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# Promoting Parental Involvement and Students Success in School: What Teachers Can Do

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Promoting Parental Involvement and Students Success in School: What Teachers Can Do

by  
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A capstone project submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of The College at Brockport, State University of New York in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Science in Education

**Abstract**

Parents' active involvement in their children's education strongly correlates with student success in school (Abel, 2012; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Zhan, 2005). Despite the benefits of parent involvement (PI), a variety of factors limit and discourage parents from taking an active role in their child's education. This analytic literature review examine 1) what factors hinder parent involvement and 2) to research methods that teachers can take to promote PI. This review suggests that a variety of factors, ranging from teacher expectations and biases to parents' beliefs and specific life contexts, can hinder PI (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). That said, teachers can do much to promote PI including but not limited to promoting positive interactions with parents, practicing culturally responsive teaching and empowering parents (Christianakis, 2011; Gillanders, McKinney, & Ritchie, 2012). In the end, further research is needed regarding the specific strategies that teachers can use to promote PI, as well as helping teachers learn how to effectively work with students whose background greatly differ from the teachers' (Sewell, 2012).

*Keywords:* parental involvement, student success, teacher preparation and action

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## Introduction

Over the past three decades, statistics indicate that thirty percent of kindergarteners will not make it to their high school graduation (Messacar & Oreopoulos, 2013). High school graduation rates are not only used to measure school and teacher effectiveness, but *student success* as well. Although student success has many definitions, the majority of definitions focus on academic settings (e.g., K-12 schools, college, and university). According to York, Gibson & Rankin (2015), “student success is defined as academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational outcomes, and post-college performance” (p.4). Research indicates that student success is important to consider as it directly correlates with one’s future life success, financial well-being, and overall happiness in life (Zhan, 2005).

Unsurprisingly, parental involvement (PI) importantly influences student success in these academic settings (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). PI describes the actions that adult caregivers take to nurture their child’s (or family member’s) social, emotional, and cognitive development (Epstein, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). In this review, it is important to note that the term *parent* refers to any adult who plays a major part in a child’s upbringing; that is, one can be a parent regardless of his or her biological relation to the child. In the next section, I identify what can be gained when parents are involved in their children’s education.

### Benefits of PI

PI has been associated with a variety of benefits, including an increase children’s achievement across academic settings (Abel, 2012; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Zhan, 2005; Kim, 2009). As Kim (2009) points out, “Parents who are active in their children’s school lives by volunteering in school, participating in school activities, and attending teacher-parent

conferences have children who achieve more in school... enjoy their school lives more... show more social competence... and display fewer behavioral problems” (p. 80). PI also helps students develop the social and cognitive skills necessary for academic success (Zhan, 2006).

Furthermore, when parents are involved in their child’s education, children show more interest in school and are also less likely to drop out (Messacar & Oreopoulos, 2013).

Children undoubtedly benefit when parents are actively involved in their education. Many parents feel as though they do not know how to help their child academically (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). This phenomenon occurs in part due to a misunderstanding between parents and teachers in regard to the roles each expects the other to play (Hango, 2007). For example, Gillanders, McKinney, & Ritchie (2012) found that parents’ and teachers’ perceptions and understandings of the others’ roles differ greatly, and that the problem is compounded by a lack of communication between the two groups. This understanding often leads to confusion that potentially hinders parents and teacher from effectively working together (Gillanders et al., 2012).

Confusion between parents and educators likely stems from differences in what some call social and cultural capital (Hango, 2007). *Social capital* refers to one’s general understanding of the dominant culture and includes the individual’s skills and access to resources whereas *cultural capital* refers to one’s non-financial, social assets (Hango, 2007). Examples of social assets include education, style of speech, dress, and physical appearance. Social and cultural capital is directly linked to how individuals (i.e. parents and teachers) view the world and how, in turn, they perceive the world as responding to them.

