Family Involvement within Early Child Care Settings

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The purpose of this research paper is to discuss an issue, topic, or problem that pertains to child development. The topic that I was interested in researching is family involvement within early child care facilities and how that benefits the children attending the schools. The value of strong family involvement in early childhood education is supported by a large amount of research and quite a few studies (Knopf & Swick, 2007, p.419). It is seen firsthand that having family involvement is an important part of any successful development (Sciarra & Dorsey, 2007, p.472). This paper will discuss what family involvement is, why it is important to children, as well as why it is lacking and ways to increase the amount of involvement seen in schools. I will also discuss studies that have been conducted to obtain more information about this topic.

First and foremost, family involvement is exactly that, families being directly involved within their child's education. "The purpose of family involvement is to get them active in planning, implementing, and evaluating the total experience" (Sciarra & Dorsey, 2007, p.476). There are many ways families can be involved in their children's education. McGrath mentions that parents can be involved by attending meetings, fundraising, organizing events, by being a part of parent associations, and by helping to chaperone field trips (2007, p.1404). In my experiences I have also seen that parents can interact with the teachers on a daily basis while they are picking up and dropping off their children. Some other ways parents can be involved in their child's life are by supporting learning activities in the classroom, parent nights, volunteering help in the classroom, and being on school-boards (Driessen, Smit, Sleegers, 2005, p.510). These ideas are part of a process of families and professionals equally sharing their resources

in order to make learning experiences more enjoyable for the children (Anderson,

Meyer, Somers, 2006, p.14). Good points.

Driessen, et al. (2005) also discuss six types of parental involvement that involve

relationships between teachers, schools, and parents and their children. The first

involves parenting, in that schools should help parents create the best possible home

environment for the children and their development. The second type is communicating

with parents about school programs and progress. Volunteering is the third type of

involvement that can be accomplished by parents helping out during school activities.

The next type is learning at home which consists of activities that are sent home for

families to complete with their children to further their development. Decision making is

the fifth type that is discussed and it is the involvement of parents in the policies and

management of the center. The sixth and final idea is having families getting their

children involved and collaborating within the community. (p.511). Varied ways to

involve families.

Parental involvement within early childhood programs is not a new concept for

the twenty-first century. It has come quite a long way and still could use much

improvement. Recognizing that families are the primary influence on children's

development and their education is very important (Hamilton, Roach, Riley, 2003,

p.225). It is also important to understand where this idea of family involvement

originated from.

Before the 1960s child care outside of the home was almost nonexistent due to

the fact that most mothers did not have jobs and cared for their children at home

(Hamilton, et al. 2003, p.225). There were day nurseries established for low income

and immigrant families. If the mother did work outside of the home, the children were usually cared for by grandparents or other family members (Hamilton, et al. 2003, p.225). The few centers that were around were created for middle and upper class families with the purpose of enriching children's experiences and development beyond what the family provided at home. Hamilton, et al. (2003) also discuss that these centers were very involved with the families they serviced and provided a large amount of support between learning experiences in and out of the household. The mothers of the enrolled children were active participants within the schools with the exception of the time period during World War II, when women were needed to work in factories and other war related jobs. The 1950s started the post-war baby boom and as men returned to work, women returned home to care for their children, which created very little demand for child care centers again. (p.226). In California, centers continued to operate.

During the 1960s families became increasingly interested in preschool programs, especially those based around values of the home and local community. The civil rights movement raised concerns about the values that were being instilled in their children in such programs. These concerns led to more and more services being offered to families that honored the growing diversity of people and educational ideals within America and its schools. Schools like Head Start became strongly committed to family involvement by mandating polices such as volunteering, home visits, educational activities at home, and participating in decision making processes. (Hamilton, et al. 2003, p. 226). Good points. There was a shift in thinking about young children.

Many centers during the 1970s and 1980s, and even some in the current day, did not understand the need or importance of having families actively involved in their children's education and development. Some schools views parents as a "nuisance" to their program and some parents felt that they had no business being involved in the schools (Shoemaker, 2000, p. 229). Shoemaker (2000) also discusses that the overall feelings towards family involvement in the 1970s and part of the 1980s, is that only the experts should be involved in education and how that mentality has been shifting in the past two decades (p. 229).

More recently, a very influential accreditation system has been introduced into the world of child development and education. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has been setting standards for child development and parental involvement in early childhood schools since 1984. Their goal is to see that "teachers work closely with families to ensure high-quality care for children, and that families feel supported as contributors to the program". (Hamilton, et al. 2003, 227). Check APA format.

