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Cultural Differences and Attitudes Towards Parental Involvement: a Case Study of Early Elementary School Parents

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CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF EARLY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARENTS

by

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2007
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Doctoral Candidate, Flor de Maria Rubinos, has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the E.D.D. during this Spring Semester 2007.

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STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

Background: This research focused primarily on parents and their cultural attitudes and beliefs as it related to their role in their children's education as well as how they shared responsibility with their children's teachers and administrators.

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of culturally diverse parents as it related to their role in their children's education. It also sought to understand their attitudes toward how they shared responsibility with their children's school and teachers. The study also looked to comprehend intentional and unintentional behaviors of teachers and how they affected parental involvement.

Setting: A Pre-K through Grade Two public school in a multicultural community of the borough of Queens in New York City.

Subjects: A random selection of six parents, four teachers and four administrators from within the identified school and district.

Treatment: All focus groups, parents, teachers and administrators participated in an interviewing process regarding their views on participation.

Research Design: The design of this study was the use of three focus groups. The first focus group encompassed six parents from the identified school; four teachers from the same school made up the second focus group and the third group consisted of four administrators. All data collected was qualitative. After the three focus groups were formed and interviewed, a transcription of the interviews was reviewed using inductive analysis to discover patterns, themes and categories from the data. After the researcher completed identifying, defining and elucidating the categories, a manageable classification/coding scheme started the analysis of the data through the creation of a
framework which will be produced for the purposes of organizing and describing the data collected during the focus group reviews. Upon completion of said framework, the researcher reviewed the framework for convergence and divergence issues, determined substantive significance, cross-classified different dimensions to generate new insights about how the data can be organized and reviewed for patterns not immediately obvious in the initial inductive analysis. Thereafter, the researcher sought comparisons, causes, consequences and relationships that have developed out of this research.

**Data Collection and Analysis:** Three focus groups provided qualitative data regarding cultural attitudes and beliefs in children’s education.

**Findings:** This study found more ways of involving parents in their children’s education.

**Conclusions:** Parental involvement benefited students’ educational success; educators that work collaboratively with parents find students perform better academically.
Acknowledgments

This dissertation could not have been made possible without the moral, financial and spiritual support of the following people: the Lord above who gave me the courage, stamina and wisdom to complete this Herculean feat; my parents, Reyes Josefa Miranda de Rubiños and José Vianor Rubiños Puga, my very first teachers, who through their love and daily intersession kept me motivated to go on; my sisters, Ana and Sofia, who through their energetic spirit and “sibling antics” kept me entertained; my dear aunt, Dr. Elvia van Geum, by her “modeling” and paving the road to doctoral success showed me the best path to take; my “brother” Ivan for his humor and understanding; my beloved nieces, Catherine, Aideen and Emma who are my “other” children, for their love, support and hope; my mentor, Dr. Anthony Colella, whose patience and understanding is truly beyond belief; my dissertation defense committee members, Dr. Alan Sebel, my former Deputy Assistant Superintendent at the New York City Department of Education and professor at Touro College, whose belief in me and encouragement allowed me to participate in the Seton Hall University Executive Education Doctoral Program; Dr. Andrés Rodríguez, former Assistant Director of the Bilingual Program at the New York City Department of Education and Educational Consultant at Long Island University for his constant support and kindness; Dr. James Caulfield, our Seton Hall champion of the Executive Ed. D. program and my reader for his academic input, suggestions and care; Ms. Olga Guzmán, principal of P.S. 228Q and a very dear and “patient” friend for allowing me the privilege of using her school and her beloved “school parents” for this study; my dear friend Ms. Zoraya Torres, the parent coordinator at P.S. 228Q for her enthusiastic help with my project; the parents and teachers of P.S. 228Q that without their
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Dedication
This tome is dedicated to my beloved grandmother, Fani Berta Emelina Galvez de Miranda y Rollizo. Through her hardships, experience, determination and love, I learned that you must work hard and never give up; things are earned not just simply received. It was through her utmost care that I learned that I must proceed with my studies and my responsibilities. Gram, you are my love, my joy and my personal treasury of knowledge and understanding; it is because of you that I will always be looking for “El Pollo de Colón” and for that I most graciously thank you.

Additional Dedication
December 27, 2006 – January 11, 2007: At the time of this writing, I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my mother. During the last days of reviewing and rewriting my dissertation with my mentor and defense committee members, my mother suffered a massive stroke on December 27, 2006. She was later placed at Cabrini Hospice and entered immortality on January 11, 2007. May Our Lord keep her very close to His Sacred Heart until we are all reunited in Heaven. Thank you, Mom, for all your love and support; I will really miss you but I know you’ll always be with me. I love you, Mamita!
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CHAPTER I

Introduction and Background

In many Latino cultures, parents consider education to be the school's responsibility alone (Bermudez & Marquez, 1996). Parents feel that they may not have the skills or qualities that teachers and administrators do in order to help their children with their academic needs. Educators, including teachers, teacher assistants, community liaisons, counselors, principals, and other personnel, sometimes believe that because parents have less formal education or reside in lower socioeconomic communities, they are uninterested in their children's education. It is widely known that low-income urban parents are reluctant to be involved in their children's education. (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997) identified three psychological factors contributing to this problem. First, the family's perception of their role and responsibility in their children's education is the most important factor predicting parental involvement. Middle class parents, for example, feel that they should collaborate with school efforts. But low-income families often perceive themselves as outside the school system and feel it is the school's responsibility to do the teaching. Second, parental feelings of efficacy contribute to their involvement in their children's school. Parents who believe they can make a difference in their children's education are more likely to visit and participate in school activities than those who feel ineffective. Third, some schools are more welcoming than others, and the extent to which schools make parents feel comfortable and valued contributes to the adults' participation in their children's education. Schools serving low income, ethnically diverse neighborhoods, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler argued, must make greater efforts to welcome families, because those are the parents who often feel excluded because of
differences in their ethnicity, income, and culture. They leave school-related issues sometimes even the teaching of the alphabet, to teachers and administrators, who supposedly know more than they do (Skerry, 1995). Hence they see no need to be involved in their children’s school. In fact, they view parental involvement as interference with the work of professionals (Bermudez and Marquez, 1996).

de Silva (2001) states that there are various factors that contribute to both positive and negative attitudes towards parent involvement by culturally diverse parents. Some of the positive attitudes that developed due to a more welcoming approach by schools and staff were collaboration and participation with school as well as with community projects. Some of the negative attitudes that developed were insensitivity or hostility on part of school personnel, transportation issues for the family and uncertainty of roles in an American school. Bermudez and Marquez (1996) also provide the following reasons for negative feelings:

1. Parents feel judged by occupation, economic status, housing, group membership, immigrant status, culture shock.
2. English only confrontation from school is uncomfortable.
3. Minority parents feel a low self worth and alienation from a system they do not know or understand.
4. Negative past experiences with school may play a significant role.

Research tells us that Latino parents do care about their children’s education. Although there are many ways to accomplish parent involvement goals in Latino communities, three major conditions and objectives stand out. They are connecting, sharing information and staying involved (Delgado Gaitan, 2004). The term “connecting” deals with how parents feel included in their children’s education. “Sharing
information" means a dialogue between parent and teacher/administrator to see the daily on-goings of the child. The term "staying involved" shows more of a long-term commitment from both parent and teacher/administrator.

The Setting of the Study

Jackson Heights, New York is part of Queens County, one of the five counties of the great metropolis of New York City, New York (see map of New York City, NY). The population of Jackson Heights is approximately 85,000 according to the Jackson Heights Beautification Society (Wikipedia-The Free Encyclopedia, 2003). It is a middle-class community and has a plethora of different nationalities from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. Over the past 25 years, it has become home to immigrants from many Asian and Latin countries. According to the (Cityscape: a Journal of Policy Development and Research (1998), by 1990, Jackson Heights was a multiethnic community with no clear majority. White, Asian, African-American and Latino were more or less equally sorted throughout the neighborhood. The census category of Hispanic does not begin to capture the population's diversity. Jackson Heights is home to substantial numbers of Colombians (the largest and most visible single group), Ecuadorians, Peruvians, Argentines, Mexicans and Salvadorans. In contrast, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans (New York City's largest Latino populations) are present in smaller numbers.

As previously stated Jackson Heights is a place of diversity and presents its sense of distinctiveness in sometimes unexpected ways. There are several public schools in this neighborhood. Recently, white parents fought bitterly against having their children bused out of overcrowded, predominantly Latino schools to predominantly white schools in nearby Astoria. The parents' argument was that their children would be deprived of the
unique experience of growing up as members of the Jackson Heights community. Public School 228Q is the only Pre-K through Grade 2 school that is culturally diverse as well as a magnet school. A magnet school is one which functions in the traditional school setting but with an emphasis on the few target areas of instruction to best prepare students for the future (Microsoft, Inc, 2005). P. S. 228Q was the school selected for this study.

Statement of the Problem

What we know about parental involvement is that it is critical to a child’s success in school (Rockwell, 1996); what we don’t know is why some parents have different culture attitudes and beliefs toward participation in their child’s education. (Swap, 1987) says the following:

“Our society is becoming extremely tense. The pressures are unbelievable on almost everybody. Therefore, children are living with special strains on all sides. And for that reason, I think we all need to understand each other more. No situation matches another one. And we really need as teachers to know what is going on at home. We need to know the strains, and we need to know more about the children than we’ve ever needed to know before.”

Being involved in the education of their children and the learning of developmentally appropriate practices maintained in early childhood programs allow parents to define appropriate levels of expectations for their children and to perceive and understand their children’s development, abilities, and skills at definite age levels (de Silva, 2001).

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of culturally diverse parents as it relates to their role in their children’s education. It also sought to understand their attitudes toward how they shared responsibility with their
children’s school and teachers. The study also looked to comprehend intentional and unintentional behaviors of teachers and how they affected parental involvement. It also offered information on how to support parents from culturally diverse backgrounds that are often overlooked in educational and social policy.

Parental involvement is crucial for children who are at a risk for failure in school especially those from culturally diverse backgrounds. Recent major legislation, such as Goals 2000: Educate America Act and the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), has made parents’ involvement in their children’s education a national priority (Howard, 2001). No Child Left Behind (NCLB) which was preceded by Goals 2000 encourages guidelines and choices for parents in schools and programs under Title I. Parents are allowed to select schools that have higher performing standards and be able to place their children there. This study attempted to describe the attitude toward parental involvement of culturally, in this case, Colombian, Dominican, Ecuadorian, Mexican, Puerto Rican and Peruvian parents. All Latinos in the United States are grouped in one category: “Hispanics”, a cultural “border” created by the United States Government in response to a federal need to have an umbrella term for a language minority group. This umbrella term obscures the cultural differences that Latino parents confront when they take their children to school in the United States for the first time (Epstein, 1995). It examined the parents’ understanding of the term “parental involvement” as defined by educators, the role of parents perceived as theirs in the education of their children and the impact of their cultural differences on effective parental involvement.
Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide this research study:

1. What are the perceptions of culturally diverse parents in the education of their children?

2. How can understanding of these cultural differences assist educators and administrators in developing techniques to broaden the involvement of culturally diverse parents in early elementary education programs?

Significance of the Study

This study looked at parental involvement in early elementary educational programs through different panoramas. This research is important to teachers, administrators, social workers, parents and other participants in the educational world. It is hoped that this study will help schools and other agencies comprehend parental involvement as perceived by minority and low socio-economic families.

As the daughter of immigrants, this researcher had experienced her parents’ concerns with school participation that in this case was quite extensive. Both of the researcher’s parents are well educated; the mother received her professional degree in Business Administration from the University of Panama and the father received his Bachelor’s degree in Economics and Business Science from the University of San Marcos, Lima, Peru. When it came to questions regarding homework or any other educational concern, the mother, primarily, would immediately call to ask for an appointment with our teachers or try to meet up with them early in the morning before the school bell. Unfortunately, not all immigrant parents are fortunate enough to have a higher education and trust that the teachers will do what is right for his or her child. They
may also not be able to address any of the homework problems and also not have necessary tools to address any teacher bias. Because of the researcher’s personal and professional background, one has always encouraged parents to participate as much as they possibly can in their children’s homework assignments, parent/teacher conferences and any meetings/workshops offered by the school.

Through this research, the researcher attempted to assist culturally diverse parents as well as teachers of students of cultural diversity to better communicate their hopes, wishes and desires for better educational involvement.

Assumptions

For the purposes of this study, it was assumed that the method of research most appropriate for this study is one of a qualitative nature. It was also assumed that the responses gathered from the focus group participants were honest in their sharing their beliefs in school parental involvement.

Limitations

Focus groups have their advantages and disadvantages. Some of their advantages are that they give insight into not just what participants think but why they think it. They can also reveal consensus and diversity of participants’ needs, experiences, preferences, and assumptions. Another advantage is that it allows group interaction such that participants are able to build on each other’s ideas and comments to provide an in-depth view not attainable from individual questioning as well as presenting unexpected comments and new perspectives that can be explored easily. Some disadvantages in using focus groups are that samples are typically small and may not be representative. All participants must be able to congregate in the same place at the same time, which is
particularly difficult if the potential participants live in geographically distant regions. They can generate a large amount of qualitative data that is often difficult to analyze. Also, the information collected may be more likely biased by subjective interpretation than is the case with quantitative methods as well as having more unspoken individuals dominating the discussions. Viewpoints of less assertive people are often difficult to assess (Academy, 2004).

The school selected for this study represented a microcosm of cultural diversity in the community. Researchers wishing to replicate this study may want to use a larger sample in order to obtain more information.

Definitions

In order to better understand the esoteric terms used in this study, an explanation of these terms will be delineated as follows:

Bias: an inclination of temperament or outlook; especially, a personal and sometimes unreasoned judgment ("Bias," 2004)

Culture: the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group ("Culture," 2004)

Diversity: The wide range of observable and demonstrable physical and behavioral differences among human groups and populations (Johnson, Dupis, Hall, & Gollnick, 1999)

Ethnic Group: Group based on its members' ancestors' national origin (that is, a specific country or area of the world), a shared culture, and a sense of common destiny (Johnson et al, 1999)
Inclusion: The integration of all students, regardless of their background or abilities, in all aspects of the educational process (Johnson et al., 1999)

Socioeconomic status: The social and economic condition of individuals based on their income, occupation, and educational attainment (Johnson et al., 1999)

Summary and Organization of Study

Chapter I included the background of the problem and the reason for the study. Chapter II presented the review of the literature related to parental involvement, strategies for involvement and cultural sensitivity information. Chapter III presented the methodology of the development and use of data collection and analysis. The results, interpretation and summary of this detailed analysis are presented in Chapter IV. Chapter V included a discussion and interpretation of the results and recommendation of future research.
CHAPTER TWO

Review of Related Literature and Research

"That parent involvement benefits Latino students’ educational success goes without saying. Educators that work collaboratively with Latino parents find students perform better academically. More than parental level of education, family size, or family’s socio-economic level, the extent to which schools reach out to establish parent involvement in ethnically diverse schools is the strongest determinant of Latinos getting involved in their children’s education.” (Delgado Gaitan, 2004) What is parental involvement? Enriquez (Bilingual Education, 1997) states that there are many conceptual and operational definitions of parental involvement but most researchers agree that there is a positive relation between parental involvement and students’ performance.

In reviewing the literature, it is unmistakable that parent participation was imperative to the success of children in their academic endeavors. Yet, before addressing the importance of parental involvement, first, the terminology was described. Second, the types of parental involvement were examined. Third, the barriers to parental involvement were explored. Finally, how to increase the level of parental involvement were also discussed.

Definitions of Parental Involvement

Seeking or encouraging parent involvement is most often viewed as an attempt on the part of educators to empower the parents and share the responsibility of educating their children (Gestwicki, 1997. This partnership between the parent and the teacher is defined as a collaboration that grows slowly, building itself upon mutual trust and
respect, a bridge that allows a meaningful presence of the family in the program
(Rockwell, 1996).

It is a universal understanding that parental involvement and strong schools are
inseparable; one cannot work without the other. Research indicates a strong link between
parental involvement and student achievement (Hester, 1989). Yet, a definition of
effective parental participation is not the same for everyone.