In the United States, the “typical” teacher is white and middle class (Hango, 2007). These teachers make up the dominant culture of the school. White teachers may have particular

expectations of parent involvement that reflect their own socioeconomic status and life experiences (Christianakis, 2011). Those with social and cultural capital similar to the dominant culture are familiar “with the styles, tastes, and dispositions of the dominant culture” (Hango, 2007, p.82). The closer a family’s social and cultural capital aligns with the values of the white middle class typical of most schools, the more likely these families (which include students and their parents) are able to successfully and favorably work with educators in their building or district.

### **Why Does PI Matter to Me (and Others)?**

As an educator working in an urban charter school, I want to do all that I can to promote PI among the parent(s) of my students. From what I have observed, some parents are extremely involved; they always return my phone calls and initiate contact whenever there is a problem concerning their child. In contrast, some parents do not return my calls, do not check their child’s homework folders as requested, and do not reach out to me in any way. I want all of my students’ parents to feel comfortable approaching me, and to know that I am committed to doing what is best for their child. For that reason, I want to help others, like me, to better understand what we can do to promote student success—through PI –among students (and parents) who’s social and cultural capital differ greatly from their teachers’. Given that PI is critical to student success, it is important to understand the factors that hinder PI as well as to learn ways in which PI can be promoted by teachers.

### **Purpose of Study**

As an educator, I am interested in why some parents take a more active role in their child’s education than others. Additionally, I am curious about steps educators can take to enhance parent-teacher interactions. The purpose of this literature review, therefore, is to identify

factors that can hinder PI, and offer recommendations about what teacher can do to promote PI.

Thus my research questions are as follows:

- What factors hinder PI in general?
- What might teachers consider and/or do to promote PI in their classrooms?

This review suggests that a variety of factors, ranging from teacher expectations, and parents' beliefs and specific life contexts, can hinder PI (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005).

That said, teachers can do much to promote PI including but not limited to promoting positive interactions with parents, practicing culturally responsive teaching and empowering parents (Christianakis, 2011; Gillanders et al., 2012). Before delving into these findings, I first describe how I sought to answer the research questions posed.

## Methods

### Information Retrieval

In total, 2,659 research papers were collected through an initial online search of the Education Source Database. The criteria used to narrow the search included: 1) the research paper needed to be published in a scholarly, peer reviewed academic journal; 2) the full text of the study needed to be available online; and 3) the date of the publication should be no earlier than 2005. Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997), Epstein (1995), Ladson-Billings (1995) were included because they are foundational to understanding PI. Combinations of the following key words were used for the search: *parent involvement, school-home, involvement, techniques, methods, literacy, and graduation rates*. The terms *parent involvement, school-home, school and involvement* were included in order to search for articles that 1) pertain to PI in general; 2) describe factors related to PI both in school and at home; 3) identify effective techniques and methods that increase PI. Literacy and graduation rates were included in order to search for studies relating to the overall impact PI has on student success.

### Selection Criteria

In the first stage of the data selection, the title and abstract of each study were reviewed based on a set of screening criteria including: 1) the study should be identified as empirical (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, or mixed studies), 2) the study should occur within the United States, and 3) the study should focus on factors that influence PI. Of the original 2,659 research studies, 92 fit these criteria. I then narrowed my selection to those studies that addressed PI that occurs during a child's K-12 education, resulting in 18 relevant works. These works included qualitative, quantitative, mixed, and case studies. A full read through of these studies revealed themes pertaining to disadvantaged families, teacher and school interactions with parents, and

barriers to involvement. As a result, I review the factors affecting PI that emerged as significant. Findings have been grouped into three main categories: 1) teacher expectations and biases; 2) parents' expectations and biases; and 3) actions teachers can take to improve involvement.

## **Parental Involvement: Literature Review**

### **Overview**

Educators can benefit from understanding why parents do or do not become involved in their child's education. The level of PI in academics is influenced by both teacher and parent factors. Ultimately, teacher expectations and biases interact with parent expectations and biases to create an environment that either promotes or hinders PI. In the next section, factors such as teachers' and parents' expectations and biases are discussed, as both influence PI. I then recommend actions that teachers can take to promote PI.

