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Improving Parent Involvement

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Title

Improving Parent Involvement

Abstract

The capstone's site is Greenfield High School (GHS) and is located in Greenfield, CA. One of the concerning issues at GHS is the low rate of parent involvement. There are plenty of events that Greenfield High School puts together for parents and students to attend, as well as, a good number of educational workshops and informational meetings during the school year.

Unfortunately, the attendance of parents participating during these events is really low. There are about 1,200 students enrolled in GHS and about 50% of parents participate during the school year. According to the Department for Education and Skills, researchers found that children were disadvantaged not by social class, but rather by lack of parents' interest. Therefore, poor parent participation is caused by race, poverty levels, parental educational attainment, and parent's language. These are all barriers that affect a child's education. GHS needs to improve their way of reaching out to parents. Text messages, flyers, and recorded phone calls don't seem to be working. GHS could assign home visits with parents and students, meet parents in the parking lot while they wait for their kids after school, have a phone chat, or go out and meet parents at their jobs during their lunch hours. These are all ways that can help GHS improve their system of communication with parents.

Keywords

Participation, Involvement, Education, Importance, and Reaching Out

Agency Description

The name of the site is, Greenfield High School (GHS). The mentor's name is Katie Trujillo and she is the counselor for 10th and 11th grade students. She also coordinates meetings, programs, and activities for parents. The school's mission statement is, "Greenfield High School provides all students with a standards-based curriculum, educational programs, resources and opportunities which empower all students to achieve academic success and reach their fullest potential." Vision statement is, "Students at Greenfield High School are provided with educational and personal experiences that enable them to become lifelong learners and responsible, productive citizens." The school also has learning outcomes that students should follow in order to help them be more successful and they are, **B**-Build, **R**- Responsibility, **U** - Understand, **I**- Independent Learner, **N**- Navigate, and **S**- Success. Furthermore, the school offers they're students a good number of beneficial programs. Some of the programs they offer their students are GEAR UP, Migrant Education, and ETS. The services that they provide for them are academic advising, goal setting, behavior guidance, and assistance with preparing for college entrance exams (SAT/ACT). The population that this agency serves are 9th – 12th grade students from 13-18 years of age. There is a diverse population of students in this agency. The majority being Hispanic or Latino of any race with a 97.3% and then Asian, 0.4%, Filipino, 0.08%, African American, 0.3%, White, 1.6%, and Two or more races, 0.2%. Most of these students come from low incomes families.

Problem Definition

The rate of parent involvement in Greenfield High School is way too low. Since parents are not being involved in their children education it has become a problem, therefore, it has

affected the education of many students at GHS. For instance, when parents aren't involved with meetings or attend any events that are in regard to their child education then the child notices and thinks to themselves that their education doesn't matter to their parents, so they stop trying or stop caring themselves. On the other hand, when a parent is constantly concern and up to date with the education of their child then the child becomes more aware and notices that their parent cares and they will continue to push and try in classes and homework. Furthermore, according to the parent involvement website for GHS it shows that the rate for the 9th and 10th students parent involvement is at 47%, which is lower than what the research for Soledad High School (SHS) shows. According to the parent involvement website for SHS it shows that the rate for the 9th and 10th grade parent involvement is at 60%. There was no data of previous years of parents' participation, therefore, there can't be a comparison. However, Katie the counselor from GHS said that she has noticed over the past 2 years a big drop rate of parents participating during events and attending meetings.

Contributing Factors

Parents who are more involved in their child's education life are more likely to succeed in all their classes, have fewer behavioral problems, and are more likely to graduate from high school. Parental involvement in school by Child Trends (2013) states that,

“Positive effects of parental involvement have been demonstrated at both the elementary and secondary levels across several studies, with the largest effects often occurring at the elementary level. A recent meta-analysis showed that parental involvement in school life was more strongly associated with high academic performance for middle schoolers than helping with homework. Involvement allows parents to monitor school and classroom

activities, and to coordinate their efforts with teachers to encourage acceptable classroom behavior and ensure that the child completes schoolwork.”

Teachers also notice parents that are involved with their kids and tend to pay closer attention to those students, and even noticed early stages problems that might inhibit student learning. Not only do the teachers pay closer attention to the students, but it also helps their self-perception and job satisfaction. However, this job isn't only for one parent but for both (mom and dad) even if they don't live together.