As I briefly mentioned in the above paragraphs, family involvement is extremely important to the development of young children. This has been proven through extensive research and studies. Mapp (1997) reports that studies "over the past 30 years reveal that parental involvement is directly related to increased child achievement, better school attendance, and improved behavior" (p.36). Active participation by families is necessary for children's educational success (Shoemaker, 2000, p. 232). Family involvement is also said to be a crucial factor concerning the maintenance of skills learned in school (Shoemaker, 2000, p. 227). Driessen et al. (2005) reports that

parental involvement such as parent workshops and home visits have been found to influence the cognitive and social development of young children (p.510&514). Some of the social improvements seen in young children as a result of parental involvement are behavior, motivation, and social interactions between teachers and children, as well as between children and their peers (Driessen et al., 2005, p. 514). Such involvement also plays a key role in language development (Shoemaker, 2000, p. 228). According to research from Harvard University, family involvement is very important to learning and development and learning gaps have been seen when this involvement is scarce (Weiss, Little, Bouffard, Seschenes, & Malone, 2009, p. 3). Research has also shown that "even the smallest amount of parental involvement has positive effects on children's overall academic success and attitudes towards learning" (Shoemaker, 2000, p. 242).

Having families involved in early childhood program s does not only benefit the children. There is research that shows this relationship can also be beneficial to families themselves. Parents are relying on child care centers to educate their children, now more than ever before, and they need to be sure they are getting what they pay for, and that includes teachers supporting the family unit (Knopf & Swick, 2007, p.419). Knopf and Swick (2007) also state that families are facing new and different challenges that were not previously seen in older generations and that means educators should work even harder to keep family involvement a part of their classroom and school (p. 419). This support from teachers will help to encourage more positive attitudes towards education and can lead to changes in child-rearing behavior (Driessen, et al. 2005, p.514). Children's development can be traced back to the way families view the role of education in their child's life (Shoemaker, 2000, p. 225). Shoemaker (2000) also states

that the interaction between families and their children is important because a child's

first teacher is their parents (p. 229). Important findings and conclusions.

We know that family involvement is important to children, their families and

schools. But it is also known that there is a severe lack of such involvement despite all

of the research supporting its need. There are many reasons why families are not

active in their children's schools. Mapp suggests it is lacking due to programs

stereotyping families depending on their culture, race, and economic differences, as

well as parents making the same assumptions about their children's teachers (1997, p.

36). There is also a lack of informational materials available for parents and teacher to

learn healthier ways to work together (Shoemaker, 2000, p.241). Some parents also

feel that they have no right to step in and get involved in the educational process

because they are not as educated as the teachers (Mapp, 1997, p. 36). Sciarra and

Dorsey (2007) report that "families also feel that their child-rearing practices may be

criticized by the teachers" (p. 472). Parents can feel this way because educators

sometimes do not understand how crucial it is to have families involved in all aspects of

the child's education and development (Mapp, 1997, p. 36). Some teachers feel that if

they allow parents to participate they will lose control of their management and teaching

(Epstein & Sanders, 1998, p. 393). This is due to teachers and parents not having the

appropriate training associated with working as a team to benefit the children (Epstein &

Sanders, 1998, p. 393). Hamilton et al. (2003) reports that involvement is challenged

because a lack of family resources, staff resources and training, as well as

misinformation about cultural values of staff and families (p. 227). Important

Other obstacles that prevent families from becoming more involved are ignorance, stress, and lack of resources (Shoemaker, 2000, p. 225). Sources also discuss that barriers such as hectic work schedules and lack of transportation can limit the amount of involvement from parents (Mapp, 1997, p. 36). McGrath (2007) agrees that working parents often have difficulties participating in school events that are held during working hours (p.1403).

Research and studies have revealed many ways that this problem can be improved. Parents can help at home by turning off the television, reading with their child, and having fun playing and interacting, as well as encourage their children to be creative (Shoemaker, 2000, p. 227). Parents are scared to jump right in and start being active in their child's education, which is why teachers and administrators need to welcome all parents with open arms (Shoemaker, 2000, p. 232). This can be done by sending out frequent newsletters that suggest at-home activities for parents and children, sharing child development information, and using parent study groups (Shoemaker, 2000, p. 232). Another useful idea is for teachers to send home weekly activities to be completed by children and their families and returned back to school (Epstein & Sanders, 1998, p. 392). Families will also feel more comfortable about participating if the teachers and directors demonstrate a positive attitude towards their involvement in the school (Sciarra & Dorsey, 2007, p. 472). Focusing on a family's strengths will allow a strong bond to develop between school and family and also help

to make the families feel valued for even the smallest contribution (Knopf & Swick, 2007, p. 420). Important points and options.