### **Teachers' Expectations and Biases**

Teachers' expectations and biases emerge as an important factor that can impact PI. Teacher's attitudes towards parents are developed through a variety of experiences including but not limited to, parent visibility in the school setting, preconceived notions about race and ethnicity, and previous experiences with students' family members (Gillanders et al., 2005). These attitudes impact how teachers interact with parents and can negatively affect parent teacher relationships; therefore, it is important for educators to be aware of the impact their mindset can have.

Teachers' beliefs and biases about the demographic they teach influence the actions they take to create a welcoming environment for parents. When white, middle class teachers are negatively biased towards poor and minority parents, they are less likely to invite parents into the classroom and to keep lines of communication open. A lack of communication is detrimental to student success; teachers may miss out on valuable information that only parents can provide, while parents do not get the opportunity to learn how they could improve their child's academic achievement (Kim, 2009).

The negative impact of teacher bias is compounded when white teachers teach children from a demographic with which the teachers are unfamiliar (Abel, 2012). Kim (2009) discusses how teacher bias towards minorities contributes to differential treatment of parents. For example, when minority parents do not interact with their child's teacher, teachers may conclude that the parents do not care about their child's education (Gillanders et al., 2005). However, research indicates that minority parents' interest in their child's education is no different from that of parent's from the majority population (Kim, 2009). Additionally, when teachers and parents share a similar background, teachers are more likely to tolerate parent aggressiveness. On the other hand, when parent and teacher backgrounds differ, parents' actions and advocacies are more likely to be ignored, if not dismissed.

This disconnect may stem from teachers' limited understanding of minority parents' life context. According to Christianakis (2011):

As possible outsiders to minority communities, white teachers may have particular expectations of parent involvement that reflect their own socioeconomic status and life experiences (Graue, 2005). Gracia and Guerra (2004) find that all teachers (white and minority) use middle class parent involvement practices as a standard. Consequently, poor and minority children and parents are treated as though they have the same resources and life experiences as white, middle class parents. (p. 159)

In other words, teachers hold the same expectations for all parents and do not take into account the impact that different socioeconomic status and cultural backgrounds can have on a parent's ability to be involved (Christianakis, 2011). Teachers may become frustrated and begin to develop negative feelings when parents are unable to meet their standards (Abel, 2012).

Parents can infer when teachers harbor negative feelings towards their family. This situation often leads to parents becoming defensive, less involved, and discouraged (Abel, 2012). A parent who believes their child's teacher is insensitive or biased against them may avoid opportunities for communication or they may stop trusting the teacher's opinion (Abel, 2012).

As such, it is crucial that teachers consider the background and perspective of their students' parents, especially when it differs greatly from the teachers' own. With this in mind, in the next section, I discuss factors that influence parents' decisions to be involved.

### **Parents' Expectations and Biases**

Many factors can impact a parent's level of involvement in his or her child's education. Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (2005) identify three reasons why parents get involved:

(a) parent's beliefs about their role in their children's education and their sense of efficacy...for helping their children succeed in school; (b) parent's perceptions of invitations for partnership from the school, teacher and children; (c) families' life context that facilitate or hinder their ability to become involved (Gillanders et al., 2012, p. 287).