Schools often desire parental involvement "only when it is needed" (Coulombe,
1995). There are two extremes in the perceptions of parental participation. One is the
sole use of parents, determined by the school staff, to be involved only in specific ways
and times. Parents who want to control the school by hiring and firing of staff,
curriculum selection and school expenditures represent the other extrem. Fortunately, in
most instances, there seems to be a favorable medium. Moreover, parents want their
children to be in good schools and educators want to provide the best services they can
offer. Unfortunately, the way parental involvement is perceived by different people
interferes with the parent-teacher relationship. There needs to be outline for
comprehending the differing perspectives. Due to changes in viewpoints in our society,
the way parental involvement is viewed also changes. Davies (1991) has defined parentai
involvement from a shifting perspective and, therefore, has constructed a framework to
address different terminology regarding parental involvement.

Changing Definitions of Parental Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Paradigm</th>
<th>New Paradigm</th>
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<tr>
<td>From:</td>
<td>To:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Focus</td>
<td>Family Focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20
Family  Communities agencies
School  Home/Neighborhood setting
Eager parents  Hard-to-reach families
Teacher/Administrator Agendas  Family Priorities
Deficit View of Urban Families  Emphasis on Inherent
Strengths of Families

*Adapted from Davies (1991)*

The framework demonstrates the changing opinions of families and communities. Changes include more non-traditional family units that, in this analysis by Davies, are recognized to be effective. Liontos (1992) states the there are new beliefs emerging about parents and families. These new beliefs are listed as the following: all families have strengths; parents can learn new techniques; parents have important perspectives about their children; most parents really care about their children; cultural differences are both valuable; and many family forms exist and are legitimate.

Parent involvement has two independent components according to Vandergrift and Greene (1992). They are parents as supporters and parents as active partners. It is not sufficient to focus on one component only. You may have a parent that can be active yet not supportive of the educational procedure. The other side of the coin may be that you have a parent that is supportive yet not active in school activities. The optimum would be to have a combination of both characteristics; unfortunately, this becomes difficult when both parents work outside of the home or when there is only one parent at home. Parental participation can mean different things depending on the person's perspective whether the parent is either in a supportive and/or an active function. From
reading to preschool children to volunteering at the school to participating on collaborative decision-making committees to lobbying for their children, parents can be viewed in various ways as participating in their child's school. One important aspect to remember is when addressing parental involvement is not to restructure it for either personal interactions or for policy changes. If done in isolation, neither will be successful (Cochran & Dean, 1991). In order to maintain the focus on parental participation efforts, an agreement by both parents and teachers should be reached to first, define what is meant by parental involvement, second, provide examples of parents' decision-making roles, third, eliminate any structural barriers, and, finally, identify who else has an interest in the parent's role in the school.

Types of Parental Involvement

Although perceptions regarding parental participation may differ among people, several researchers have identified components of parental involvement. Hester (1989) explains parent participation from the following perspectives: parents as teachers, parents as supporters of activities, parents as learners and parents as advocates. Communication is also an essential component for success. Moore (1991) identifies three components to parental involvement in the schools: parents as policy makers, parents as volunteers, and parents as facilitators of children's development. (Weisz, 1990) goes further by offering suggestions such as providing tutoring and remedial work, helping with field trips, raising money for school projects, operating a telephone network for other parents, and helping arrange open house activities and meetings for volunteer activities. One of the best-known researchers in parental involvement is Joyce Epstein. Dr. Epstein developed a framework that defines six different types of parent involvement.
Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement

1. **Parenting:** Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.
   - Parent education and other courses or training for parents (e.g., GED, college credit, family literacy).
   - Family support programs to assist families with health, nutrition, and other services.
   - Home visits at transition points to pre-school, elementary, middle, and high school.

2. **Communicating:** Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children’s progress.
   - Conferences with every parent at least once a year.
   - Language translators to assist families as needed.
   - Regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters, and other communications.

3. **Volunteering:** Recruit and organize parent help and support.
   - School and classroom volunteer program to help teachers, administrators, students, and other parents.
   - Parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings, and resources for families.
   - Annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times, and locations of volunteers.

4. **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.

- Information for families on skills required for students in all subjects at each grade.
- Information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.
- Family participation in setting student goals each year and in planning for college or work.

5. **Decision-making**: Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

- Active PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, advisory councils, or committees for parent leadership and participation.
- Independent advocacy groups to lobby and work for school reform and improvements.
- Networks to link all families with parent representatives.

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

- Information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs/services.
- Information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programs for students (Epstein, 1995).
In summary, the research demonstrated that parental involvement can be defined in four ways: viewing parents as teachers, parents as partners, parents as decision-makers and parents as advocates.

These types of parental involvement have been proven to be effective by recent research. The first teachers children have are their parents. This idea is so powerful that programs such as "Parents as First Teachers" are rapidly expanding around the country. Recent advances in brain research inform us that the first years of life are critical in terms of determining the learning abilities of our children (Sylwester, 1994). Therefore, much support should be provided to parents in order to assist them to make the most out of their child's first years of life.

**Barriers to Parental Involvement**

Moore (1991) describes a number of barriers to effective parental involvement that are easily identified by parents and educators. These barriers may include distance between teachers and parents, lack of teacher training, race and class barriers, limited views parental involvement and the public's perception of the school. Barriers also rise from beliefs, perceptions and attitudes of teachers and administrators. Lack of commitment to parental involvement, confusion about the role of teachers, concerns about territory and turf, doubts about being able to work with at-risk parents and mistaken beliefs about at-risk parents have all been found to be barriers for schools and teachers. Other barriers include low teacher expectations for at-risk children, schools assuming a passive role, schools not helping parents feel welcome and communications between parents and the school that focus on the negative (Liontos, 1992). Notions by parents that have resulted into barriers also exist. Feelings of inadequacy, failure, poor
self-worth, suspicion or anger at the school can create such barriers. Some parents have a
"leave it to the school" attitude; others have logistical problems; and some have
economic, emotional or time constraints to handle (Liontos, 1992).

There are also cultural and language barriers to parental involvement (Liontos,
1992). Research indicates that the extent to which parents' cultural and ethnic
background is valued in the school affects parental participation in the classroom
(Carrasquillo & London, 1993; Delgado-Gaitan, 1992). Parents of similar cultural and
social values gain easier acceptance and access to the school environment, while families
with diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds must adapt to the dominant school culture
to become an advocate for their child. Delgado-Gaitan (1991) asserts that the ethnically
diverse families living in poor socioeconomic conditions often face sustained isolation
from the school culture, which can lead to miscommunication between parents and
school. This situation puts the culturally diverse and low socioeconomic parents at a
disadvantage for participating in the classroom, from the first day of school. In fact,
some researchers have proposed that certain parents may need assistance in bridging the
cultural gap between the ecological spheres of home and family with instruction on how
to help their children succeed in school, such as family literacy programs (Christenson,
Rounds, & Gormey, 1992). When educators address the topic of parental involvement for
immigrant families, they often overlook one key consideration: culture (Pena, 1999).
Definitions, discussions and examinations of parental involvement must incorporate the
complex and valuable differences cultural background has on parental involvement
(Pena, 1999). Some Asian parents may feel that it is disrespectful, for example, to talk to
teachers because it looks like they are checking up on them. (Yao, 1988). Minority

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parents also may feel intimidated and awkward when approaching school staff. Many times, minority parents are not invited to participate in involvement activities (Chavkin, 1989).

What the school staff perceives of parental preferences is not necessarily so. Parents do not like to deal with school staff who are overly businesslike, who appear patronizing or who talk down to them (Lindle, 1989). Problems at school can also become a barrier. For example, it has been found that parents who become aware of problems or opportunities when it is too late to act upon them tend to blame the school (Cuéombe, 1995).

Disagreements or problems between teachers and students are unavoidable. Lindle (1989) has found that when parents find out about these skirmishes between students and teachers with no information from the teacher, they become angry and are slow to forget. Specific behaviors on the part of school staff may annoy or unnecessarily irritate parents. Teacher-parent disagreements have been found to increase with the seniority, training and formality of the teacher.

It is imperative to take into account that when making efforts to increase the level of parent involvement parents should not be thought of as deficient. Parents should be pulled into the process of attaining goals related to school success. A philosophy of parent involvement should be developed and an array of activities should be designed to bring parents and teachers together. Finally, it is important to have activities designed specifically for involving hard-to-reach parents (Swap, 1990).
Increasing the Level of Parent Involvement

Data exists that provides information as to how to increase the levels of parental involvement. Researchers have explored many successful parental involvement programs. For example, when looking at thriving urban programs for high schools in New York City, Jackson and Cooper (1992) have identified the following ten factors as crucial to success:

1. leadership
2. accessibility
3. time
4. cultural awareness
5. active teacher roles
6. continuity
7. public recognition
8. broad-based support
9. adolescent focus
10. recognition of parents as people

They also noted that cultural awareness and recognition of parents as people are important to this useful program. Although the above factors were only applied to high schools, their use can be universally applied. Other researchers such as Williams and Chavkin (1989) of the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory have identified seven factors that are crucial to parental involvement:

- written policies
- administrative support
- training
- a partnership approach
- two-way communication
- networking
- evaluation

Fredericks and Rasinski (1990) have also recognized 14 ways to involve parents. They are:
1. flood them with information
2. make it a school-wide effort
3. recognize students and parents
4. involve students in recruiting parents
5. conduct participatory projects that include the entire family
6. recruit community members
7. make the classrooms and the school a comfortable place
8. use the telephone as an instrument of good news
9. find out why parents are not involved
10. have a variety of event scheduling plans
11. operate a parent hotline
12. use community members to endorse the program
13. videotape programs for parents
14. provide support services like babysitting

Berla, Henderson & Kerovsky (1989) conducted research to find other approaches for getting middle-school parents involved in their children’s school. They offer the following strategies:

- develop a policy for parental involvement
- make sure that at least one person in the building knows every child well
- maintain a friendly school office
- encourage parent-to-parent communication
- hire a full-time parent contact person
- have a parent room in the school building
- determine and meet family needs for services
- provide translation services when appropriate

Schuur (1992) offers “sixteen proven parental involvement strategies”. They are the following:

1. involve parents in mutual goal setting, contracting and evaluating
2. involve parents in assessment of school policies, practices and rituals
3. open a parent lounge, center or resource room
4. develop public information displays, public service messages and work its seminars
5. develop a parent handbook of guidelines and tips
6. hold a weekend or evening public information fair
7. award extra academic credit for parent involvement
8. have an old-fashioned family night at school
9. develop a school-wide communications plan
10. have a parent and student exchange day
11. keep parent/teacher dialog journals for communication
12. engage in official parent proclamation efforts
13. assemble monthly home achievement packets
14. conduct home visits for a special bond
15. enact a school-wide homework policy
16. have a meet and greet program for involvement

Lindle (1989) states the following:

"Parents want to be equal partners in the education process. Also, parents do like schools providing activities for them. They also like it when the needs of working parents are acknowledged. Parents like it when parent-teacher conferences are arranged around work schedules, but they truly do not care for the conferences themselves due to the formality and limited time typically allotted."

Parents who perceive that they are receiving frequent and positive messages from teachers demonstrate a tendency to get more involved in their children's education than do parents who do not perceive that they are receiving such communication (Ames, Khoju and Watkins, 1993). Parents appreciate their children's teachers who take the time to concern themselves about their thoughts and beliefs. In fact, parents report that a "personal touch" is the most enhancing factor in school relations (Lindle, 1989).

There are several ways identified by a number of researchers to strengthen parental involvement. Corser (1986; in Flaxman & Inger, 1992) suggested that: parents be involved in school management teams, schools develop workshops and tutoring programs, school-parent teams plan a social calendar, and parents serve as classroom assistants.
An important fact to keep in mind when attempting to strengthen a parent involvement program is that it may take considerable effort to get low-income parents involved (Johnson, 1991). The following are recommendations to assist in overcoming these obstacles:

- have regular meetings to discuss homework, behavior and curriculum
- conduct special parenting skills seminars
- help parents reinforce reading and math skills in children
- teach parents how to help kids with home study
- encourage parent volunteerism
- encourage parents to become educated themselves
- make opportunities for students and parents to learn together
- offer community education classes to get parents to cost to the school

There can be no question as to the ample amount of recommendations for improving the quality of parental involvement. There is no one best way for schools to effectively engage parents in the achievement of their children. Yet, from the above research, there are examples of commonalities that promote effective parental involvement.
CHAPTER THREE
Design and Methodology

Qualitative researchers are interested in answering those "why?" questions (Enquiry Learning, 2003). This study looked to find the determinants that will help parents and school personnel to become better partners in their children's education as well as to understand each other's cultural attitudes.

As previously stated, focus groups were used to investigate the different questions that were posed to the participants as to their involvement in their children's education and school-based activities participation. Focus groups have their advantages and disadvantages. Some of their advantages are that they give insight into not just what participants think but why they think it. They can also reveal consensus and diversity of participants' needs, experiences, preferences, and assumptions. Another advantage is that it allows group interaction such that participants are able to build on each other's ideas and comments to provide an in-depth view not attainable from individual questioning as well as presenting unexpected comments and new perspectives that can be explored easily.

Some disadvantages in using focus groups are that samples are typically small and may not be representative. All participants must be able to congregate in the same place at the same time, which is particularly difficult if the potential participants live in geographically distant regions. They can generate a large amount of qualitative data that is often difficult to analyze. Also, the information collected may be more likely biased by subjective interpretation than is the case with quantitative methods as well as having
more outspoken individuals dominating the discussions. Viewpoints of less assertive people are often difficult to assess (Academy, 2004)

(Patton, 2002) states the following about qualitative interviewing and focus groups:

"The purpose of qualitative interviewing is to capture how those being interviewed view their world, to learn their terminology and judgments, and to capture the complexities of their individual perceptions and experiences. This openness distinguishes qualitative interviewing from closed questionnaire or test used in quantitative studies. Such closed instruments force respondents to fit their knowledge, experiences, and feelings into the researcher's categories. The fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms."

The design of this study will be the use of three focus groups.

The first focus group encompassed parents from P.S. 228Q; four teachers from the same school made up the second focus group and the third group consisted of administrators. More than one focus group is necessary as a single group of people would be too limited and not produce any characteristic insights (Babbie, 1999). The qualitative form of inquiry is holistic and concerned with interrelationships: its meaning is established inferentially (Denzin, 2000). Generating a large amount of descriptive data, the theory follows the data. In other words, theory is produced inductively, not deductively (de Silva, 2001).

Research Design

For the purposes of this study, the researcher selected a Pre K – Grade Two school in Jackson Heights, New York which is part of Queens County, one of the five counties of New York City. It is one of the eleven school located in Jackson Heights. There are nine elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. The P.S. 228Q school population as of May 2004 is 354 students. The school offers many
programs for parents to attend and benefit from such as ESL (English as a Second Language) evening and Saturday classes, staff and parent art classes, Parent Coordinator Parental Workshops, nutrition workshops, parent counseling and the Parents and Teachers Association.

The researcher contacted the Regional Superintendent in order to meet and describe the objective of the study. The researcher requested permission to use the identified school and whether it is a feasible place to conduct a study. The superintendent approved and notified the principal of P.S. 228Q to establish intent. Letters were generated providing an explanation of the study and forwarded to the administrators, parents and teachers. They were told that all participants would be requested to sign a permission form (along with permission to use audio taped responses). They were also informed of a neutral locale to serve as a meeting place, the dates and times of the meeting and the length of time for the projected discussions. Refreshments were served.

The researcher developed a question standard that was comprised of direct and pensive questions that were used and asked of the participants during a two hour session. Although the questions may seem spur-of-the-moment, the questions were developed in advance as a result of much thought and effort on the part of the researcher in order to obtain many perspectives from the participants and therefore obtain a better understanding of the problem.

Instrument for Data

Interview questions used for the focus groups were reviewed by a jury of experts in parental involvement such as Parent Coordinators, Bilingual Specialists and Instructional Support Specialists from various districts in different parts of New York City. The
primary research questions come from research articles and other dissertations that explore questions from the literature base. From these questions, the researcher developed the questions for the focus groups and in turn these questions were reviewed by a panel of experts.