Furthermore, the lack of parent involvement also comes from race, poverty levels, parental educational attainment, and parent's language. These are all barriers that affect a child's education life. For example, blacks and Hispanic students have less parent participation than white students' parents. 32% of Hispanic students and 31% of black students only have parents that volunteer their time to help classrooms compared to 50% of white students' parents. Poverty affects in a way were living in a household at or below the poverty line requires parents to work long hours in order to provide for their family, therefore, they can't participate in any volunteer school work. “In 2011-12, for example, 45 percent of children living above the poverty line had a parent who volunteered or served on a committee at their child's school, compared with 27 percent of children living at or below the poverty line” (Child Trends, 2013). Parents who don't speak English find it harder to communicate with their child's teacher who doesn't speak their language, to attend general school meetings, or school events. Having parents that have an education also increases the chance of them participating in their child's education,

“For example, in 2012, more than 85 percent of students whose parents had a bachelor's degree or higher had a parent who attended a school event, compared with 48 percent for

students whose parents had less than a high school education. This gap is even wider when it comes to volunteering: 19 percent of students with no parent who had graduated high school had a parent volunteer or serve on a committee, compared with 61 percent of students who had at least one parent who had completed graduate or professional school” (Child Trends, 2013).

Consequences

When parents aren’t involved in the education of their child it creates a negative outcome in their achievements, they lose focus in their studies, and don’t want to stay in school very long. What researchers are noticing is the lack of time that parents spend asking their kids about school, and that for some families’ school isn’t an important variable. According to the Department for Education and Skills, there was a study designed whether the educational performance of children was influenced by parents, and what the researchers found was that children were disadvantaged not by social class, but rather by lack of parents’ interest.

Furthermore, the key findings that researchers found were: Children whose parents showed a high level of interest (regardless of social class), had higher test scores at age 8 and 11, however, the scores of those children whose parents showed little interest were dramatically low. Where there wasn’t report of parental interest there was a higher rate of not obtaining qualifications after 16. Father’s lack of interest in schooling is also a particularly powerful and progressive predictor of lack of qualifications. Overall, the failure of education is increased by the lack of parent interest in their child’s schooling.

Therefore, when schools can provide parent engagement within the school and at home then the students make greater gains. For example, in the article, how parental involvement affects student achievement by DreamBox Learning (2013) states that,

The Harvard Family Research Project concluded that parental involvement is associated with higher student achievement. They found that student success was higher in a variety of areas including standardized test scores, grades and teacher ratings. Students are also more likely to enroll in higher-level programs, pass their classes, attend school regularly, and have better social skills and move onto post-secondary education. The types of parental involvement that had the greatest impact on student success were reading and communicating with one's child, as well as holding parental expectations (para. 2).

The concept of parental involvement with the student and the school is a vital one and can produce great rewards for all concerned. “When parents talk to their children about school, expect them to do well, make sure that out-of-school activities are constructive, and help them plan for college, their children perform better in school” (National Education Association, 2015. Research Spotlight on Parental Involvement in Education. para. 4).

Project Description and Justification

The name of this capstone project is, Improving Parent Involvement. After analyzing parents’ attendance and participation with Patricia, who is the Parent Involvement Coordinator at Greenfield High School (GHS), it came to my attention that the percentage of parents not attending any parent events nor meetings was high. Patricia had already conducted an evaluation from parents during parent teacher conferences this spring 2018. Parents were asked to fill out a survey before leaving the event. This survey asked them about their lack of attendance and

participation on events and school meetings. The results of the survey were the following: late hours at work, reaching home very late in the afternoon due to work, feeling tired, not being informed, too much on plate that forgot, and the language barrier. However, parents need to realize that being part of their kids' education is important. Therefore, as a team Patricia and I decided that it was best to organize a program that would involve parents and students together.

Furthermore, the program will be broken down into three different educational workshops for parents and students. These workshops are for both mom and dad, and students from 9th and 12th grade are required to attend along with their parents. The workshops will be taking place three consecutive weeks in October, and they will be from 6:30pm to 7:30pm on Thursdays. The program will begin on October 11th and end on October 22nd. The three different workshops will focus on the following topics: time management, building relationships between parents and teens, stress/health care. There will be a different guest speaker invited for every session, as well as, activities and snacks will be provided. The goal of this event is for parents and their children to learn together about important issues, while slowly creating a bond with one another. By attending these three workshops together they get to take some better understand about the topics back home and be able to put them in practice together. After all education is just not a one person's job but a team.

