the school such as:
- No parent involvement plan
- Guidance counselors not trained to assist teacher/family communication
- Resentment of problematic students
- Inflexibility to parents needs
- Misguided assumptions
- Miscommunication
- Lack of support for teachers
- Negative view of parent involvement

Negative Attitudes

It is important that teacher educators work with teacher candidates to build a positive foundation for working with families.

- “If it is not in the curriculum (or standards) I do not have to do it.”
- “I want paid for all of the ‘extras’ I am expected to do.”
- “It is not my job, I work with children.”
Progress Conference

• Please listen as Dr. Kathleen Bukowski shares some comments on how to hold a successful parent-teacher conference for all types of families.

Let’s talk strategies

• Many strategies common to traditional families work well with marginalized families.

• However, in some cases additional strategies are needed.

Strategies for…

• divorced parents
• foster parents
• aging grandparents
• young parents
• ethnically-mixed parents
• immigrant families
• homeless families
• same-sex partners
• absentee-parent families
Your Turn

Susie lives with her mother. Father has been in jail for 2 years. Mother does not take good care of Susie; instead her older brother gets her up and ready for school and generally cares for her. Susie’s attendance is poor and she occasionally comes to school with no coat or shoes. Her mother does not return notes or phone calls from the teacher.

- What are the issues/obstacles for this family?
- What does the teacher need to know in order to work with this family?

Closing Remarks

References