Data Analysis

The design of this study was the use of three focus groups. The first focus group encompassed six parents from the identified school; four teachers from the same school made up the second focus group and the third group consisted of four administrators. All data collected was qualitative. After the three focus groups have been formed and interviewed, a transcription of the interviews was reviewed using inductive analysis to discover patterns, themes and categories from the data. After the researcher completed identifying, defining and elucidating the categories, a manageable classification/coding scheme started the analysis of the data through the creation of a framework which produced for the purposes of organizing and describing the data collected during the focus group reviews. Upon completion of said framework, the researcher reviewed the framework for convergence and divergence issues, determine substantive significance, cross-classified different dimensions to generate new insights about how the data can be organized and reviewed for patterns not immediately obvious in the initial inductive analysis. Thereafter, the researcher sought comparisons, causes, consequences and relationships that have developed out of this research.
CHAPTER FOUR
Presentation and Analysis of the Data

The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of culturally diverse parents as it relates to their role in their children’s education. It also sought to understand their attitudes toward how they shared responsibility with their children’s school and teachers. The study also looked to comprehend intentional and unintentional behaviors of teachers and how they affected parental involvement. It also offered information on how to support parents from culturally diverse backgrounds that are often overlooked in educational and social policy. The following research questions were formulated to guide this research study:

1. What are the perceptions of culturally diverse parents in the education of their children?

2. How can understanding of these cultural differences assist educators and administrators in developing techniques to broaden the involvement of culturally diverse parents in early elementary education programs?

Qualitative measures through the use of focus groups were used to obtain the feelings and attitudes of the parents, teachers and administrators. Different questions were posed to the participants as to their involvement in their children’s education and school-based activities participation. The first focus group encompassed six parents from P.S. 228Q; four teachers from the same school made up the second focus group and the third group consisted of three administrators.
Chapter IV discussed the results of the analysis obtained from this qualitative research design study. This chapter commences with a presentation and discussion of the three focus groups obtained for this study.

Analysis of Discussions

Teacher Focus Group Questions

For the first focus group, all four teachers were present for the meeting which took place in the Principal’s conference room of Public School 228Q. Within this interview set, the researcher asked the teachers the following questions:

Question #1: "What do you think parents understand as to their role in the education of their children?"

Teacher #4 answered first by stating, "I think the parents understand that they have a very important role in their child’s academic success and from my experience in my classroom, the parents are extremely involved and they are always participating and assisting with the homework. The parents, if they see that the child is struggling with a particular subject area, they’ll work with that child on the particular subject area. I’ve noticed that, especially with math, there are a lot of new concepts, especially in first grade and the parents, especially after the parent-teacher conference, they know specific examples of what to work on them with and they help them in that particular area.”

Teacher #3 stated the following: “It has been my experience that parents are well aware of participating in their child’s education, however, I have noticed that there is a higher level of participation that seems to wean off in the middle grades and high school years and I don’t know if it has anything to do with the fact that parents aren’t as capable of helping with the more complex work that the children seem to get as they advance in
the school years or if it's that they leave the job of educating to the teachers. They feel that maybe at that level, the teacher would be the better person to help out with the child's learning process."

Teacher #2 added the following: "I agree with teacher #3 and 4. It's basically a wide spectrum; you get both sides. You get the ones who are gang-ho and want to help the kids and see willing to help in the classroom like if you need anything cut or collected, they are more than willing to help. Then you have another end where they think that their job is to teach the values and our job is to teach the education and you have to struggle to get their support. You see that a lot in special education because they're reluctant to say that there even is a problem."

Teacher #1 stated that "I have plenty of experience with parents; a lot of parents come from different cultures, different countries and they have a totally different understanding of what education is in their country as opposed to what their responsibility is in the United States. So a lot of them are very trusting and feel that the school is the one that has to do the job in terms of teaching values as well as education. I agree with all three teachers that there is a spectrum, a big difference, in the way that parents are in this school, we're very fortunate in this school, but in other areas and in other schools, it's totally different and there's a big problem especially with communication. Parents are very much afraid if that they don't speak the language, they're afraid with immigration so there's a lot of different factors as to why parents don't come forward sometimes. It's not that they don't care but it's a lot of factors."

Question #2: "What is your definition of parental involvement?"
Teacher #1 responded by stating the following: "I'm answering as a mother and as a teacher. Parental involvement, to me, is a parent who has to be aware of what's going on in the classroom. The parent should know what the teacher is doing with his/her child and has to work together with the teacher. The parent has to understand that even though we're (the school) going to have extended hours, the parent still has to work with the child at home. There must be a very close working partnership between the parent and the teacher."

Teacher #2 followed by saying that "My definition of parent involvement is not only just willing to be available to come on field trips and it's much more than that; it's also being the reinforcement at home of what you're learning here and it's not just the values, it's also the academics and also bringing in, as you were saying, the culture into the classroom, letting in if you have ideas or you want to celebrate a certain thing and it's not just your child celebrating but being willing to share it with the entire class."

Teacher #3 added: "My idea of parental involvement is a combination of what the previous two teachers said. It would be very important for parents to understand their responsibility in the educational process of their youngster that it's very important that they understand that they're not just to take over at the hour when we release them but that it continues throughout their entire day whereas for instance whatever is being worked on at school, I would say that it should be an extension of that at home. For instance, if my daughter was studying when was a child and I can only compare my example as a mom too, if she was studying say the solar system at school, I felt the need to take her on an excursion to the planetarium where we would get some real life experiences to associate them with the experiences that are being taught from the
textbooks and workbooks at school, yes like enrichment so that you know I think that students/children learn best when they have some experiential background to bring to the learning experience otherwise it's just concepts to them and it's not anything that they can actually personalize. So I think that parents need to know the importance of that and that it's more important than just doing the homework but put the books away and end the day that way. Also, I think that parents need to be models in the home. There should be time set aside with the television off and some reading, conversation and interacting needs to happen that would reinforce the skills being taught in school. I have some early childhood memories where we would sit around as a family and just talk about the day that we had and we weren't allowed to say that 'it was OK' or 'the day was OK', that wasn't good enough. My mom and dad wanted to know at least two or three examples of what did happen at school, in subject areas or even in socialization times in the lunchroom or at recess. So it's a very well-rounded responsibility for parents in regards to their children."

Teacher #4: "I agree with all three of the previous teachers that spoke. As I heard them talking, I was thinking of my own mother. I have younger sisters that are in the fifth grade and they're twins. I now see how she was involved because I'm seeing it from a teacher's point of view now. Her cultural values are different; she would expect from what you learned in school that you already retain that information and should know how to do that homework at home. So sometimes she would get upset and say, 'You were not paying attention in school' instead of sitting down and helping them. So I think a lot of it has to do with the way they were raised and the way they were brought up because my grandmother also felt the same way. She would say, 'Don't they teach you values in
school; don’t they teach you how to sit properly; don’t they teach you how to behave when you come home’ and the kids were just bouncing off the wall but the parents aren’t teaching them that because they’re expecting the school to do that. That reminded me of, I know because my mother still says it, and she’ll say, ‘I can’t believe that you don’t know this’; then she would write a letter to the teacher asking the teacher to please explain it to her daughter. Yet now the work is harder especially the math work in the fifth grade and I don’t think that she’s able to assist them in that way but that’s how she was raised.

Question #3 - “How can teachers affect a positive consensus with parents about their role in learning community?”

Teacher #4 – “I think first meeting with the parents and discussing what they feel that particular child has issues with. Then modeling for the parents; how you do it in the classroom and if they’re having difficulty reading ‘word wall’ words or showing them how you do it in the classroom. Model or act like the parent is the child and that’s how you teach the child so that they know how to do it when they get home. Also inviting the parents to come to the classroom and see how the child interacts with the other children and how your day goes, the flow of the day and see how they can add more to what the child is learning.”

Teacher #1 – “The best thing, the ideal situation is when you do speak the language of the parent because parents will open up to you. A common language is always something that people becoming trusting to the other but the best thing to do is bring the parent in. You’ve got to get the parent involved; you’ve got to show them what your teaching techniques are in the classroom so that they can apply it at home.”

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Teacher #4 - "When we had the parents come in for like 'Meet the Parents' orientation to watch the children in the classroom, we usually do the testing with the children one on one, the 'E-class' or in Spanish, the 'El Sol', the parent was able to sit with me while I was doing the testing with her child and she saw her child was reacting, how she was saying the word and how she was answering the questions and she was getting upset with the child by saying, 'You know how to say this, you know how to say this' but she saw what we had to go through in order for the child to answer the question. So she said, 'now I understand what you have to deal with and what it entails.' So now she knows she can work with her child on that specific strategy as an example and that helped her see it from a different point of view. Therefore, instead of saying, 'you're not listening in school', she can work on her strategy that she needs, whatever it is, but it has to be an open communication between the teacher and the parent especially in the same language."

Teacher #3 - "I definitely agree with what you're saying and one of the things that will help parents to want to become part of the learning community is if they know what their role is and what it is that is expected of them to do to help their children. So that is why I agree that you need to provide workshops so that you can empower them. It's very hard for a parent to know what direction to take in terms of helping their child if they have no clue as to what it is they're supposed to help with. For example, in our building we offer parent workshops for tests such as the 'E-class', 'E-pal', etc. where we give them information as to what this test is asking their child, well assessment actually, because not much testing goes on at this level, which is great so that the parent understands that this is what is expected of my child, they have to listen to a reading
passage and after listening to it, they’re expected to respond by answering questions and that they have to stick to answering the question. They can’t wander away from the question too much and use details from the story in order to help them answer the question so that when they do certain activities at home, when they read stories, they can hone in on those types of skills so that they’ll be able to say, ‘well you know, give me more information about this’, they’ll ask more questions about the book read, more about the character; this is the type of stuff that will be required of them in the testing or assessment situation. So, empowering parents by giving them the tools that they need so that they can understand what is expected of their children so that they can help them be better students.

Teacher #2 – “I agree with the workshops, empowering them and giving them goals. In my teaching experience from my state of Arizona, there was a time when you get the reluctant. Just like the kids, you have to get the parents excited about education. I recall this one child, he was a fourth grader, and he would just come in and not even sit up straight; he would just slump over. So it was like ‘how can I get him motivated’ and so I figured ‘talking to the parents’. The parents said, ‘it’s OK’. They were from Mexico and they said that he would be in the family business so education was not important to them. I was kind of like ‘OK, so when he takes over the family business’; I thought I’d approach it that way. It took me a lot of kind of ‘come-up’ because this is my second year of teaching, thinking ‘OK, what do I need to do to get the parents excited.’ So I had to call them up and get them by making lots of positive phone calls. ‘You don’t know what your child did today! Blah, blah, blah! They would start getting excited because I would stress to them that the skills that he learns here today will only make
your family business better! So just like you get the kids motivated, you have to also get the parents motivated too."

Question #4 - "How can administrators affect a positive consensus with parents about their role in the learning community?"

Teacher #2 - "I have to say at this school – high expectations not only of the teachers and the students but of the parents and I think that brings them in a lot. I mean the parents know that they are welcomed here and they have the availability to speak to people in many languages predominantly in Spanish but, if not, there's always someone to help out. Things are available for them; workshops are available and the Parent Coordinator is an excellent resource. I know some schools you go to are like a 'lock down'; you can't see those teachers but here we're a little more open, a little more flexible and I definitely have more high expectations."

Teacher #1 - "Comparing this setting as to other settings, I can understand why this school has a great academic achievement because you have the administrator who is very positive; she doesn't behave like an administrator with the parents. She just welcomes them; there's a lot of warmth. As a parent, I would be very comfortable. They don't feel intimidated and they feel like family. So I have seen other administrators, forget about those administrators! You can't walk in, you can't see anybody; it's a setting where parents would be turned off and not wanting to interact with the administrators or the teachers or be cooperative. It's almost like an enemy-type of thing; you don't open your mouth, you don't want to say this, you don't want to say too much because they don't feel comfortable."
Teacher #3 – "I have to agree. The atmosphere is one of family, loving and warm. The parents feel very welcomed because their diversities, even though there's a large Hispanic population, they are different nationalities and cultures within this building and these differences are celebrated and recognized such things like dinners and luncheons and I noticed that even in the lunchroom, this was something that I thought would make any parent feel a part of this building where the flags are hanging, representing all the different countries that these students represent in this building, a sense of pride, a sense of belonging is all evident and the administrator in this building is the person responsible for developing that whole attitude. It is just a wonderful thing that parents practically live in this building; they contribute of themselves and are welcomed to contribute of themselves. In other buildings that I've taught in for many years, parents were shunned. They really did not want the parents in the building because for whatever reason, I don't know what was tried to be hidden, but in this building, everything is wide open because it is wonderful things occur here. So we celebrate the parents and their backgrounds and their diversity and I think that is what make them feel a part; they have a very good sense of belonging and that's important."

Teacher #4 – "I agree with the other teachers that spoke. It starts with the administration and it stems down to everybody else. I started student-teaching here and just from the way I felt here, I graduated college and then went to another school and the administrator at that particular school would turn her face when I would say 'hi'. So just from that experience, I said that as soon as I finished, I would never come back here and visit. I felt so bad because I grew attached to my students. I came back to this school to volunteer from four to five months until I started working as a substitute and I kept
coming here because it felt like this was a family. The administration has a big deal to do with it and that’s how I know that the parents are so involved in this school and they don’t mind staying the extra hours or doing the extra work. She commends the parents that stay here like, for example, the multicultural dance. They’re names are called over the loudspeaker and certificates are given. Even at the P.T.A. meetings at other schools, the principal speaks only for about two or three minutes and then leaves; the administration of this school is wonderful especially the administrator because she stays for the whole meeting and participates in all the activities which parents need to feel that her presence is here because it’s something that empowers them to do more for their kids. She also lives in this community and that says a lot.”

Teacher #3 – “She embraces these children as if they were her own children as well. So parents, when they see someone that going to love their child the way you love your child genuinely then you’re going to do the best and everything you can. Teacher #4 – “She has a balance; she’s not too strict or too calm about everything. There has to be a balance and the parents know that she is strict and that she has high expectations but the child is also loved the way the parent treats the child.”

Teacher #2 – “She can specifically name the names of certain students; I would say she know the names of all students. She watches them grow like you said like a family. She follows them and even when they go to the other school, she’s looking out and says ‘what’s going on with ‘my’ kids.”

Question #5 - “How can teachers and administrators make parental involvement more meaningful to parents?”

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Teacher #2 – “I think one of the key things as I said before is the culture, inviting them in to be exposed and teach the children about the cultures that are available there. For example, when we do our multicultural dance and we have Chinese New Year’s coming up, we’re going to be doing a celebration for that. So just getting involved that way and teachers being willing to say ‘OK, we’re opening up the classroom for the parents and we’re willing to put this in our lessons to enrich I think is one way of getting both involved.”

Teacher #1 – “I just started in October and I can say from observing this school that there seems to be an open communication between the parents, teachers and the administrators. So I think I can see a lot of positive things happening in a setting like this. There is a lot of communication because there are a lot of people who speak the same language as the parents and I think that’s what’s working here. It’s one of the key factors. The administrator is open, compassionate and that you have a lot of people speaking the language is what makes it work.”

Teacher #2 – “I know one of the things here is something called ‘the common goal’. We all have a common goal as teacher, parents and administrators and the common goal is the student. We all want them to be successful; we want them to be able to function in society and as long as there’s that common goal that’s agreed upon, that’s what makes it work.”

Teacher #3 – “A shared vision is the most meaningful thing is that we can give to parents in order to get them involved. They should understand clearly the goals, the expectations and the standards and how to accomplish them.”
Teacher #4 – "The administrator and the teacher always has an open door policy for the parents and allow the parents to speak what they have to say and not treating the parents as if they have nothing to say. Last year, I had an incident with one of my students and the parent was really upset. It must have been a miscommunication or something but the administrator had us all sit down together and work it out somehow but she allowed that time with everything that was going on; I think it was one of the craziest days and all these emails were coming in and she said, 'Don’t worry about it. Just sit down and talk about it'. So I think that as far as an administrator is concerned, she plays the part of a mediator."

Question #6 – Should there be a cultural sensitivity course in your graduate level educational coursework?

Teacher #1 – "I agree. I’ve seen it done in the police department. It may not work but at least you have some exposure. I do agree; you should have some sensitivity courses. If you’re going to work in the city with a diverse culture, you should have some understanding of what you’re going to be confronted with."