In regard to the first construct, beliefs relate to the specific role that parents feel they are supposed to take in their child's education, whereas self-efficacy refers to a parent's understanding of the impact that they can have on their child's educational success. Second, parents need to believe the teacher invitation is authentic. The third factor, life context, takes into account a variety of factors; including education level, job, and history of health or mental illness. All play a role in a parents' decision to be more involved and communicate with their child's teacher (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

**Parents' Beliefs and Self-Efficacy.** Parents' beliefs about their responsibilities in education are central to the role they choose to take. These beliefs tend to be based on the

parent's level of social and cultural capital (Gillanders et al., 2012). To reiterate, social capital refers to one's general understanding of the dominant culture and includes the individual's skills and access to resources, whereas *cultural capital* refers to one's non-financial, social assets (Hango, 2007). Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (2005) discovered that working class parents tend to view home and school as "separate." Many of these parents believe that their responsibilities do not extend beyond teaching manners and getting their child to school on time. Additionally, working class parents have a strong tendency to accept the school's decisions, such as classroom placement and retention, without question because they believe that the school is primarily responsible for decisions about educational progress.

In contrast, Hoover Dempsey & Sandler (2005) argue that upper-middle-class parents typically have an "interconnected" view of home and school. These parents tend to see themselves as playing an integral role in educating their child. As a result, they are willing to provide input and will intervene in decisions made by the school if necessary. Ultimately, this phenomenon highlights the impact social and cultural capital has on parents' perceived roles and on PI in general.

Parents' expectations are also important to beliefs. *Expectations* refer to the set of standards that parents hold for teachers and/or their child. Zhan (2005) confirms:

Parents with higher expectations for their children are more likely to set higher standards for their children's schooling and social functioning than parents with lower expectations. They are also more likely to transmit the values of doing well in school and of getting along well with teachers and peers.... Consequently, as conceptualized in some literature... [P]arent expectations...directly as well as indirectly influences children's behaviors and achievement [in school] (p.963).

In other words, high expectations are associated with greater student success. Additionally, expectations are a driving force behind PI, as parents will intervene when their expectations of educators and/or their child are not met (Zhan, 2005).

Parents' sense of self-efficacy is another important factor influencing PI. Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (2005) define self-efficacy as the belief that time spent focusing on academics with their child matters and has an impact on their child's educational success. Self-efficacy theory suggests that parents will guide their actions (i.e., make their involvement choices) by thinking through, in advance of their behavior, what outcomes are likely to occur. Parents with a strong sense of self-efficacy tend to set higher goals for themselves and their child and put in more effort towards meeting those goals. In contrast, parents with a low sense of self-efficacy tend to avoid difficult tasks and believe that they are unable to help their child when school becomes more challenging (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005).

**Invitations.** Parents' early interactions with schools and teachers are the greatest motivator or deterrent of future involvement. In fact, a parent's first impression of teachers and staff often set the stage for how involved the parent will be in the future (Hango, 2007). Abel (2012) found that invitations were the most motivating factor in increasing African American fathers' involvement in their child's education. Additionally, invitations resulted in an increased sense of self-efficacy for the fathers. (Abel, 2012).

**Life Context.** Life context can reduce levels of PI by creating many barriers to involvement. The aspects of life context that influence involvement are the knowledge, skills, time, and energy that they bring to the possibilities of involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005).

According to Manz, Gernhart, Bracaliello, Pressimone, & Eisenberg (2014), poverty has detrimental effects on PI. The concentration of poverty is disproportionate among families of ethnic and racial minorities. Teachers and parents of different backgrounds already struggle to work together effectively; poverty adds an additional barrier to involvement. Manz et al. (2014) details the following as potential effects of poverty:

Starting at birth, parents' educational involvement with children can buffer poverty's threats to children's acquisition of the language, cognitive, and social competencies that foster achievement in elementary school... Yet, the socioeconomic consequences of poverty limit parents' resources and emotional capacity to provide critical learning experiences for their young children... Such limitations result in parents talking infrequently with their children, using restricted range of vocabulary when speaking with their children, and minimal participation in child-focused learning activities... (p.172).

Manz et al. (2014) describes how the relationship between poverty and PI is reciprocal; poverty can limit PI, while increasing PI can counter the negative effects of poverty. This provides further evidence for the importance of promoting PI, especially in disadvantaged families (Hango, 2007).