Social events are a great way to encourage more family involvement. Mapp states that social gatherings should involve food, be entertaining for parents, and the focus should always be on the children (1997, p. 37). Shoemaker lists potluck dinners and Saturday yard sales as great starting points for involvement (2000, p.242). A parent welcome area is also a good way to get parents involved in a subtle way (Sciarra & Dorsey, 2007, p.472). When new families join the school it is a nice gesture to host a small breakfast gathering in their honor (Mapp, 1997, p. 37).

Teachers, administrators, parents, and politicians need to become more involved to make serious changes happen (Shoemaker, 2000, p. 230). A parent education program is a great way to get parents involved, as well as inform families about topics that benefit the children's growth and development (Sciarra & Dorsey, 2007, p. 475). When teachers and directors know all of the students and their families by name it makes them feel truly welcomed and appreciated (Mapp, 1997, p. 37). Good points.

Position

I believe that family involvement is a vital part of the development of young children. It is important that families feel confident and welcome to work with their child's teacher to promote positive outcomes for their children. The involvement of families is also very important when it comes to children's overall success in the classroom. There is a large amount of research that confirms how much it is needed because it affects the children, family, and schools. Research also discusses what steps need to be taken by schools and parents in order to increase its existence.

Study and Results

There have been a number of studies done that focus on family involvement and its influence on child development. I have chosen to focus on a study of family involvement with in child care centers in Wisconsin. The study and results focused on four schools in the state that used a family-centered vision. The purpose of the study was to obtain information about how early child care programs function when they have extensive family involvement. Parents, teachers, and staff were all observed and asked questions about partnerships between families and schools. The centers have a strong belief that "early childhood programs should serve families, not children alone". They also feel that assessments of program quality should give more attention to the perspectives of parents and families. (Hamilton, et al., 2003, p. 225)

The first center that was studied was the Waukesha County Head Start Child and Family Center. This program has a philosophy that focuses on families in their program being "self-sufficient, thriving, and healthy" (Hamilton, et al., 2003, p. 228).Waukesha County Head Start uses the term "compassionate partnering" to describe the respective relationships they want their teachers and families to have with each other (Hamilton , et al., 2003, p. 229). Their partnerships begin each year with a home visit between the child's teacher and the family in their home and are also encouraged to volunteer in the classroom and on field trips (Hamilton, et al., 2003, p. 229).

The next center that was studied was Encompass Child Care. This program feels that the first step to getting parents involved is making them feel welcome (Hamilton, et al., 2003, p. 229). They do this by having a parent corner in each

classroom where parents have the opportunity to relax and be a part of their child's class in the short time before and after work (Hamilton, et al., 2003, p. 229). Encompass Child Care also encourages its families to participate in parent-education activities and provide a monthly newsletter that offers ideas for activities that can be done at home with their children (Hamilton, et al., 2003, p. 229).

Gray's Child Development Center was the third program observed for the study. This center bases its philosophy around "family education and support as an essential component for helping parents become more successful in their roles as parent and adult" (Hamilton, et al., 2003, p. 230). They also feel that there is a strong link between children's educational experiences and parents' sense of feeling welcome and involved in the center's activities (Hamilton, et al., 2003, p. 230). To promote their goals, Gray's Child Development Center holds schedule-friendly events such as parent workshops, hands-on activities for parents and children, and theme nights (Hamilton, et al., 2003, p. 230).

Next Generation Now was the fourth and final early child care program in the study. Families at this center are viewed as a whole and are provided with many services that go beyond the daily communication between teachers and parents (Hamilton, et al., 2003, p. 231). The teachers and staff at Next Generation Now strive to create warm feelings between parents, children, family advocates, and all other staff members (Hamilton, et al., 2003, p. 231). Some of the services offered to families are food stamps, WIC, county social services, nutritional services, public health information, as well as various therapies and parent support groups (Hamilton, et al., 2003, p. 231). The director of this center stated that they "respect their families and focus on their

strengths and provide support for their weaknesses and work hard to be a place parents can trust" (Hamilton, et al., 2003, p. 231).

Some other major results they were found during conclusion of this study support the fact that with the correct guidance other centers can be as successful as the four mentioned above (Hamilton, et al., 2003, p. 231). Family centered care and educational programs maintain a clear vision that including families in learning how their children develop in school is extremely important (Hamilton, et al., 2003, p. 231). Interesting findings.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

In conclusion family involvement is a vital part to the success of any child's development. Family involvement can be something as simple as reading a book at home with your children or in school to the child's class. It can also be a task that involves much more effort and time, such a volunteering or being on an educational board or committee. But research shows that even the smallest amount of involvement can show positive effects on children and families. Despite all of the research however, there is still much that needs to be done in order to increase family involvement both in schools and at home. Administrators, teachers, and parents need to work together and create a common ground where all parties feel comfortable and generate ideas for meaningful educational experiences. The study discussed in this paper shows that there is such involvement and it is not too far out of our reach.