Teacher #4 – "I’m still working on my master’s program. I had to take a course in Queens College on cultural diversity. It was by far the best course I’ve ever taken because it sheds light on a lot of issues and things we don’t notice. You look at things from one point of view but then you start seeing things like a movie one didn’t realize that was so biased or racial. It’s like a movie that everyone’s seen but it just puts a different light on it. A lot of times, we just don’t realize that we may be saying things that are offensive like ‘Indians’ instead of ‘Native Americans’; that’s just an example of a
way that people can be offensive and we should be more careful. I know Queens College is offering this course and I don’t know if there are other colleges offering this.”

Teacher #3 — “In the administrative program that we both participate in, that’s a very big piece. It’s a very important piece and one that I was happy to see there because, at the College of St. Rose which is the site program, I’ve noticed, as one of the few minorities in the cohort, that it is a topic that up and coming administrators need and be exposed to. They’re going to go to schools with students of diverse backgrounds. They need to be able to understand things. I learned from this course that children of Hispanic background, I don’t know if it’s true of all children of Hispanic background, but that when you’re speaking to them, they have a tendency of lowering their heads. There are people, teachers and educators which would insist that they should hold their heads up while they are speaking to them; that the children should look at them and not look away with a sign of disrespect when in fact they are respecting you by lowering their heads. It is a form of cultural respect and these things are important as educators and administrators to understand the differences in the way the people are raised and brought up and how they interact and that’s very important.”

Teacher #2 — “My undergraduate studies at Arizona State University West had cultural awareness course. Then when I went for my master’s program in counseling, I took another cultural awareness course; it’s very important because you’re going to be counseling students and you must be aware that they may not look at you in the eyes and that they celebrate and that you don’t talk about certain things. I also think that you start even younger because it should not be at the college level but it should be in the high
schools, middle schools and in the elementary schools. I feel that it’s happening here that we are very culturally aware and we try to integrate it into our lessons.”

Question #7 - What do you take away with you from your learning experience at this school?

Teacher #3 - “My experience in this building in the past three years has given me an enlightenment that I wasn’t able to get as an educator in the past 10 years of experience. Three years of my life here have impacted the way that I look at everything in the way that I educate children in a totally different light. This administrator will look at you as a person and see the potential in you. I probably would never have pursued a program in administration if it had not been for her encouragement. I always knew that I had organizational qualities and abilities to motivate students and adults and just be the type of person that would probably do well in a leadership role but I just never saw myself actually doing it because I just didn’t want to be a part of what I saw other school administrators looking like. I did not want to turn into that creature but now I upon seeing how a building can be run with excellence, love, compassion and sensitivity, it has completely changed my outlook of what future might hold. In fact, I was ready to throw in the towel because I have three years till retirement and pursue another career but now I have a different outlook and it’s because that exposure.”

Teacher #2 - “I came from a state where they’re very Republican, very conservative so cultural awareness wasn’t really there. Either you were from Mexico or from the United States! I’ve been here for four years at this school when I first moved here and I just feel that it’s made me a better person. I grew up in New York but I moved to Arizona and kind of lost it. You forget about the diversity and coming back here, to
me I feel that when I do become a mother, I can pass that on and no matter where I am just do that. I can do that as well when I become an administrator."

Teacher #4 - "When I first started student teaching, I was just taking college courses but this was the first school I was student teaching. The first week I was student teaching, I said to one of the teachers that this was not what I wanted to do and just want to graduate. I was there for about a week and it felt right and the teacher told me that I didn’t realize I was perfect for the job and I was meant to be a teacher. I told her that I didn’t see it. Just from the love that you got from the school and just from feeling the empowerment that they trusted you with the kids and they said not to worry even the administrator said that I could stay with the children. I felt like ‘wow, I was trusted with the children and I don’t even have a license’ which was amazing. The sense of making you feel all this power and you don’t even have it yet so she gives you all this authority and confidence. Sometimes you can’t believe that you’re doing it but you are actually doing it because she’s giving you that extra push. Also, like she said, the love. I recently lost my father and I wasn’t expecting so many people to come to the funeral and it was like a ray of sunshine in the clouds. All these teachers were coming into the funeral home and it was unbelievable. It’s like a family and it made me feel like I was a special part of this school and it’s because it stems down from the administration. I feel that she created that."

Teacher #5 - "I said to my administrator that she reminds me of a movie called ‘Pay it Forward’ and I see how she encourages other people to do things that they didn’t think they could do. So if she could do that for us, we can pass it on to the children."

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Teacher #2 - "I remember first coming here and she told me that I could do kindergarten and I said ‘kindergarten, oh my God, they're little and I don’t know anything about kindergarten’ and I’ve been doing kindergarten for the past four years! Now she tells me to take administration courses and now I am taking administration courses."

The second focus group, which consisted of the six parent volunteers, were present for the meeting which took place at the school’s parent lounge.

Parent Focus Group Interview

Question #1 - "What do you think are the reasons why most parents do not participate in their children’s education?"

Parent #1 - "My opinion is that parents think that they don’t have time or make time to learn what their children are doing in school."

Parent #5 - "I think parents don’t participate actively in the education of their children because of lack of information on how to participate even if there are any language barriers. This is because it happened to me; I felt like an outsider because of my not knowing English but when I came to this school, they showed me how to participate and it opened up a whole new world on how to participate."

Parent #2 - "In my point of view because I’m an immigrant to most immigrants people from Asia and any other country have no idea of the procedures here and are less educated. They want to contribute in their children’s learning but they can’t handle it because of the language problem."

Parent #3 - "I think that many people have a problem participating because of lack of information and lack of time. Many people only dedicate themselves to their
work and do not involve themselves in the education of their children. They look for people to pick up their children and give the excuse that they can't get involved."

Parent #4 - "I did not participate in the education of my children. Now, with my grandchildren, I love to participate here at this school. It gives me great pleasure to participate in all activities."

Parent #6 - "I think that the problem of parents not becoming involved is not so much the lack of information but that the school and the staff are here to teach the children and be more of a caregiver than actual teacher. A lot of parents, including myself, go to work and we forget that we send our children to school and forget that it's a center of academics not a day-care center. So I find that a lot of parents, including myself a lot, that we become involved in other things that we don't take the time to read a piece of paper and see what they're telling us. So I feel that it's mostly on our behalf as parents that we take the time and I see a lot of parents that see it as a day-care center not an academic center."

Parent #2 - "I agree with parent #6. Some parents do think like that and they don't care what the kids learned at school. I do care; I have three kids and I check my children's book bags. I ask them what they did in school but I then stand aside because I trust what the teacher is doing. Their teachers are so responsible and therefore I don't have to involve myself because of the wonderful work that the teacher is doing with my kids."

Parent #6 - "The home is the first school so we are our children's first teachers. If we, as parents, do not become involved what happens is that we lose our kids during critical times such as the going onto a higher grade. The belief here is that the
child is getting bigger and can be independent. It doesn’t work that way. If we don’t become involved when they’re little, the child becomes accustomed to believing that mommy and daddy don’t care about their education. So I feel that as a parent, that is our biggest role because if I had not become involved in my son’s education, I would have lost him. That’s my opinion but I see it a lot because there are children walking the streets, first and second graders, walking around and I say, "Where are the parents?", “Where is the guardian? So they send their children to our school and they’re forgetting that besides being a building where there are teachers and we teach the children, we are not a day care center. That’s my biggest issue, the parents tell their children to just go to school but it’s not for learning purposes. I really think that we as parents must get involved.”

Parent #2 – “I’m not talking about the day care, I’m talking about procedure, punctuality, dress code and their needs. I try to have perfect attendance for my kids even if there’s bad weather. I try to give as much time to the school but due to a younger child at home, I must attend to him and spend time at home. I would really like to spend more time here at the school but I have my responsibilities at home. Still, I’m satisfied with my child’s education; I’m satisfied with my child’s teacher. They are responsible for teaching not for my child’s attitude and not for other needs that should be taught by the parent. I ask other immigrant parents on how their children are doing and they respond by saying that they’re OK. Some people with less education are more interested in their children’s education because since they have less education, their children should be more educated. So they totally depend on the school for the complete education of the children.”

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Parent #5 - "I think, as a Hispanic parent, we have this idea that wealthy people send their children to school and those less fortunate do not and do something else. Yet when they come to this country, they start to think of the school as a babysitting service to take care of your children while you go out and work and you cannot pay a genuine babysitter to do the job. I think these parents see the school as a convenience, cheap and practical, while you go out and work. This is why I believe that there is a difference between other nationalities and us, the Latinos; the other groups see education as a way up and as a way of progress while we see it as a babysitting service and the children begin to believe that it's not important for them to go to school because their parents don't care since their parents will go to work anyway."

Parent #1 - "I have noticed that we have teachers who teach our kids but there is also emotion involved. If you don't get involved in talking to the kids, you will not know if the kids are happy and that's important, if the kids are happy in school and the teachers are doing a great job but sometimes the kids have emotional problems and are afraid to talk to the teacher. Some parents are also afraid to talk to the teacher or the parent coordinator and in order to get the parent involved, you have to show them to put some feeling into it by not only asking 'how the day has been' but by asking for specifics such as 'what activities are going on in school?'"

Question #2 - "What do you think teachers and school administrators can do to motivate parents to participate more? Should teachers and administrators be more culturally sensitive? Should they take courses that will help them learn more about other cultures?"
Parent #2 - "The teachers and the school staff do a great job in involving the parents, but it depends on parents; it depends whether or not they want to come to school. Some parents have responsibilities and they have no time to come to school while other parents have the time but prefer not to come to school. I am one of the few parents happy to come here because the school welcomes me and gave me a chance to participate; most people think 'why didn't the parents come?' and they'll say 'it's useless and why bother?' but I say that it's not useless. When I do something here at the school, the other parents and my children will say, 'Did a parent do that?' 'Did my mother do that?' I get very happy to see especially that my participation is being appreciated. My children will say that they are not alone in school but that their mother is here as well."

Parent #3 - "I feel that teachers and school administrators can motivate parents more by trying to incorporate more of our native languages because the language barrier causes one to be an outcast and not feeling like participating in anything. When things are done in one's own language, you feel welcomed; when they speak in another language, obviously you don't understand and you feel like you don't belong. Of course, one does not want to be where one is not wanted."

Parent #3 - "I think that the schools send out information in order for parents to participate but the desire comes primarily from the parents themselves. Sometimes school newsletters are sent written in English, and sometimes one understands what is said but mostly other parents can't understand what is written and therefore feel that since the newsletter was written in English, the meeting will also be conducted in English and not feel at ease in participating because they won't understand what is
being said. Another thing is that it depends on the parent’s feeling on participation. Some parents don’t even check or help with their children’s homework. I still think that the school should send some any type of information even if the parent does not speak the language.”

Parent #1 – “I would like to elaborate on what parent #2 said; it’s true that information does get out there but it’s just getting the parent to get involved a little. Sometimes they think that because they don’t speak the language, they don’t have to try. I still think that the school should send out letters to keep on trying to get the parents involved. Here at our school, we have interpreters so, I don’t think that the parents should have any excuse for not participating due to language barriers.”

Parent #2 – “The school sends letters so many times but I think that people want to see if it’s beneficial or not. They want to know if it will be of benefit to them to come to the school; they want to know if these meetings will bring them information on how to obtain a job or financial know-how. My belief is that participation brings a hidden benefit; it’s for my child and for me. It brings me lots of happiness to see that I’ve done something, still most people are materialistic and do not see the benefits from participating in the school. They just want to know what they can get, financially speaking, out of participating in their children’s school.”

Parent #3 – “I feel as a parent that teachers feel that it’s only a job; from 8:20 AM to 2:40 PM, they’re gone but they’re parents too and have to attend to their children as well. Still they should take some time to inform the school parents of upcoming meetings and that we would like for you to attend these meetings. Papers are papers and the parents get them but they don’t read them. We need the teachers to go out
there and involve the parents. I feel that this is the way we’ll get more parents to come to the school. We could also offer gifts at these meetings. For example, the ‘BJ’ store offers samples while one shops so the school should do the same in order to motivate the parents to come. We need the parents, the PTA, everyone to get involved and all it takes is just one parent to make it count. SSL overall I really feel that it should be more the teacher to help the parents get involved because when a child sees his teacher at a meeting, they look concerned; the teacher looks like she/he is really interested in my child’s education. When you don’t see that teacher in the meeting, you feel that you don’t have to participate because my child’s teacher doesn’t even care.”

Parent#2 – “More parents will come if the meetings involve all students not just the highlights of some students such as awards ceremonies when it is a selected few students that will be talked about and not their children.”

Parent #5 – “The success of the school will be when it thinks about people in general. The school should welcome them by being more genuine and sincere rather than just following rigid rules and regulations. One should be treated like a person not like a number on a list of things they must attend to. The school, of course, should be more culturally sensitive. They should dedicate time to inculcate the cultures and customs of other countries. The teachers should also learn about these different countries and their cultures because they will benefit by getting more people to participate in their children’s education faster. The teachers will also find that they will be able to teach the children better and faster by knowing the different ways that people are. They would find a faster way to teach via the heart which is a more
sensitive manner of teaching rather than through the cold manner of theory and
practice which takes more time for the child to absorb. As a mother, I feel that if
you’re more sensitive about the way you approach a child, you will get more results
than by just approaching a child with books and lecture only.”

Parent #1 - “How a teacher talks to a child and how the child shows his/her
emotions are things I find fascinating. I like to see how a teacher deals with
children’s emotions.”

Parent #6 - “Educators should take classes in cultural sensitivity because a lot of
teachers focus on only what they know. In Queens, we’re a big melting pot; we have
all different types of cultures and diversities and we should become knowledgeable in
other people’s cultures. This is the way we will get people to come to the schools.
For example, Chinese New Year was celebrated and the Asian parents saw how well
we knew about the history and the culture. They will say, ‘We’re being
acknowledged!’ It’s not just about the Hispanic or African-American culture but the
many other cultures that exist and are coming into this country on a daily basis.

Educators and administrators need to take these culture sensitivity courses because
there will be times when, for example, a child may not come to school and the school
staff should be aware that it’s the Jewish New Year or Kwanzaa being celebrated.
They should not make it a big issue because of an absence but to recognize that there
are other reasons for missing school. We should see people from other countries as
people and not as objects.”

Parent #2 - “There should be a multicultural day. In this way, other people can
see how other people dress and everyone can learn about other cultures.”
Question #3 - "Do you think more parents would participate if the school offered workshops on how to help their child if they were held in other languages such as Spanish?"

Parent #5 - "I think it would be a great idea if the workshops were offered in my language. You identify yourself with known things and it makes one feel comfortable becoming more open to ideas. If the teachers were to learn more about the different cultures, they would become more magnetic because their knowledge of other people and their cultures would make them more likeable to the parents seeking some identifiable comfort. It's like seeing pictures that are familiar to you and you then become the next picture to be added to the group thus forming a parental mosaic. Therefore, it is important that they do speak your language although it should not be the ultimatum because one should learn the language of the country if one is to participate in other projects and widen one's world of knowledge. In learning all that you can, your child will see that you too are doing your best to learn and they will in turn do the best that they can for themselves. With what you learn, you touch the heart of others."

Parent #6 - "My mother is an immigrant and she's from Ecuador. I went to my mother's country and studied in Ecuador and I only knew Spanish. There were no translations done here and I remember that we had this dictionary that we still have at home and my mother would have to sit and translate everything for me. Then we found someone who would translate things for us. At that time, there were no bilingual parent workshops for us. Parents had to learn the language and it was mandatory. Now that I'm a parent, it's great that letters are done in different
languages but I feel that there’s a problem that we’re having in society. Parents are relaxing more and they are not realizing that they need to learn the language. Yes, it’s great to have workshops in different languages but not always. You need to have it done in the language that is spoken in that country and in the United States, it’s English. What happened 30-40 years ago when workshops were not done in your language? You had to learn the language in order to know what was going on. You become more knowledgeable and what I’ve noticed is that when we have the workshops in Spanish or in other languages, parents are still not coming to the school. What’s happening is that parents are lying back saying that they do not have to go. The problem is that they’ll also say that it’s their right and yes it is their right not to attend but it’s also your right to learn the language. A lot of parents are falling back by saying that all meetings should be done in their language. Why should the meetings be done in your language? What happened when the first immigrants had no one to translate for them? For example, you go to the post office and they ask you a question in English, they are always looking for someone to translate for them. Parents are falling behind and feeling comfortable that there will be always someone to translate for them.”