Many lower income parents, often work long hours or have multiple jobs. These facets of their life context can limit their ability to interact with teachers during regular school hours. White, middle class teachers often overlook barriers specific to disadvantaged populations such as community safety and availability of transportation. (Christianakis, 2011).

In summary, a parent's involvement in his/her child's education is contingent on many factors, including but not limited to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) conceptions of

beliefs, invitations, and life context. In order for educators to work efficiently with parents, it is important to understand the specific barriers to involvement that exist in the demographic they teach. Taking these factors into account when designing PI programs and policies can hinder or promote PI. In the next section, I discuss specific actions teachers can take to increase levels of PI.

### **Actions Teachers Can Take to Improve Parental Involvement**

Although there are many barriers to involvement, various actions can be taken by educators to increase PI within their classroom and school. Specifically, teachers can *promote positive interactions* with parents, practice *culturally responsive teaching* and *empower parents*.

**Promote Positive Interactions with Parents.** Promoting positive interactions involves maintaining a favorable attitude when interacting with parents (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). PI increases when teachers communicate with parents in a positive manner. Encouraging communication not only promotes PI, but also improves the relationship between teacher and parent. For example, teachers can increase self-efficacy, and in turn PI, by communicating with parents about times where parent assistance at home benefited their child in the classroom. Gillanders et al. (2012) confirmed that “when teachers communicate to parents that the help they have provided to their children has positively impacted their children’s performance, they are more likely to continue being engaged in helping their children in school” (p. 288).

Invitations into the classroom are another way to increase positive communication between parents and educators. Teachers can invite parents to contribute to the classroom when they understand and respect the wealth of knowledge that parents can contribute. Moll, Gonzalez, & Amanti (2005) classify these contributions under the title funds of knowledge. “*Funds of knowledge* refer to culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for

household or individual functioning and well being” (p. 75). When teachers draw on families’ funds of knowledge and invite parents to be more involved in teachers’ classrooms, parents may begin to feel more connected (Christinakis, 2011). For example, Moll et al., (2005) conducted a case study where teachers in New Mexico utilized parents’ knowledge of traditional Mexican candy making to develop a business model where students made and sold candy. Altogether the subjects of math, English language arts, science, and social studies were incorporated into the project. Ultimately, students and parents felt more welcome and connected to the classroom, and teachers felt as though they had created a more engaging and authentic unit of study.

Teachers who successfully invite parents into the classroom tend to have a strong sense of self-efficacy concerning their instructional skills. Providing professional development and instructional coaching on best educational practices can help increase teachers’ sense of self-efficacy (Kim, 2009). Teachers with a higher sense of self-efficacy tend to actively communicate and collaborate with parents, such as making regular phone calls, scheduling more frequent conferences, and having more parent volunteers in the classroom. Other methods and instructional strategies, such as sending home information concerning homework are also effective in increasing PI (Kim, 2009).

**Culturally Responsive Teaching.** Culturally responsive teaching refers to teaching in a way that is authentic to the population of the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Parents often choose to enter the classroom more frequently when they feel that the teacher respects their culture (Abel, 2012). Moll et al., (2005) recommends that teachers visit with families in an effort to learn about their culture and the funds of knowledge that parents may have. According to Moll et al., (2005), “The relationship can become the basis for the exchange of knowledge about family or school matters, reducing the insularity of classrooms, and contributing to the academic

content and lessons” (p. 85). Each family has a unique life context; it is important to move past the notion that different is bad and utilize these differences as teaching points.

Differences among family cultures can be used to an advantage within the classroom setting. One method of incorporating different cultural backgrounds into the classroom is through the use of culturally relevant pedagogies, or the practice of connecting the subject content of lessons to the student’s cultural context. The concept of culturally relevant teaching practices was developed by Ladson-Billings (1995). The researcher argues that culturally relevant pedagogies result in teachers creating an environment where students 1) have academic success, 2) are able to develop or maintain cultural competence and 3) can develop their critical thinking skills to challenge the status quo or current social order. To understand what this looks like in school settings, Ladson-Billings (1995) conducted a study where African American parents commented on teachers who used culturally relevant pedagogy in their classroom. Parents stated that they felt respected when interacting with their child’s teacher and that the teacher increased their child’s enthusiasm for school and learning. Most importantly, parents felt that these teachers understood the need for the students to operate in dual worlds of their home community and the White community that is school.