Parents and students both benefit from educational workshops. For instance, there's a big transition that happens once students leave elementary and go onto middle school and then high school. Between middle school and high school parents start to slowly be involved in the education of their kids and start leaving them on their own. In the article, *Students Learn Better with Engaged Parents* (2012) by Laura McMullen, she states "As kids get older and advance to

high school, talking to them about their school life can become more difficult for parents. With younger children, parents may have been required to sign off on report cards and progress reports, attend more parent-teacher conferences, or simply drive their kids to school. But when students reach high school, connecting with children over school can become challenging” (para 1). Therefore, during the workshops the students will be able to give their point of view on certain topics and this will help the parents understand and see a little bit more where these 9th to 12th grade students come from. The benefits that parents and students will receive from these workshops are the following:

Benefits for the Children:Children generally achieve better grades, test scores, and attendance. Children consistently complete their homework. Children have better self-esteem, are more self-disciplined, and show higher aspirations and motivation toward school. Children's positive attitude about school often results in improved behavior in school and less suspension for disciplinary reasons. Children from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to do better when parents and professionals work together to bridge the gap between the culture at home and the culture in school. Junior high and high school students whose parents remain involved usually make better transitions and are less likely to drop out of school.

Benefits for the Parents:Parents increase their interaction and discussion with their children and are more responsive and sensitive to their children's social, emotional, and intellectual developmental needs. Parents are more confident in their parenting and decision-making skills. As parents gain more knowledge of child development, there is

more use of affection and positive reinforcement and less punishment on their children (Education, 2018).

These workshops will have a positive impact on the agency. Reason why, because the workshops will bring the parents and students to participate together, therefore, there will a small change in the parent involvement participation in the agency. Moreover, the need of this program was determined by my mentor, me, and Patricia. After constantly meeting with students and seeing how they have such low grades a concern feeling grew inside of me. I would ask students if their parents asked me about their homework or participated in their education by attending meetings or events and sadly most said no. I became more concern about what was going on and why weren't parents being involved when they're the main key to their kids' education. According to Child Trends (2016), parents who are more involved in their child's education life are more likely to succeed in all their classes, have fewer behavioral problems, and are more likely to graduate from high school. Therefore, while brainstorming on what can be done to increase this issue my mentor recommended me to speak with Patricia, and that is when the decision of implementing educational workshops came in mind. This project could slowly decrease this issue in the agency.

Project Implementation

Moreover, the need for this project increased when I kept seeing students settling with D's and F's as "good enough grades." While individually meeting with students I had the chance to ask them what the causes of their low grades were more than 80% of the students responded back that their parents didn't push them to raise their grades up or cared if they had good or bad grades. This left me thinking are parents not interested in their Childs' education or are they too

busy with work to not bother? The reality is that no matter how tired or what a mother or father is dealing with they must pay attention to their Childs' education life because it is the most important gift they can give them. Therefore, we will begin implementing this project in August 2018 with the goal of increasing parent involvement step by step. There will not be any training required because the people giving the topic will be professional guest speakers that already have full knowledge of the topic.

For example, Rockdale County Public Schools established a program called, Parent Academy. This program started about 11 to 13 years ago. "Parent Academy is a learning opportunity for all adults, as well as "tweens/teens" (students ages 11-17), in the Rockdale County community. Classes include a variety of topics, such as parenting, college and career readiness, healthy relationships, computer skills, Zumba, financial planning, healthy eating/living, organizational tips, and more. There are classes geared toward Special Education and classes with Spanish interpretation" (RCPS, 2018). Darci Gilreath, who is the Parent Academy Coordinator said, "I am proud of what Parent Academy has been able to provide for more than 4,300 parents who have attended previous sessions." There last session was on March 10th from 8am to 1:30pm. They do their academy once a month on a Saturday. This program has been very successful and has helped parents and students in many positive ways.