Parent #2 – “It’s a problem from all cultures. You can learn English and English is an international language. You can use it everywhere. It is a necessity to learn English. Many of the parents do not come to the meetings because they say it’s a waste of time since they are done in Spanish. They do not do it in English and it keeps them from coming.”

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Parent #1—"I come from Puerto Rico and when I came to the U.S., I was always in a fight because I did not know the language. I realized that I had to learn the language because it was my way of communicating to my teachers of the things that were going on in my daily school life. I feel that all parents should learn the language. There's a lot of information out there for them and they should make an all out effort to learn the language."

Parent #6—"Parents are too relaxed and feel that it's their right to have all things translated for them. Why? If you go to Colombia, Paraguay or Chile, they're not going to translate things for you in English; they are going to tell you things in Spanish and you're going to have to try to figure things out for yourselves. An American goes to one of our countries, they come well prepared by speaking Spanish or at least attempting to do so. As parents, we look for someone to translate things for us when we go to the hospital, post office, etc. Why not learn the language? We've in this country and the previous immigrants had to do so. I don't care if you're learned or not, if you're a carpenter, garbage man, lawyer, anything, just learn the language. We assume that there should be a translator because that is our right to have one but why not learn the language and be responsible. We must learn the language. I love my language and I love being a Latina but I am conscious of the fact that I must learn the language in order to survive and so should other parents. There are parents I run into on the streets and they ask me to translate for them; I don't mind but I look at the face of that person and it's a twenty year old girl and I wonder to myself 'what's going on with society?' 'What is happening to education?' People are putting more of an emphasis in other things than learning the language; therefore, I
think this type of behavior comes from the home. You have to involve your children. When children see their parents involved in learning, they'll say 'money is learning; she's going to school'. Still many people will say 'I don't want to go to that workshop because I don't know English; I don't understand' but we have to do something on our part. Parents will still insist that the workshop be held in their language but I believe that we must put something of our part to learn the language in order to be more involved. We should sit and listen in English and what we don't understand will be translated to them in Spanish. Still we do hold a majority of workshops in Spanish and, worse, we have parents who will still ask questions such as 'teacher, what did you just say? I did not understand that part!' Then I say to myself 'what language am I speaking? Am I speaking Spanish or Chinese?' Then I realize that the problem is not so much the lack of understanding the language but the parents are not well educated in their own language. They are illiterate. Therefore I think parents have to educate themselves and find ways to do so. They have to be realistic and be honest and come out and say 'teacher, I cannot read nor write. I need your help'. I know it is embarrassing but they should not be embarrassed because that is what the school is here for; to help them. The school will come to realize that there is a portion of their population that needs help and will try to develop ways on how to help them. They will see a need for bilingual classes whether they are in Spanish or Urdu but at least some help will be given to them. If the parent doesn't inform the school staff of its need, the school cannot help them. So the workshop can be given in Spanish or Urdu and still they'll be asking questions. This makes me
Frustrated. Sometimes the ignorance will produce parents that are rude and this makes it all the harder to deal with."

Parent #5 - "I believe in what parent #6 has just said. Ignorance can make people sometimes rude and they can adopt a behavior of indifference. They sometimes adopt an aggressive behavior because they don’t understand what’s going on because they do not want to admit this. Therefore, an incorrect view of this person is perceived because of their lack of education. A study should be conducted regarding the different types of "parent grouping", for example, those that have no schooling at all, those that have some and those that are more advanced in their education in order to have a better understanding of these people which has a lot to do with the way they are and what they’ve gone through."

Parent #3 - "Yes, more parents would attend workshops held in their native language but I also think that becomes a more personal issue because many parents like myself are not that well educated and I’ve tried to participate in my children’s education. I have two children born here and two others born in my country. The two older ones were brought to this country more than three years ago and they were very scared because they didn’t know English but I inculcated in them that they were going to come here and learn the language. I have helped them as much as I could and when I did not know something, I would consult with a dictionary. My husband would also help more so because he’s been here longer and understands English more. One of my younger boys, who is now in third grade, started Pre-K here. Although I did not know that much English, I became more involved with his education by volunteering in his classroom, with the Parent Coordinator and any
other activities held here at the school. Since the recent birth of my child, I've had to lessen the amount of volunteering at the school. I really believe that each parent has their own educational philosophy, although I am educationally limited, I do try to participate as much as possible. I also try to go to all the meetings and if not me, then my husband goes. We make the time; we always try to participate. Therefore, I believe that parent participation is a personal one, a decision that every parent has to make."

Question #4: "Do you believe more parents would participate in these workshops if they were held in the evening?"

Parent #2 - "I want to say that nobody wants to participate in the evening because everyone wants to rest. I mentioned earlier that everyone wants to get something out of it like if there is coffee being served; unless something is worth their while, they won't attend."

Parent #5 - "Since I'm not working, I can participate at any time. If I were working, I would not be participating and it would be important to me to have workshops that would accommodate my time schedule. Although there are some businesses that allow you to take time off for school business, the majority of businesses do not allow flexibility in work schedules for their employees to take time off to address their child's academic needs. The schools should not only provide evening workshops but research "comfortable" hours when parents can come in for these workshops."

Parent #2 - "The care of children is extremely important as to when the meetings should be held. If there is no one to watch my children, I cannot go to the meeting."

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Question #5 — “Do your children share with you what goes on in the classroom/school? If they do, what do you think and/or do about it?”

Parent #4 — “I like to share with my child; I’ll ask her as soon as she gets home from school ‘how was your day?’ and if she has a great day, we celebrate the situation. If she had a bad day, I try to morally support her as much as I can.”

Parent #5 — “I think that if a child brings home any news from school, it is beneficial because the child will share more than those children that do not bring home any news and parents will not be able to help them. In my case, it is difficult because my daughter does not share with me what happened during the school day. I make it my business to look over her school books and notebooks and make suggestions regarding any comments made by the teacher in the notebooks. I’ll then ask her about what the teacher was trying to say. I’ll be supportive by saying ‘How lovely! What were you trying to say with this? What does this mean?’ With this type of questioning, she’ll see that I’m interested and only want to help even if she does not want to share with me. It may be her way of being and I must respect that but I do believe that even though your child may not want to share with you, it is up to you to involve yourself in your child’s learning and ask the pertinent questions. If you don’t find out what going on, how are you supposed to help him or her? Sometimes I’ll send a note to the teacher in order to find out what’s going on when I am not able to get the information from my child. Children get distracted and that happens to my daughter so in order to know what is happening, I’ll check with the teacher in order to find out what is expected for the week, the month, etc.”
Parent #2 - "I have a daughter in the eighth grade, a son in third grade and my youngest one is in Pre-K and all of them make me proud. They share with me when they want me to speak with their teachers whenever necessary. For me, this makes my life easier knowing that they trust me and allow me to speak for them on their behalf. For example, I have an excellent relationship with my eldest daughter; it is like a friendship and she shares with me what goes on in the school and I help her out with my advice or go to the school to find out what else I can help her with. The teachers here are wonderful and they always share with me what goes on in the classroom. I am happy to see that my children share with me their school experiences and they are not afraid to tell me anything. You should try to teach your children that this approach is necessary and that one is only here to help them; they should share all ongoing experiences in the classroom, whether it is good or bad, they should feel comfortable telling you what happens in school."

Question #6 - "How do you help your child with his or her homework?"

Parent #1 - "I sit down at my table at home with my four children. I try to explain to them how and why to do things in the way the teacher has asked them to do. I model the behavior for them."

Parent #2 - "I check their homework everyday and maintain a routine for them."

Parent #3 - "I ask my older children if they have homework but I leave them to work by themselves because that they know that they must responsible for their grades. If they do maintain good grades, then my husband and I discuss the situation with them and hold back from them any privileges and certain perks until their grades are better. With the younger children, I sit with them to see what the homework is
and to see if anything is missing from the day's work. I've taught them to be honest with me and share with me if there is anything wrong. I try to help them with all projects to the best of my ability. I also try to teach them to be responsible for all their work."

Parent #4 - "I have a child in third grade and while I'm cooking, she is doing her homework. I am always aware of what she is doing and if there are any problems, I stop what I'm doing and I help her as best possible. She rarely causes me problems, thank God, but I'm there to be as supportive as possible."

Parent #5 - "I help my child by first allowing them to first relax when they come from school. Then I review their books and assignments. I am lucky because at this school, the teachers are well prepared by always having a homework sheet distributed weekly and this helps the children as well, as the parents with what has to be done regarding homework, projects, etc. I also want to say that the way math is being taught here is wonderful because it is taught in a practical manner and the children see why it is important to learn it. I applaud this! I also think that since the school is providing so much information and materials, there is no excuse for parents not to help their children. If I still don't understand what the teacher is asking for regarding the homework, I'll call other parents or anyone able to assist me by either translating or explaining what is being asked to do. I really believe one should just participate and help their child because there are no limits to what one can learn and your child will see how enthusiastic you are about learning. I don't care how busy I am, I want my child to see that I want to help as much as possible and if I can't help, I model the behavior by looking for help in other ways. In that way, my child will see that there..."
are other ways to solve a problem. I don’t even have a computer so we rely on other resources to find answers. As a matter of fact, she won a prize for her research project without the use of a computer and with limited English abilities. As you can see, you can do anything if you put your mind to it.”

Parent #2 – “My child received a good grade on her project and I felt as if I had been the one receiving a good grade. This is a wonderful feeling since I feel that I was able to help her in her project by not only giving academic support but moral support as well.”

Parent #1 – “I wish I had a mother that had gotten more involved in my studies. Because of this lack of interest, I decided that when I had children, I would not do that to them. I help them out as much as possible.”

Parent #6 – “When I was growing up, my mother who is a single mother, helped me out and I am a single mother and I try to help my son as well. I believe in structure and that is something my mother taught me. The routine keeps him in order and that is why structure is very important. An example of this is penmanship exercises. I always made my son practice his handwriting and after so much practice, if you look at his notebook, his writing is beautiful and the teacher is very happy with it. For me education is paramount and this is something I tell my child that will help him in the future.”

Parent #2 – “In whatever practice the school asks us to do, I urge my children to practice and practice in order to make the exercise better.”

Question #7 – “Do you speak and understand English? If not, what do you do to help your child?”
Parent #3 - "I understand a little bit of English. I am lucky that my husband understands more. When he is not home, I use the dictionary for translation purposes. Now, my older children dominate the language and I ask them for help as well. So as I said, either I ask people surrounding me or I resort to a dictionary."

Parent #2 - "I use my language with some subjects but I use English with other subjects and when there is something that we don't understand, we immediately resort to the dictionary."

Parent #5 - "I do not speak, read nor write English; the only way to help my child with his homework is when I use the dictionary or I'll go to the library in order to obtain the answers. As a matter of fact, these two alternatives have been more helpful to me than English language courses. I have been able to learn more English because of these experiences than the ordinary route. I have tried to go to different classes but the time schedule goes against me because of my work responsibilities. I did worry when I had my child because since I only knew Spanish and she was only going to speak Spanish, how was she going to learn English and how was I to help her? I did it step by step and I have been successful in a day by day ritual. I've learned to relax and just work with her at the given time. So I recommend to other parents to just keep their ears open and learn. They'll be able to do things just like other parents in time. Also don't forget that the best resource is the dictionary!"

Parent #1 - "I do speak English; at first I used to give them the answers to their homework. Now, I let them figure it out and when they're to a point that they are about to give up, I then help them out. This I learned from some parenting classes I took a while ago and I found them to be helpful in instructing my children."
Question #8 - "How do you handle any problems when the school personnel speak only English?"

Parent #4 - "I have been lucky because I have always had someone keep me company to translate for me. If not, I have to bring a dictionary and see how I translate the necessary forms, etc."

Parent #5 - "I think that teachers or schools for that matter should guide the parents as to what books and other resources to have in order to help their children. I was fortunate because that happened to me. The teacher was kind enough to recommend the necessary books and materials that would help my child with her schoolwork. She took a while to give me the help but she finally did. She sent me a note saying, 'I did not forget you but I'm trying to find the appropriate books for you that will help you best. I promise to send you a list of books.' She finally did. I also shared my problems with a friend of mine who recommended a particular dictionary; by the way, I found the dictionary being sold by a street vendor for only $10 and it was bilingual! It really turned out to be my best investment because it has helped me so much with my child's schoolwork and with my own problems as well. Therefore, when the school sends a letter home asking for supplies, books such as these should be included in the list. Now, when I go to a place where no one speaks Spanish, I try to understand to the best of my ability and answer that way as well. If I notice that I am not understood, I try to ask them to write down what they are asking of me and I'll go back and have someone translate it for me and then try to resolve the situation."
Parent #2 - “I prepare myself by using the words that will be used at the time. For example, when I came to register my son, I only came with one word in mind and that was: ‘admission’. With that, the secretary was nice enough to give me the necessary papers; I brought them home and reviewed them with my husband and brought them back completed.”

Parent #1 - “Although I do speak English, people do listen and just try to communicate what is on your mind.”

Parent #4 - “When I don’t understand something, I use my hands like sign language. I’ll act it out until someone understands me.”

Question #9 - “Whether you work outside of your home or not, do set time aside to help your child with schoolwork? How much time?”

Parent #1 - “I used to work outside of the home and I would dedicate as much time as possible to my three children. I must admit though that I dedicated more time to them when I’m not working than when I am.”

Parent #2 - “If somebody were to watch my routine with my children, they would say that it is not enough time that I dedicate to them but I believe that I do. I do not feel that I have to be overwhelming them all the time by asking them all sorts of questions. I am giving them my full time but in a different way. I observe them doing their work and I look in their book bags to see if they have enough supplies for school. I allow them to do independent work and help them only when they need my help. I’ll review the work completely only after they’ve done their own work all by themselves.”
Parent #3 - "I do not work; I am a housewife. I have two older kids and two younger ones and I'm always busy. I have to keep my eye on them always so that they do not interfere with one another. So while I'm doing some housework, I'll check the younger ones' work but with the older kids, I rely on their judgment to do their schoolwork correctly. I gauge it by the results of the report card. If the grades are good, then I can leave them alone. If the grades start to suffer, I have to then involve myself more with them and their teachers. I also try to attend all parent-teacher conferences in order to be informed of what is going on in school."

Parent #5 - "I work outside of the house; from 6PM to 9PM, I work with my child on her homework. I also have established a routine for my children. As soon as they get home, they rest a bit then start their homework. I get home, start the evening meal and then sit down with them to see what they've been doing."

Parent #6 - "It is not the quantity of time that you spend with your child is the quality. As time goes on, I can see that with my own child, I don't have to spend a lot of time with him because he knows how to do things for himself. Although, I do surprise visits to the school so that my son sees that I am always interested in his schoolwork. I believe that although one helps a child in an earlier grade, you must be more vigilant when they're older because as they are growing, they seem to lose interest, the hormones are raging and peer pressure is terrible."

Parent #2 - "It's important to always have time for my children because it establishes trust. My oldest daughter looks to me for consult; it is almost like being her best friend but with responsibility. She sees that I'm interested in her and all her
activities and therefore likes to share with me what goes on in school. I'm fortunate that she is this way."

Question #10 — "How do you encourage other members of your family (immediate and/or extended) to support you in your child's education?"

Parent #6 — "My biggest support is my mother and very few, dear friends. Although I do not have a husband, my mother plays a very supportive role in my child's life. My mother is my rock! My mother and my son have a special relationship so much so that a lot of people think that my mother is his mother and I'm his sister. We're very supportive of one another."

Parent #2 — "I have a sister in Denmark and even from far away, my sister will discuss things with my daughter. Even from far away, people will help my children. So much is the support I want you to know that my daughter who is in eighth grade scored 100% on the city-wide exam. I'm so proud of her and it is all because of family support whether here or from afar!"

Parent #5 — "I am not as lucky to have any family with me. It is only my daughter and I but I've been accompanied by great and helpful people. When I see someone that speaks English, I'll ask them to read to her and work with her whenever the school assignments have been difficult. I have also relied on the public libraries for help. The library helps a lot even if you don't speak the language. Although you may not have family with you for support, there is always the library that has been very helpful. It is the best neighbor one can have. I want to take the time to thank you for this interview; I thought it had to do with something else. It has been enlightening. I wish you much luck, success and only the best and I do hope that

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your study contributes information that will help our children and those children to come. Thank you."