Well done presentation and discussion of your research paper. You provide many examples of research that supports family involvement and its benefits. Interesting discussion of the benefits of family involvement. A history of family involvement in early childhood programs was

presented. Good analysis of the research. Your references are extensive.   Douglas Powell did some early research on the benefits of family/parent involvement in education. Did you compile an appendix?

Grade - 27.5/30

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ECED 505
Research Paper and Presentation

Name_ ___ Date__ **5/18/10**_____ Grade __**27.5**_____Revision ___

Exceeds Expectations **28-30 Points**	Meets Expectations **23-27 Points**	Does Not Meet Expectations **0-22 Points**
A comprehensive and detailed research paper of 10 pages, following APA format, on an aspect of early childhood growth and development submitted. **6 Points** **Standards 1a,b,4c, 5a, c,d** **Tools 2, 3, 4, 5, 6**	A detailed research paper of 8 to 10 pages, following APA format, on an aspect of early childhood growth and development submitted. **4- 5.5 Points** **Standards1a,b, 4c, 5a, c, d** **Tools 2, 3, 4, 5, 6**	A research paper of less than 8 pages, using APA format, on an aspect of early childhood growth and development submitted. **0- 4 Points** **Standards 1a,b,4c, 5a, c,d** **Tools 2, 3, 4, 5, 6**
The findings of the paper presented in class with extensive documentation. **5 Points** **Standards 4c, 5b,c, d** **Tools 2, 3, 4, 5, 6**	The findings of the paper presented in class with some documentation. **3- 4.5 Points**. **Standards 4c, 5b,c,d** **Tools 2, 3, 4, 5, 6**	The findings of the paper presented in class with a lack of or limited documentation. **0- 4 Points** **Standards 4c, 5b,c,d** **Tools 2, 3, 4, 5, 6**
Extensive primary and secondary research sources utilized. The professional literature documented includes many peer-reviewed academic journals, books, academic internet sites, and technological resources. **5 Points** **Standards 1a,b,4c, 5a** **Tools 3, 4, 5, 6**	Primary and secondary research sources utilized. The professional literature documented includes some peer-reviewed academic journals books, academic internet sites, and technological resources. **3- 4.5 Points** **Standards 1a,b,4c, 5a** **Tools 3, 4, 5, 6**	Limited primary and secondary research sources utilized. The professional literature documented includes a lack of or limited peer-reviewed academic journals, books, academic internet sites, and technological resources. **0- 4 Points** **Standards1a,b, 4c, 5a** **Tools 3, 4, 5, 6**

Exceeds Expectations 28-30 Points	Meets Expectations 23-27 Points	Does Not Meet Expectations 0-22 Points
References include at least 8-10 peer-reviewed journal articles and 5 scholarly books as references. **5 Points** **Standards 4c, 5c,d** **Tools 3, 4, 5, 6**	References include at least 5-8 peer-reviewed journal articles and 3 scholarly books as references. **3- <u>4.5 Points</u>** **Standards 4c, 5c,d** **Tools 3, 4, 5, 6**	References include less than 5 peer reviewed journal articles and less than 3 scholarly books as references. **0- 4 Points** **Standards 4c, 5c,d** **Tools 3, 4, 5, 6**
Findings are analyzed in the paper and presented in class, using multiple methods of presentation and expression such as, handouts, PowerPoint, overhead transparencies, or charts. <u>**5 Points**</u> **Standards 4c, 5d** **Tools 3, 4, 5, 6**	Findings are analyzed in the paper and presented in class, using some methods of presentation and expression such as handouts, overhead transparencies, or charts. **4- 5 Points** **Standards 4c, 5d** **Tools 3, 4, 5, 6**	Findings are analyzed in the paper and presented in class, using one method of presentation and expression such as, handouts, overhead transparencies, or charts. **0- 4 Points** **Standards 4c, 5d** **Tools 3, 4, 5, 6**
Extensive bibliography (APA) compiled for the class with a brief appendix of research collection included. **4 Points** **Standard 5c** **Tools 3, 4, 5, 6**	Bibliography (APA) compiled for the class with a brief appendix of research collection included. **<u>2</u>- 3 Points** **Standard 5c** **Tools 3, 4, 5, 6**	Bibliography and appendix are not compiled for the class or is not in APA format. **0- 2 Points** **Standard 5c** **Tools 3, 4, 5, 6**

Name_____ **Date** _5/18/10_____ **Grade** __27.5_____**Revision** _____