Ladson-Billings (1995) interviewed teachers practicing culturally relevant pedagogy and noticed that they had similar ideological practices; in this case how they felt about themselves as teachers, how they structured social relations inside and outside of school, and how they conceived knowledge. For example, these teachers viewed themselves as part of the African American community and viewed teaching as a way to give back. Students were treated with respect and encouraged to take on the responsibilities of owning their learning by teaching each other.

Ultimately, culturally relevant pedagogy demonstrates the power teacher perceptions have on the success of students in the classroom. Teachers who master culturally relevant teaching practices model respect for other cultures that are sensed by students and parents alike.

**Empowering Parents.** Empowering parents involves creating a balance of power between parents and schools (Christinakis, 2011). The parent empowerment model is an ideology in which power is balanced between parents and schools in order to encourage parent participation in school decision making. Within this model, educators work with and encourage parents to participate in creating a school environment where children can learn, play, and feel safe. Specifically, parents are encouraged to collaborate with educators in defining the needs of the school and community and to act as stake holders in creating school practices, policies and pedagogies (Christianakis, 2011).

According to Christianakis (2011), teachers should use the parent empowerment model when making decisions about PI policies. Schools empower parents when they consider the parents' background when developing their parent involvement policies. Parents who are confident with their educations are also empowered. Abel (2012) suggests advertising programs from other agencies or providing space for programs such as GED classes. By building a disadvantaged parent's education and knowledge, their self-efficacy will increase and potentially, family life context will improve. Enacting parent empowerment requires a high degree of social interaction and networking on behalf of the school; and requires parents to use their capital (i.e., time, social skills) to advocate for their child (Christianakis, 2011).

There are many programs marketed to schools, designed to increase PI. However, these programs do not consider the specific culture of a school and as a result are typically ineffective.

According to Gillanders et al. (2012), these programs require a considerable amount of money, time, and energy, yet yield poor results.

Gillanders et al. (2012) argues that, due to the diversity of a school's population, there is no one size fits all formula for promoting PI. The authors feel that the primary failure of parent involvement programs is a lack of consideration for the ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic background of families in schools. "Given this scenario, schools need to make conscious and purposeful attempts to resist and overcome the societal forces that influence their decisions making with respect to their relationships with minority parents" (Gillanders et al., 2012, p.286). They recommend interviewing parents to get an understanding of their specific beliefs, expectations, perceptions and life context. Educators can then tailor their PI policies based on the specific demographic within the school.

### **Concluding Remarks**

As this analytic literature review indicates, many factors promote and deter PI. Many of these factors are due to life context and circumstances, such as income level, educational attainment of the parent(s) and cultural capital (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). Others stem from teacher expectations and biases, efforts made to communicate with parents, teachers' attitudes towards parents, and teachers' use of culturally relevant pedagogy (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995). As educators, it is important to understand these factors, as they all play a role in shaping parents' decisions to be involved.

## **Conclusion**

### **Introduction**

This analytic literature review examined the literature pertaining to PI in the school setting. As PI plays a major role in student success, factors that promote and deter involvement were discussed. Specific actions teachers can take to increase PI were also shared. I theorized that differences in cultural backgrounds between teachers and parents creates a divide between the two groups that ultimately hinders PI.

### **Key Takeaways**

Educators benefit from understanding why parents do or do not become involved in their child's education. Poor and minority parents' interest in their child's education is no different from the white upper-middle class majority (Kim, 2009). However, the divergence between the two groups is important to consider.