Parent #4 - “Just involve yourself and your family!” Parent #5 - “My support here has been my neighbor and I appreciate her very much.”

Parent #1 - “Honestly, I didn’t have anyone to help me including my husband who doesn’t help. I’ve been blessed though because my children come to this school which has been incredibly helpful to me. I also would like to say that this interview has been very helpful to me. It has opened my eyes to many other ideas and possibilities.”

For the third focus group, three of the four administrators were present for the meeting which took place at a facility outside of the school premises.

**Administrator Focus Group Interview**

**Question #1** - “What do you think parents understand as to their role in the education of their children?”

Administrator #3 - “There are different interpretations or meanings when it comes to a parent’s understanding of what parental involvement is. I think that some parents feel that while their role is to support, they also have the responsibility to be a teacher as well for their child. Some of them want to work together with the teacher. Also they feel responsible for the well-being of their child.”

Administrator #2 - “There are educational and cultural backgrounds to consider. For example, I notice that Asian parents have what I call “complete trust” in what we

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do as teachers and administrators. They feel that we know what we're doing and allow us to do our work without any questioning or interruptions."

Administrator #3 - "There are pockets in the population such as working parents that have different work hours and it does interfere with their quality time with their children. There is also the point to be made about different home surroundings. Some children are blessed to have all the necessary items for their schooling while others do not."

Question #2 - "What is your definition of parental involvement?"

Administrator #1 - "My definition of parental involvement is the belief not only in the academic aspects of school but in the social activities as well. I want to know that my school parents can participate in other activities that my school offers and feel comfortable as well doing so."

Administrator #5 - "I agree with Administrator #1; there has to be a 'comfort zone' in my school. I too want the parents to feel welcomed at all times, to come in at any time and enjoy the resources of my school."

Administrator #2 - "I believe in alternative ways of participation not just the customary ways such as only checking homework or signing test papers. There are the social/emotional issues to contend with; there is the child/parent partnership which is one that should be developed and carefully handled."

Question #3 - "How can teachers affect a positive consensus with parents about their role in the learning community?"

Administrator #3 - "Our teachers have a monthly newsletter that show all the wonderful things that are happening at our school; this newsletter also allows our
students to shine by preserving all the good things that they're doing for the school, home and community."

Administrator #1 - "My teachers use a positive tone rather than a negative one. Also when they call the child's home, they always start the conversation by saying positive things that the child is doing in school. The parent will then feel more at ease with what is going on and will try to help in any weak areas that the child may have."

Administrator #3 - "I have different staff members call the homes at different times. It shows that it is not only the teachers that are concerned about something but the whole school that wants to help the child and its family."

Administrator #2 - "Our Parent Coordinator is an asset; she has a wonderful connection with the parents and makes them feel comfortable and always wanting to help out in the school."

Question #4 - "How can administrators affect a positive connection with parents about their role in the learning community?"

Administrator #1 - "I have had to put myself in their shoes; there are times that I have to step thinking like an administrator and think things through as a parent which I am. I have to think how I would like it if this school decision were made and how it would affect me. Remember that you are a parent as well!"

Administrator #2 - "I have what I consider to be an 'open door policy'. I warmly welcome the parents to stop by and share with me their ideas about the school and how to better any programs that we have. Parents are eager to help out with anything that involves their children."
Administrator #3 - "I believe in good listening skills for administrators towards the parents. This is crucial if you really want to know how to make your school work better. You have to be there sometimes to hold their hands when things are going tough. I remember a time when I really had to sit a group parents inside my inner office. They had been going through a very tough time and wanted to discuss these issues with me. We talked for a while and found ourselves later praying; yes, praying! There are times when you really must be more a person than administrator and you have to make them feel that their needs are being heard and that you're trying to help them meet them."

Question #5 - "How can teachers and administrators make parental involvement more meaningful to parents?"

Administrator #3 - "One should inquire about the culture as school administrators, we should be looking into what activities are of interest to the parents culturally something that most, if not all, will be willing to enjoy and appreciate."

Administrator #2 - "We have to find out what is important to the parents. We simply have to ask the questions. We need to find out what are the common interests."

Administrator #1 - "I believe that it is quality not quantity that counts. How do you judge it? Is it by looking at the numbers or is it by the results? I believe that it is what you put into it that really matters!"

Summary

The researcher used three focus groups in this study to analyze the attitudes and beliefs of culturally diverse parents as it relates to their role in their
children's education as well as to also understand their attitudes toward how they share responsibility with their children's school and teachers. The qualitative data provided insight into the intentional and unintentional behaviors of teachers and how they affect parental involvement. The use of focus groups promoted in-depth discussions in order to uncover the perceptions of the participants. Krueger and Casey (2000) emphasize that these types of results cannot be described using quantitative measures but need to be expressed in a descriptive style. It also offered information on how to support parents from culturally diverse backgrounds that are often overlooked in educational and social policy.

General findings from the teacher focus group indicated that, although there were varying levels, they found parents participating in their children's education. The teachers of this particular school also found it important to "model" examples for the parents, work collaboratively with administration and collegially with other teachers and participate in community activities in order to demonstrate their belief in the philosophy of involvement in children's education. They also stated the need for cultural sensitivity courses as well as maintaining their school as another "home away from home" for their students.

Findings from the administrator focus group paralleled many of the teacher focus group sentiments. They believe in parent/teacher/administrator teamwork; one without the other will not be of benefit to the child. The children in turn will see that all these people that are important in their lives are very interested in them and their education. The administrators all stressed the importance of being available and approachable to parents as well as making their schools as inviting and as "warm" as possible. They want
the parents to be able to send their children to an environment that they believe is safe and highly educational.

Results from the parents' focus group indicated a variety of answers regarding participation. Some responded that their lack of participation was warranted in the belief of not disrupting the teachers and the administration in their method of teaching. Lack of information and varying degrees in English speaking skills also accounted for the inconsistent levels of parental participation.

Chapter V included a summary of findings, conclusions and suggested recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER FIVE
Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of culturally diverse parents as it relates to their role in their children's education. It also sought to understand their attitudes toward how they share responsibility with their children's school and teachers. The study also looked to comprehend intentional and unintentional behaviors of teachers and how they affected parental involvement. It also offered information on how to support parents from culturally diverse backgrounds that are often overlooked in educational and social policy.

Chapter I included the background of the problem and the reason for the study. Chapter II presented the review of the literature related to parental involvement, strategies for involvement and cultural sensitivity information. Chapter III presented the methodology of the development and use of data collection and analysis. The results, interpretation and summary of this detailed analysis were presented in Chapter IV. Chapter V presented the summary of the purpose, procedures and findings from the study. It also provided conclusions and recommendations for practice and future research based on an analysis of the data that is presented.

Summary of Research

This chapter presented a summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations for future research on cultural attitudes on parental involvement. The researcher sought to obtain information to the following two main research questions:
1. What are the perceptions of culturally diverse parents in the education of their children?

2. How can understanding of these cultural differences assist educators and administrators in developing techniques to broaden the involvement of culturally diverse parents in early elementary education programs?

The researcher used three focus groups to inquire about the cultural attitudes on parental involvement as it relates to parents, teachers and administrators.

Teachers and administrators were asked various questions that dealt with the following topics such as what their definition of parental involvement was, how they felt about parents' involvement in their children's education, the teachers' and administrators' role in the community, their views on cultural sensitivity and any learning experiences. Parents were asked whether or not they participated in their children's education, what could be done by teachers and administrators to motivate them to participate such as providing them with workshops in their own languages, if their children share with their parents the daily ongoing of classroom life and if they helped their children with the homework.

Findings of the Research

Teacher Focus Group

For the first group, the teacher focus group, five questions were asked for research and discussion purposes.

The first question asked them what they think parents understand as to their role in the education of their children. The teachers felt that participation varied amongst the parents due to the different cultures and countries that they come from. They stated that
there are some groups that will participate to the maximum while other groups did not feel that they would only be interrupting instruction. One teacher did state though that she felt parent participation did subside as the students became older. Parents didn’t mind helping out while their children were young but resisted participating later on because they wanted their child to learn for themselves.

The second question asked for their definition of parental involvement and it brought in a variety of answers. One of the teachers believes that one should be aware of all the on-goings of the classroom. She also stated that “there must be a very close working partnership between the teacher and the parent.” Another teacher felt that involvement solely meant participating in school trips. The other two teachers believed in a combination of the prior two statements made by the other teachers. They both believed in close parent/teacher partnerships in order to model these behaviors and teaching styles at home and help out in anyway possible when the teachers needed them for other projects that were non-academic. These analyses concur with findings from Gestwicki, 1997; Pettygrove & Greenman, 1984; Rockwell et. al. 1995 “seeking or encouraging parent involvement is most often viewed as an attempt on the part of educators to empower the parents and share the responsibility of educating their children. This partnership between the parent and the teacher is defined as a collaboration that grows slowly, building itself upon mutual trust and respect, a bridge that allows a meaningful presence of the family in the program.”

The third question asked how teachers affect a positive consensus with parents about their role in the learning community. One teacher offered her thought about providing a “common language” that both parents and teachers would understand. She
felt that if both parties can understand each other, they can be very productive and helpful. Two of the teachers added that you had to get the parents “excited” about education by providing them with workshops, empowerment, and goals. One of them discussed about an experience from her home state of Arizona convinced her that his idea was essential; he had a student whose family did not believe in education because he was going into the family business and the advancement of his education was not necessary. She convinced them that their son’s education would provide better business skills and this made the parents more interested in participating. The fourth teacher believes that the first meeting is “key” to making an important impression. She added that “modeling” teaching styles and techniques will show parents how the “flow of the day” in the classroom is for their children and appreciate the situation. This particular statement confirms the findings by Ladd (1989) which stated the following: “Parents appreciate their children’s teachers who take the time to concern themselves about their thoughts and beliefs. In fact, parents report that a “personal touch” is the most enhancing factor in school relations.”

The fourth question asked how administrators affect a positive consensus with parents about their role in the learning community. For this question, all the teachers agreed that it is essential to have an administrator that is very positive and treats the parents in a warm and welcoming manner. They believe that their principal creates a family atmosphere; an atmosphere that is warm and understanding. She knows the names of each and every one of the students, participates in all school meetings in order to be visible and accessible to the parents if needed. Their principal partakes in all community activities because she lives in the neighborhood as well. They feel she has an excellent
balance of things: she's not too strict yet she's not too calm. This description of the teachers' lead administrator parallels findings by Berla, Henderson, and Kerewsky (1989) who offered the following strategies of developing a policy for parental involvement, making sure that at least one person in the building knows every child well, maintaining a friendly school office, encouraging parent-to-parent communication, hiring a full-time parent contact person (in this case, the principal has a Parent Coordinator), having a parent room in the school building, determining and meeting family needs for services and providing translation services when appropriate.

The fifth question asked how teachers and administrators make parent involvement more meaningful to parents. One offered her opinion by stating that there must be open communication between the parents, teachers and administrators. Another teacher stated that culture is important and that all parties should be exposed to other cultures and teach their children about them. The third teacher strongly believes that a "shared vision" is needed and meaningful. She also believes that everyone should clearly understand the goals, expectations and standards and how to accomplish them. The fourth teacher believes that teachers and administrators should have an "open-door policy" for the parents; she states that parents will be appreciative if they feel comfortable to walk in and speak with the staff when needed and not just turned away.

Additional information was unearthed due to these discussions. All teachers agreed that cultural sensitivity courses should be a part a graduate level curriculum; they felt that the course offers different perspectives on cultural diversity and made them aware of behaviors and thoughts they never knew before. They also stated that they are incorporating these new learning experiences into their teaching style.
Parent Focus Group

For the second group, the parent focus group, ten questions were asked. They were asked what they think the reasons are why most parents do not participate in their children's education. One parent stated she believes one reason for parents not becoming involved with their children's education is due to fear. They are intimidated to speak to either the teacher or any staff member in order to inquire about their child's progress. Another parent stated that lack of information and time is reason for non-participation. Two other parents thought they should leave the education of their children as a responsibility of the school and not theirs. A third parent declared that there is a cultural reason for not participating; she believes that people from other countries who are little or not educated use the school system as a "baby-sitting service". Yet, she believes, there are other cultural groups who truly see education as a way up and out of their present socio-economic status and onto bigger and better things. The third parent's sentiments reflect findings by Delgado-Gaitan (1991) who asserts that the ethnically diverse families living in poor socioeconomic conditions often face sustained isolation from the school culture, which can lead to miscommunication between parents and school. This situation puts the culturally diverse and low socioeconomic parent at a disadvantage for participating in the classroom from the first day of school.

The parents were then asked what they think teachers and school administrators can do to motivate parents to participate more; also, if teachers and administrators should be more culturally sensitive and if not, should they take courses that will help them learn more about other cultures. Several of the parents felt that schools should send out newsletters not only in English but in other languages as well. This would create interest
is most if not all of their children’s scholastic endeavors. If the newsletters are sent out in only English, they felt ostracized and unwelcome. They also believe that teachers and administrators should learn about the customs and beliefs of other countries in order to become more culturally sensitive and aware of their students’ needs. They declared that at this particular school, the staff truly acknowledges all types of international celebrations; parents are invited to take part in the celebrations and in turn, they feel that their children are better educated because of the cultural awareness skills being taught.

The parent group was then asked if they thought more parents would participate if the school offered workshops on how to help their child if they were held in other languages such as Spanish. Most of the parents agreed with this; they feel that when any of the workshops are offered in their language, i.e., Spanish, they are more comfortable and enthusiastic in participating with the school activities. One parent though did add the following: if the workshops were given in different languages, how are the parents to learn English and then be able to help their children with their homework? She also stated that when her mother came to the United States many years ago, such niceties were not afforded to people that were new to the country. Immigrants were forced to learn English and because of this, she feels that the previous generation learned faster and better than the present generation which believes that the school and other organizations should make things more comfortable for them. She uses the example of other countries such as Colombia or Paraguay. When you go to their post office, all signs are in Spanish. There are no other signs in other languages; you are forced to learn the language if you need to conduct business at the post office. She finally ended her statement by saying that workshops in other languages may be helpful and beneficial but they should only be
done at the beginning of parental participation. Afterwards, parents should attend English classes in order to later participate in workshops that are exclusively conducted in English.

The parents were then asked to address if they believe more parents would participate in these workshops if they were held in the evening. Only two parents opted to answer this; one of them said no. She felt that evenings are for resting and being together with her family. 'It is a time for catching up with the days' events and to prepare for the next day. The other parent stated that she didn't mind because since she was not working, she could participate at any time. She did add however that the school should research other times that would be "comfortable" for parents.

Parents were then asked to share with the researcher if their children share with them what goes in the classroom/school and if they do, what they do and/or think about it. Four of the five parents did respond by saying that they have a wonderful relationship with their children and they in turn share the daily classroom experiences with their parents. One parent stated that she unfortunately does not have that type of rapport with her daughter and must go to the teacher to find out how things are. She tries to be supportive by telling her how wonderful her work looks or how impressed she is by the quality of work that is being produced but still her child will not share with her; she feels that her daughter may be shy and she does not want to force her into doing something she is not comfortable with so she leaves her be and hopes that someday things will change.

The parents were then asked if they help their children with their homework. All the parents stated that in one way or another, they try to help their children to the best of their ability. Several of them pointed out that they have established a daily routine that
they follow as soon as their children get home. They also stated that at their school the teachers are well prepared by always distributing homework sheets on a weekly basis which keeps the parents informed as to what is expected. One parent did say that she does not involve herself with her children's homework because they are older and she believes they can handle the work by themselves.

The group was then asked if they speak and understand English and if they did not, what do they do in order to help their child. Four of the six parents responded to this question; one did speak English fluently and therefore did not have any problems per se but the other parents resorted to the use of the dictionary in order to understand what was being presented to them and in turn be able to help their children out with homework or any other type of task.

The next question the parents were asked was how they handle any problems that arise when the school personnel speaks only English. One parent stated that she does not worry; she just tries to communicate to the best of her ability. Another parent said that she tries to bring along a translator and if she can't, she then brings a dictionary along with her. She also said that she will use a lot of hand gestures to convey her thoughts. Another parent also said that she uses the dictionary but as a preparation before meeting with the school personnel; she reads herself by looking up the necessary words she'll be using to speak with school personnel.

The group was then asked if whether or not they worked outside of the home if they set time aside to help their child with their homework and, if they did, how much time was dedicated to this. All of the parents did say that they do try to dedicate some time to their children when they're working but obviously they will spend more time with
them, when they are not. One of the parents relies on her older children to assist the younger ones with the homework when she is not there. Another parent stated that it is not the quantity but the quality of time that is spent with her child. She’ll assist him when he requires help but she usually leaves him to work on his homework by himself. She did go on to say that there will be times that she takes time from her own job to go over to her son’s school and make “surprise visits” in order for him and the school to see that she is interested and participative parent.

The final question that was asked of the parent focus group was how they encourage other members of their family (immediate and/or extended) to support them in their child’s education. One parent stated that she does not have any family to help or support her but that this school and its personnel has become like a family to her and provides her with the educational support that she needs for her children. Another parent said that she too does not have any family here with her; she is alone here in this country with her daughter but does receive a lot of support from her neighbors who watch over her and her daughter. She also relies heavily on the public libraries for help; the staff at the library provides her with the necessary assistance to help her and her daughter when necessary. Another parent stated that although she is here alone with her husband and children, other family members will call long distance to speak with the children in order to inquire as to their well being and to motivate them in their educational endeavors. The last parent did say that her mother was her only family support and she relies on her a lot to help her with the raising of her son, educational and otherwise.
Administrator Focus Group

For the third focus group, three of the four administrators were present for the meeting which took place at a facility outside of the school premises. The group was asked what they think parents understand as to their role in the education of their children. They stated that there are educational and cultural backgrounds to consider; one of the administrators stated that there are some cultural groups that allow you to have a complete trust with the education of their children while there are others that do not. This statement parallels a study by Delgado-Gaitan (1991) which states that “research indicates that the extent to which parents’ cultural and ethnic background is valued in the school affects parental participation in the classroom. Parents of similar cultural and social values gain easier acceptance and access to the school environment, while families with diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds must adapt to the dominant school culture to become an advocate for their child.” Another administrator said that there are parents that believe in and look for a parent/teacher relationship at their school. Knowing this, she reminds her staff at the beginning of every school year of the importance of this special relationship. Another administrator stated that it is important to remember that there are different home surroundings of different children; some have all the necessary items for their schooling while others do not.

The next question the group was asked what their definition of parent involvement was. All the administrators agreed that there are different ways to participate in their child’s education. One administrator said that it is not only the involvement in the academic aspects of the school but to participate in other non-academic activities as well. Another administrator added that there has to be a “comfort
zone" in her school where the parents feel welcomed at all times and participate and use the resources of her school.

They were then asked another question which was how teachers can affect a positive consensus with parents about their role in the learning community. The first administrator stated that when it comes to communication with the parents, they should always use a positive tone instead of a negative one. For example, when they call the students' homes, they should always start with something good to say about their students and then proceed to discuss any irregularities that have occurred at school. The second administrator praised her Parent Coordinator for her wonderful connection with the parents and always making them feel comfortable. The third administrator said that she and her staff produce a monthly newsletter that displays all the wonderful events that happen at her school and to make announcements of future events in order to give parents the opportunity to decide if they'd like to participate in them.

The group was then asked how administrators affect a positive consensus with parents about their role in the learning community. One administrator said that one should always remember to think like the parent would; make the decision as if it were your own child. Again, the "open door policy" was mentioned by another administrator; she warmly welcomes the parents to stop by and share their ideas with her about the school and the programs. She really believes that parents are eager to help out with anything that involves their children. The third administrator strongly believes in good listening skills; she said that if you really want your school to work, you must listen to what parents as well as others are saying to you.
For the final question, the administrators were asked how teachers and administrators can make parental involvement more meaningful to parents. The first administrator said that it is quality not quantity that counts; what you put into your school is what you’ll get. The second administrator said that it is good to survey what the parents’ interests are and then incorporate them into the school culture. The last administrator also agreed with a survey of interests but also to inquire about cultural interests. In that way, parents will see that you go beyond the regular interests and welcome them based on more familiar terms. These findings from the administrator focus group agrees with the above-mentioned citation from Dr. Joyce Epstein’s “Framework of Six Types of Involvement” (Epstein, Crespo, Salinas, Sanders, & Simon, 1997) which include parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with community.

Conclusions

As was previously stated in the Literature Review, “that parent involvement benefits Latino students’ educational success goes without saying. Educators that work collaboratively with Latino parents find students perform better academically. More than parental level of education, family size, or family’s socio-economic level, the extent to which schools reach out to establish parent involvement in ethnically diverse schools is the strongest determinant of Latinos getting involved in their children’s education.” (Delagdo-Gaitan, 2004).

For parental involvement to take place and be successful, there are several points to be considered. Parents will be more inclined to participate if the school provides a welcoming environment. They are interested in their children’s education and welfare.
and will involve themselves even if there is a language barrier, financial difficulties, and
time constraints. The parents will find ways of overcoming these obstacles and help out
their children. Findings from this study concur with Fredericks and Rasinski’s (1990)
parental involvement program that includes the following: flooding them with
information, making school-wide efforts, recognizing students and parents, involving
students in recruiting parents, conducting participatory projects that include the entire
family, recruiting community members, making the classroom and the school a
comfortable place, using the telephone as an instrument of good news, finding out why
parents are not involved, having a variety of event scheduling plans, operating a parent
hotline, using community members to endorse the program, videotaping programs for
parents and providing support services like babysitting.

Teachers and administrators should use an “open door policy” in order for parents to
come in and share their thoughts and perspectives with the staff. Workshops should be
offered in different languages as well as different time schedules whenever possible.
These findings agree with a study conducted by Lindle (1989) states the following:
“Parents want to be equal partners in the education process. Also, parents do like schools
providing activities for them. They also like it when the needs of working parents are
acknowledged. Parents like it when parent-teacher conferences are arranged around work
schedules, but they truly do not care for the conferences themselves due to the formality
and limited time typically allotted.”

The staff should be trained in cultural sensitivity techniques in order to be aware
of a variety of behaviors and views from people of different countries. Pena (1999)
stated that definitions, discussions and examinations of parental involvement must
incorporate the complex and valuable differences cultural background has on parental involvement. The staff should also be visible to the members of the community and participate in community activities as well. According to Lindle (1989) "parents appreciate their children’s teachers who take the time to concern themselves about their thoughts and beliefs."

Recommendations

Recommendations for Policy

A strong recommendation for future parental involvement policy is to encourage colleges and universities to include as part of their instructional curriculum cultural sensitivity courses for new teachers. As was presented in this research, the parents as well as the teachers agree that there will be less chance of misunderstandings if teachers and administrators are exposed and made aware of different behaviors and forms of communication from their multinational, multicultural and multi-demographic students and families. Delgado-Guzmán (1991) asserts that the ethnically diverse families living in poor socioeconomic conditions often face sustained isolation from the school culture which can lead to miscommunication between parents and school. This situation puts the culturally diverse and low socioeconomic parents at a disadvantage for participating in the classroom, from the first day of school.

Recommendations for Practice

From the findings in this research and from previous data, it is highly desirable to have an "open door policy" for parents as well as for teachers if all parties are made to

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feel comfortable to share different thoughts and feelings about the students, school and community. According to Ames, Khoju and Waskins (1995), they state that “parents who perceive that they are receiving frequent and positive messages from teachers demonstrate a tendency to get more involved in their children’s education than do parents who do not perceive that they are receiving such communication.” The “open door policy” that is mentioned in this study corroborates a study by Lindic (1989) that states the following: “In fact, parents report that a ‘personal touch’ is the most enhancing factor in school relations.”

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings and conclusions of this research, additional areas of study are recommended.

- Researchers wishing to replicate this study may want to use a larger sample in order to obtain more information.
- Another recommendation would be the use of a different educational level. The study reflects an early educational level; elementary, middle or high school levels may be reviewed.
- The parent focus group dealt mainly with parents of Latinx backgrounds; another more diverse group may be considered in order to obtain a broad source of information.
- The teacher focus group consisted of staff members from one school; a larger and more diverse selection would add more information to the data.
- Triangulate quantitative research along with qualitative research for a different perspective in other higher level grade groups.
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APPENDIX A
MAP OF JACKSON HEIGHTS, NEW YORK
APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR ADMINISTRATORS
Informed Consent Form for Administrators.

Researcher’s Affiliation

The researcher’s name is Flor de Maria Ruhiños who is a doctoral student at Seton Hall University in the College of Education and Human Services. The researcher is conducting a study on parental involvement in their children’s education commencing March through May of the 2006 school year. This research is part of the researcher’s study in the Executive Doctoral Program.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of culturally diverse parents as it relates to their role in their children’s education.

Procedures

Three focus groups will be used to investigate the different questions that will be posed to the participants as to their involvement in the children’s education and school-based activities participation. The researcher will explain that there will be audio-taping for all of the three focus group meetings. As a member of the Administrators’ focus group, you have the right to review all or any portion of the tape. The timing for each focus group will be two hours.

Voluntary Nature of the Participation

This research is strictly voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without any penalty should you choose not to continue.

Anonymity

Although the researcher will take notes and audio-tape the focus group assemblies, your names will not be recorded on any of the data.

Confidentiality

The researcher will have access to the information, but at no time will anyone know or trace the individual parents, teachers and administrators related to this research. Materials associated with the project will be kept in the researcher’s home in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed in three (3) years after completion of the project.

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Risks and Benefits

Participation in this study poses no anticipated risks and may or may not provide expected benefits. Only aggregate data will be used with complete anonymity and confidentiality maintained.

Contact Information

If you would like to participate in this research but have additional questions, you can contact me by calling my mentor, Dr. Anthony Colella at 973-761-9389. In addition, questions may also be directed to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 973-313-6314.

Subjects will be given a copy of the signed and dated Informed Consent form. Your consent to participate in this program is indicated by simply returning this copy to the researcher.

If you have any questions or concerns about this program, please contact me at the number indicated below.

Thank you for your cooperation with this study.

Sincerely,

Flor de Maria Rubiños
Doctoral Candidate

Address:
CPSE Administrator - Region 7
415 89th Street
Brooklyn, New York 11209
718-759-4998 (werk)

Please Print Below:

__________________________________________
Name

__________________________________________
Signature
APPENDIX C

INFORMACIÓN OBTENIDA CON EL PERMISO DE LOS PADRES
Información Obtenida con el Permiso de los Padres

Estimado Padre de Familia,

La persona que está llevando a cabo este estudio es Flor de María Rubiños quien es candidata a un doctorado en el Colegio de Educación y Servicios Humanos de la Universidad Seton Hall. La investigadora está haciendo un estudio del envolvimiento de los padres en la educación de sus hijos en los meses de enero a marzo de 2006. Este estudio es parte de la investigación hacia el programa doctoral Ejecutivo Educacional. La investigadora invita a los padres a participar en su estudio.

Propósito de la Investigación

El propósito del estudio es investigar las apreciaciones y creencias de padres de una diversidad cultural relacionadas a la educación de sus hijos.

Procedimientos

Tres grupos serán usados para contestar la diferentes preguntas a que se les haga a los padres participantes envueltos en la educación y actividades prácticas. La investigadora explicará que la reunión de los tres grupos será grabado en su totalidad. Cualquier padre miembro de este grupo, tienen derecho a revisar las grabaciones en parte o en su totalidad. El tiempo de grabación será de dos horas.

Participación Voluntaria

Este estudio es estrictamente voluntario. Usted puede retirarse en cualquier momento sin incurrir en fallo.

Anonimidad

Aunque la investigadora tomará notas y grabará las reuniones, los nombres y las opiniones expresadas serán completamente reservadas y nadie será identificado.

Confidencialidad

La investigadora tendrá acceso a la información, pero en ningún momento se dará a conocer los padres, maestros y administradores relacionados con este proyecto. Materiales usados en este proyecto serán guardados en casa de la investigadora en un gabinete cerrado con llave y serán destruidos tres años después que el proyecto haya sido completado.

Riesgos y Beneficios

Participación en este estudio no representa riesgos o beneficios anticipados. Sólo la información obtenida será usada en forma anónima y confidencial.

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Mayor Información

Si Ud. desea participar en este estudio pero tiene más preguntas, puede comunicarse conmigo llamando mi Profesor Dr. Colella, teléfono 973-761-9389. Además, preguntas pueden ser dirigidas al Institutional Review Board (IRB), teléfono 973-313-6314.

Participantes recibirán una copia firmada y fechada de este formulario. Su aprobación para participar en este programa se indicará simplemente regresando esta copia a la investigadora.

Si tiene Ud. alguna preocupación o pregunta acerca de este programa, por favor llámeme al número de teléfono más abajo indicado. Muchas gracias por su cooperación en este estudio.

Sinceramente,

Flor de María Rubiños
Candidata al doctorado

Seton Hall University
400 South Orange Avenue
South Orange, NJ 07079
(718) 759-4898

"YO QUIERO PARTICIPAR EN ESTE ESTUDIO Y TAMBIEN DOY PERMISO PARA GRABACION DE AUDIO"

Imprima su Nombre

Firma de Nombre

109
APPENDIX D
INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

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informed Consent Form for Parents

Researcher’s Affiliation

The researcher’s name is Flor de Maria Rubiños who is a doctoral student at Seton Hall University in the College of Education and Human Services. The researcher is conducting a study on parental involvement in their children’s education commencing March through May of the 2000 school year. This research is part of the researcher’s study in the Executive Doctoral Program.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of culturally diverse parents as it relates to their role in their children’s education.

Procedures

Three focus groups will be used to investigate the different questions that will be posed to the participants as to their involvement in the children’s education and school-based activities participation. The researcher will explain that there will be audio-taping for all of the three focus group meetings. As a member of the Parents’ focus group, you have the right to review all or any portion of the tape. The timing for each focus group will be two hours.

Voluntary Nature of the Participation

This research is strictly voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without any penalty should you choose not to continue.

Anonymity

Although the researcher will take notes and audio-tape the focus group assembles, your names will not be recorded on any of the data.

Confidentiality

The researcher will have access to the information, but at no time will anyone know or trace the individual parents, teachers and administrators related to this research. Materials associated with the project will be kept in the researcher’s home in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed in three (3) years after completion of the project.
Risks and Benefits

Participation in this study poses no anticipated risks and may or may not provide expected benefits. Only aggregate data will be used with complete anonymity and confidentiality maintained.

Contact Information

If you would like to participate in this research but have additional questions, you can contact me by calling my mentor, Dr. Anthony Colella at 973-761-9389. In addition, questions may also be directed to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 973-313-6214.

Subjects will be given a copy of the signed and dated Informed Consent form. Your consent to participate in this program is indicated by simply returning this copy to the researcher.

If you have any questions or concerns about this program, please contact me at the number indicated below.

Thank you for your cooperation with this study.

Sincerely,

Flor de Maria Pabitiños
Doctoral Candidate

CPSE Administrator – Region 7
415 89th Street
Brooklyn, New York 11209
718-759-4898 (work)

Please Print Below:

Name _______________________________________

Signature ___________________________

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Informed Consent Form for Teachers

Researcher’s Affiliation

The researcher’s name is Flor de Maria Rubiños, who is a doctoral student at Seton Hall University in the College of Education and Human Services. The researcher is conducting a study on parental involvement in their children’s education commencing March through May of the 2006 school year. This research is part of the researcher’s study in the Executive Doctoral Program.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of culturally diverse parents as it relates to their role in their children’s education.

Procedure

Three focus groups will be used to investigate the different questions that will be posed to the participants as to their involvement in the children’s education and school-based activities participation. The researcher will explain that there will be audio-taping for all of the three focus group meetings. As a member of the Teachers’ focus group, you have the right to review all or any portion of the tape. The timing for each focus group will be two hours.

Voluntary Nature of the Participation

This research is strictly voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without any penalty should you choose not to continue.

Anonymity

Although the researcher will take notes and audio-tape the focus group assemblies, your names will not be recorded on any of the data.