Many barriers prevent the involvement of parents in their child's education, the biggest being poverty. PI can counter the effects of poverty by providing a valuable source of social support and academic enrichment (Christianakis, 2011). That being said, the level of PI in academics is influenced by both teacher and parent factors. My research found that teacher expectations and biases interact with parent expectations and biases to create an environment that either promotes or hinders PI. Parents' beliefs about their responsibilities in education are central to the role they choose to take. These beliefs tend to be based on the parent's level of social and cultural capital (Gillanders et al., 2012).

I also found that teachers can take specific actions to promote PI among their students' parents. Specifically, teachers can promote positive interactions with parents, practice culturally responsive teaching and empower parents.

### **Implications for Student Learning**

PI can counter the effects of low socioeconomic status. According to Hango (2007) children who experience high levels of PI and support have higher standardized test scores, better behavior in school, less police contact outside of school, and describe having better relationships with parents through adolescence.

Currently 16% of high school dropouts are unemployed; 32% are living in poverty. In the long run, increasing PI increases student success, resulting in increased graduation rates. The primary benefit of graduating high school include higher wages. In addition, those who graduate high school are more likely to have successful relationships compared to those who do not graduate. There are even health benefits associated with graduating high school with 32% of drop outs reporting being unhealthy. On a societal scale, regions with a higher rate of educated individuals tend to have lower crime rates and higher civic participation. Individuals who live in areas with fewer dropouts earn higher wages, irrespective of their own level of educational attainment (Messacar & Oreopoulos, 2013).

### **Implications for My Teaching**

By completing research and writing this analytic literature review on PI, I have a better understanding of the barriers to involvement my students' parents may face. Firstly, I will work to promote positive interactions with parents by inviting parents into my classroom, using multiple forms of communication with parents (i.e., notes home, email, phone calls, newsletters, communication apps), and striving to convey to parents the growth their child is making regularly, all while keeping the mindset that even the most disconnected parent is doing the best they can to support their child (Gillanders et al., 2012; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Kim, 2009; Manz et al., 2014; Moll et al., 2005). Secondly, I will utilize culturally responsive

teaching practices in my classroom by getting to know my demographic, asking for parent input and utilizing their funds of knowledge, and researching my local community (Abel, 2012; Landson-Billings, 1995; Moll et al., 2005). Lastly, I will empower parents by advocating for the implementation of PI programs that balance the power between teachers and parents (Abel, 2012; Christiaanakis, 2011; Gillanders et al., 2012).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

More research pertaining to teacher practices that improve PI are needed. Specifically, empirical studies are needed in order to determine best practices for promoting PI.

During my research, I found that a child's developmental years (i.e., ages birth through five) are when they make the biggest amount of growth cognitively, however many barriers to enrichment exist for those living in poverty. (Floursheim, Burrow-Sanchez, Minami, McArthur, Heavin, & Hudak, 2012). Children who receive strong emotional, social, and cognitive support during this time period have smoother transitions into school (Floursheim et al., 2012).

My research reveals that teachers have a limited understanding of best involvement practices for families of other backgrounds. According to Sewell (2012), this misunderstanding is due in part to a gap in training in teacher preparatory courses (i.e., undergraduate and graduate courses in education). Sewell (2012) explains that there is limited emphasis on family centered practice, limited infusion of family-centered content throughout coursework, and linkage of coursework to practical experience. I propose that future research be done surrounding teacher preparatory courses to better prepare teachers to work with parents of all backgrounds.

### **Final Thoughts**

Through use of an analytical literature review, I critically examined factors that hinder PI. Misunderstandings between parents and educators, due to differences in social and cultural

capital, has a detrimental effect on communication between the two groups, ultimately resulting in decreased levels of PI.

The literature suggests that teachers can promote PI within their classroom by promoting positive interactions with parents, utilizing culturally responsive teaching practices, and empowering parents. It is my hope that if all teachers strive to incorporate these practices into their teaching, the United States educational system will see an increase in students' success in school.

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