Confidentiality

The researcher will have access to the information, but at no time will anyone know or trace the individual parents, teachers and administrators related to this research. Materials associated with the project will be kept in the researcher’s home in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed in three (3) years after completion of the project.
Risks and Benefits

Participation in this study poses no anticipated risks and may or may not provide expected benefits. Only aggregate data will be used with complete anonymity and confidentiality maintained.

Contact Information

If you would like to participate in this research but have additional questions, you can contact me by calling my mentor, Dr. Anthony Coleia at 973-761-9389. In addition, questions may also be directed to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 973-313-6314.

Subjects will be given a copy of the signed and dated Informed Consent form. Your consent to participate in this program is indicated by simply returning this copy to the researcher.

If you have any questions or concerns about this program, please contact me at the number indicated below.

Thank you for your cooperation with this study.

Sincerely,

Flor de Maria Rubiales
Doctoral Candidate

Address:
CPSE Administrator – Region 7
415 89th Street
Brooklyn, New York 11269
718-759-4098 (work)

Please Print Below:

--------------------------------------------------------------
Name
--------------------------------------------------------------
Signature

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APPENDIX F

LETTER OF SOLICITATION TO PARENT

115
March 30, 2006

Dear Parent,

I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University and am enrolled in the Executive Ed. D. Program. I am presently working as a Committee on Preschool Special Education Administrator in Region 7 for District 21 located in Brooklyn, New York.

The topic of my dissertation is: Cultural Differences and Attitudes Towards Parental Involvement: A Case Study of Early Elementary School Parents. The purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of culturally diverse parents as it relates to your role in your child’s education. It also seeks to understand your attitudes toward how you share responsibility with your children’s school and teachers. The study also looks to comprehend intentional and unintentional behaviors of teachers and how they affect parental involvement.

The research that I will conduct is qualitative in nature. I will use a predetermined question format. The questions are mostly open-ended to promote a conversation among participants. I will be the moderator as well as taking notes and making sure that the tape recording equipment continues to work properly; I will also make sure that the refreshments are at your disposal. Please be informed that I am fully advised of the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants of this study. Attached is an informed Consent Form giving me permission to tape record your responses. This form will fully disclose confidentiality and anonymity measures. The taped recordings are necessary so I do not lose any vital statements or ideas from participants. Please be informed that the tape recordings will be transcribed into written format so that I can better analyze the data for results. I am seeking to discover common patterns and themes for the discussion.

By taking part in this focus group discussion, you are agreeing to participate in this study. If you should decide at any time during the discussion you no longer wish to participate you may leave the group discussion at any time. Discontinuation or refusal will result in no penalty or loss of any kind. Upon the completion of the focus group discussion, you will be given a self-addressed envelope in case you may have forgotten to mention something or would like to add more insight.

Please be assured that your responses will be kept completely confidential. No names are included in the transcripts. The data will be analyzed and included in the dissertation without reference to your district’s name or your names. The data will be placed and remain in a locked cabinet with the researcher; the data will be destroyed after three years. All responses will be kept very confidential.
There are no risks in this research. There will be no monetary benefits in this study. Refreshments will be provided for all participants.

The data from this and two other focus groups will be analyzed to determine any common patterns and themes with the hopes of achieving and adding academic advancements to the literature base.

If there are any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (718) 759-4898 or via email at fnubino2@ny robe.net. I will definitely share the aggregate results of the study while ensuring confidentiality.

I would like to thank you for your assistance and consideration with my endeavors. If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the Informed Consent Form and send it in the envelope provided.

Sincerely,

Flor de Maria Rubiños
CPSE Administrator – Region 7
415 26th Street
Brooklyn, New York 11209
718-759-4898 (work)
fnubino2@ny robe.net
March 30, 2006

Dear Principal,

I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University and am enrolled in the Executive Ed. D. Program. I am presently working as a Committee on Preschool Special Education Administrator in Region 7 for District 21 located in Brooklyn, New York.

The topic of my dissertation is: Cultural Differences and Attitudes Towards Parental Involvement: A Case Study of Early Elementary School Parents. The purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of culturally diverse parents as it relates to their role in their children's education. It also seeks to understand their attitudes toward how they share responsibility with their children's school and teachers. The study also looks to comprehend intentional and unintentional behaviors of teachers and how they affect parental involvement. As an administrator, your input in this study is very valuable.

I have received written approval from the superintendent to conduct my research in your district. I would like to request your permission to conduct a portion of my research in your elementary school.

The research that I will conduct is qualitative in nature. The design of this study will involve three focus groups. The first focus group will encompass five to six school parents; four teachers from the same school will make up the second focus group and the third group will consist of three to four administrators from your district as well as other districts from the city. The dates and times of each focus group would be scheduled so as not to interfere with other meetings or functions after school. I would also like to request permission to use a room in the school that is in a comfortable and allowable location. A room such as the faculty lounge would be accommodating and familiar to the participants. A letter will be sent to the principal of P.S. 228 requesting permission to conduct this study and use of said room. Letters of solicitation will also be sent to the teachers as well as to the other administrators for their voluntary participation. The principal will randomly select the teachers from her school for participation. They will be given an informed consent that there will be audio taping of the focus group discussions and request their permission to do so.

They will be informed that full anonymity and confidentiality will be utilized in this study. I will be the moderator and will take notes making sure that the ambiance is conducive to the discussion as well as to make sure that the tape recording equipment is working. Refreshments will be made available to the participants at their disposal. The participants will also be informed that the audiotapes will be transcribed in a written
format for later analysis of the data. They will be further informed that no names nor social security numbers or any other type of identifiers will be used.

The participants of this study will be asked to participate on a voluntary basis. If any of the participants should decide at any time during this study that they no longer wish to participate, they may leave the discussion group. The data will remain secure and under lock and key with the researcher for the next three years. The results will be included in the dissertation without reference to the district’s name or participants. I will enclose a copy of the questions that will be used for the focus groups for your review.

I would appreciate an opportunity to further discuss my intentions and respond to any questions or concerns that you may have. I would also appreciate a letter granting permission on your district’s letterhead for the purposes of verification. I thank you for your consideration and assistance. I look forward to sharing the results of the study with you while maintaining confidentiality.

Sincerely,

Flor de Maria Rubiños
CPSE Administrator – Region 7
415 89th Street
Brooklyn, New York 11209
718-759-4898 (work)
frubino2@nycbce.net
APPENDIX H

LETTER OF SOLICITATION TO SUPERINTENDENT
March 1, 2006

Dear Superintendent,

I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University and am enrolled in the Executive Ed. D. Program. I am presently working as a Committee on Preschool Special Education Administrator in Region 7 for District 21 located in Brooklyn, New York.

The topic of my dissertation is: Cultural Differences and Attitudes Towards Parental Involvement: A Case Study of Early Elementary School Parents. The purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of culturally diverse parents as it relates to their role in their children’s education. It also seeks to understand their attitudes toward how they share responsibility with their children’s school and teachers. The study also looks to comprehend intentional and unintentional behaviors of teachers and how they affect parental involvement. As an administrator, your input in this study is very valuable.

I met socially with the Principal of Public School 228Q, Ms. Olga Guzman, on October 6, 2004, to ask her if this study would be feasible in your district. Ms. Guzman recommended that I write you to request your permission to conduct my research in your district if the Institutional Review Board at Seton Hall University approves it.

The research that I would like to conduct is qualitative in nature. The design of this study will involve three focus groups. The first focus group will encompass five to six school parents; four teachers from the same school will make up the second focus group and the third group will consist of three to four administrators from your district as well as other districts from the city. The dates and times of each focus group would be scheduled so as not to interfere with other meetings or functions after school. I would also like to request permission to use a room in the school that is in a comfortable and allowable location. A room such as the faculty lounge would be accommodating and familiar to the participants. A letter will be sent to the principal of P.S. 228Q requesting permission to conduct this study and use of said room. Letters of solicitation will also be sent to the teachers as well as to the other administrators for their voluntary participation. The principal will randomly select the teachers from her school for participation. They will be given an informed consent that there will be audio taping of the focus group discussions and request their permission to do so.

They will be informed that full anonymity and confidentiality will be utilized in this study. I will be the moderator and will take notes, make sure that the ambience is conducive to the discussion as well as to make sure that the tape recording equipment is working. Refreshments will be made available to the participants at their disposal. The
participants will also be informed that the audiotapes will be transcribed in a written format for later analysis of the data. They will be further informed that no names, nor social security numbers or any other type of identifiers will be used.

The participants of this study will be asked to participate on a voluntary basis. If any of the participants should decide at any time during the study that they no longer wish to participate, they may leave the discussion group. The data will remain secure and under lock and key with the researcher for the next three years. The results will be included in the dissertation without reference to the district’s name or participants. I will enclose a copy of the questions that will be used for the focus groups for your review.

I would appreciate an opportunity to further discuss my intentions and respond to any questions or concerns that you may have. I would also appreciate a letter granting permission on your district’s letterhead for the purposes of verification. I thank you for your consideration and assistance. I look forward to sharing the results of the study with you while maintaining confidentiality.

Sincerely,

Flor de Maria Rubirosa
CPSE Administrator – Region 7
415 89th Street
Brooklyn, New York 11209
718-759-4898 (work)
frubirosa2@nymcao.net

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APPENDIX I

LETTER OF SOLICITATION TO TEACHER
March 30, 2006

Dear Elementary School Teacher,

I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University and am enrolled in the Executive Ed. D. Program. I am presently working as a Committee on Preschool Special Education Administrator in Region 7 for District 21 located in Brooklyn, New York.

The topic of my dissertation is: Cultural Differences and Attitudes Towards Parental Involvement: A Case Study of Early Elementary School Parents. The purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of culturally diverse parents as it relates to their role in their children’s education. It also seeks to understand their attitudes toward how they share responsibility with their children’s school and teachers. The study also seeks to comprehend intentional and unintentional behaviors of teachers and how they affect parental involvement. As a teacher, your input in this study is very valuable.

The research that I will conduct is qualitative in nature. I will use a predetermined question format. The questions are mostly open-ended to promote a conversation among participants. I will be the moderator as well as taking notes and making sure that the tape recording equipment continues to work properly. I will also make sure that the refreshments are at your disposal. Please be informed that I am fully advised of the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants of this study. Attached is an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to tape record your responses. This form will fully disclose confidentiality and anonymity measures. The taped recordings are necessary so I do not lose any vital statements or ideas from participants. Please be informed that the tape recordings will be transcribed into written format so that I can better analyze the data for results. I am seeking to discover common patterns and themes for the discussion.

By taking part in this focus group discussion, you are agreeing to participate in this study. If you should decide at any time during the discussion you no longer wish to participate you may leave the group discussion at any time. Discontinuation or refusal will result in no penalty or loss of any kind. Upon the completion of the focus group discussion, you will be given a self-addressed envelope in case you may have forgotten to mention something or would like to add more insight.

Please be assured that your responses will be kept completely confidential. No names are included in the transcripts. The data will be analyzed and included in the dissertation without reference to your district’s name or your names. The data will be placed and remain in a locked cabinet with the researcher; the data will be destroyed after three years. All responses will be kept very confidential.
There are no risks in this research. There will be no monetary benefit in this study. Refreshments will be provided for all participants.

The data from this and two other focus groups will be analyzed to determine any common patterns and themes with the hopes of achieving and adding academic advancements to the literature base.

If there are any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (718) 759-4898 or via email at frubino2@nybee.net. I will definitely share the aggregate results of the study while ensuring confidentiality.

I would like to thank you for your assistance and consideration with any endeavors. If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the Informed Consent Form and send it in the envelope provided. Please indicate on the outside of the envelope what grade level you teach. This will enable me to represent the different grade levels.

Sincerely,

Flor de Maria Rubino
CFSE Administrator – Region 7
415 86th Street
Brooklyn, New York 11209
718-759-4898 (work)
frubino2@nybee.net

127
1. What do you think are the reasons why most parents do not participate in their children's education?

2. What do you think teachers and school administrators can do to motivate parents to participate more?

3. Do you think more parents would participate if the school offered workshops on how to help their child if they were held in other languages such as Spanish?

4. Do you believe more parents would participate in these workshops if they were held in the evenings?

5. Do your children share with you what goes on in the classroom/school? If they do, what do you think and/or do about it?

6. How do you help your child with his/her homework?

7. Do you speak and understand English? If not, what do you do to help your child?

8. How do you handle any problems when the school personnel speak only English?

9. Whether you work outside of your home or not, do you set aside time to help your child with school work? How much time?

10. How do you encourage other members of your family to support you in participating in your child's education?
1. Mencione las razones por la cual padres no participan en la educación de sus hijos activamente?

2. Indíque en qué forma los maestros y los administradores pueden motivar a los padres a una mayor participación?

3. Cree Ud. que un mayor número de padres participarían si la escuela ofrece talleres en cómo ayudar a sus hijos en su educación si estos se llevaran a cabo en su primer idioma, como el Español?

4. Cree Ud. Que un mayor número de padres participarían si los talleres se llevaran a cabo al atardecer?

5. Diga si sus hijos comparten con Ud. lo que sucede en el salón de clase? Si así fuera, que piensa Ud. acerca de ello?

6. Digame cómo apoya Ud. a su hijo en su tarea diaria (de la escuela)?

7. Habla y entiende el idioma Inglés? De no ser así, cómo hace para ayudar a su hijo/hija?

8. Si su conocimiento del Inglés es muy limitado, qué hace Ud. para mantener una comunicación con personal de la escuela que solo habla Inglés?

9. Trabaje Ud. en su casa o fuera de ella, digame si dedica tiempo para ayudar a sus hijos en su tarea escolar? Cuánto tiempo?

10. En que forma busca Ud. que otros miembros de su familia apoyen a Ud. en la educación de su hijo/hija?
Parent Volunteers Needed!!

February 2006

Dear Parents:

We are looking for volunteers to assist a Seton Hall University Doctoral Student in her study. The topic is:

"Cultural Differences and Attitudes towards Parental Involvement"

This study seeks to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of culturally diverse parents as it relates to their role in their children’s education. A parent focus group will be created and asked different questions that will be posed to the participants as to their involvement in the children’s education and school-based activities participation. The Seton Hall University researcher will explain that there will be audio-taping of the parent focus group meeting. As a member of the parent focus group, you have the right to review all or any portion of the tape. The timing for each focus group will be about two hours. Although the researcher will take notes and audio-tape the focus group assembly, your names will not be recorded on any of the data.

This research is strictly voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without any penalty should you choose not to continue.

If you would like to participate in this study, please contact the Parent Coordinator, Mrs. Zoraya Torres at (347) 563-4325. All calls are strictly confidential. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Ms. Olga Guzmán, Principal

Cc: Parent Coordinator
    PTA President
    UFT Chairperson
APPENDIX M

TEACHER RECRUITMENT LETTER
March 2006

Dear Teacher,

My name is Flor de Maria Rubíos and I'm a doctoral student at Seton Hall University in the College of Education and Human Services. I am conducting a study on parental involvement commencing March through May of the 2006 school year. This research is part of my study in the Executive Doctoral Program.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of culturally diverse parents as it relates to their role in their children's education.

I will be creating a teacher focus group in order to investigate the different questions that will be posed to the participants as to the parents' involvement in their children's education and school-based activities participation. I will explain that there will be audio-taping of said focus group; as a member of the teachers' focus group, you have the right to review all or any portion of the tape. The timing for each focus group will be about two hours. This research is strictly voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without any penalty should you choose not to continue. Although the researcher will take notes and audio-tape the focus group assemblies, your names will not be recorded on any of the data. Participation in this study poses no anticipated risks and may or may not provide expected benefits. Only aggregate data will be used with complete anonymity and confidentiality maintained.

If you would like to participate in this research or if you have any questions or concerns about this program, please contact me at the number indicated below. Thank you for your cooperation with this study.

Sincerely,

Flor de Maria Rubíos
Doctoral Candidate

917-749-6443 (cell phone)
APPENDIX N

TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS
Teacher and Administrator Focus Group Questions

1. What do you think parents understand as to their role in the education of their children?
2. What is your definition of parental involvement?
3. How can teachers affect a positive consensus with parents about their role in the learning community?
4. How can administrators affect a positive consensus with parents about their role in the learning community?
5. How can teachers and administrators make parental involvement more meaningful to parents?