Scope of Work

Patricia and I have been meeting on regular basis planning the workshops. We also communicate via email when we can't meet in person. I have been attending Patricia's parent meetings on Thursday's from 6:30pm to 8:30pm. Through these parent meetings I've been able to analyze the parents' participation and their attendance. I've noticed that only about 15 parents

out of 900+ more parents only attended every meeting. This was really shocking. Therefore, by starting these workshops the goal is to see parents' participation increase little by little. These workshops will bring knowledge, understanding and collaboration skills for parents and students. During each workshop there will be an activity where the parent and the child will have the chance to work together as a team. This will give them the chance to collaborate and learn new things from one another.

Challenges/Obstacles

To start off, one big challenge that can happen during this project is not having a lot of participation from parents and students. The outcome will be shown on the first workshop. If this is the case and the participation is low, then we will have to change the way we are reaching out to the parents. Once the first workshop has been done, then we will have to evaluate what went wrong and what went right before and during the workshop. Furthermore, one of the obstacles that can happen would be having problems with the guest speakers due to schedule conflicts, transportation issues, or them canceling the day before or the day off the workshop. However, the solution to this conflict would be for me or Patricia to be prepared to take over the workshop. Therefore, Patricia and I must be prepared before each workshop just in case we are faced with an unplanned situation.

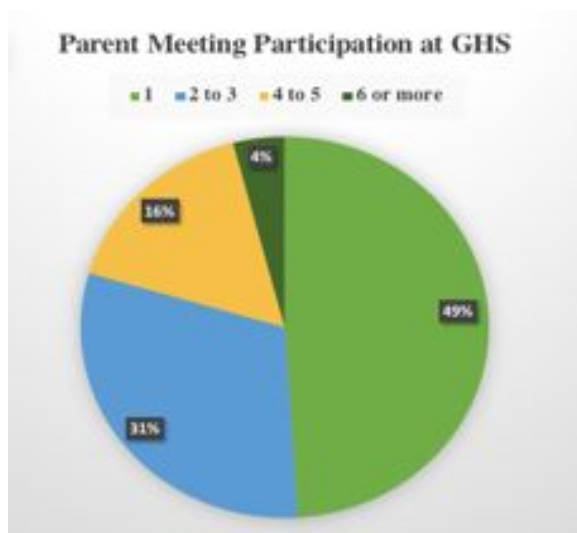
Project Outcomes & Assessment

Parent involvement is a difficult issue to address and fix in just a short period of time. GHS has been dealing with the decrease of parent involvement since 2010. This is an issue that GHS hasn't been able to succeed on raising their percentage of parent involvement since 2010 due to their lack of reaching out to parents. Furthermore, the project's outcome was not as we

hoped it would be. A week before the first meeting we reached out to parents and students via text messages, recorded phone message, and flyers were put out around the school. However, parents and students were a no show on the first workshop. This was a big disappointment and heartbreaking moment. It was unbelievable that after we announced the workshop electronically and physically no one attended. This was an eye opener for the agency to realize what is it that they're doing wrong? What isn't working and what are the things that need to change?

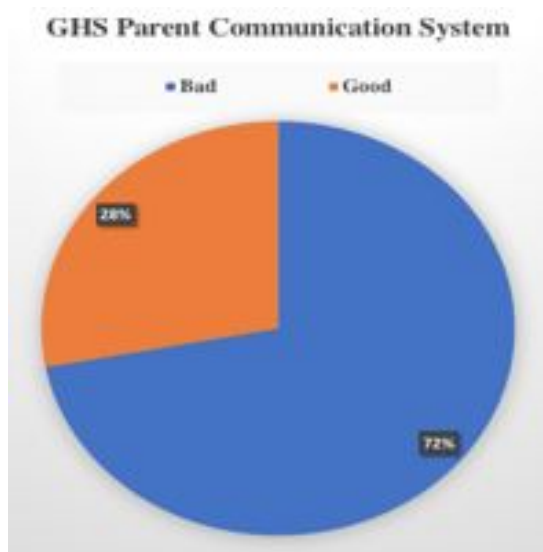
Findings/Results

Moreover, the unsuccessful outcome of this project lead to study and understand why parents aren't attending and being part of these educational workshops. Therefore, the next day we send out a post-survey via email to 50 parents of students that are in credit recovery and asked them to answer four simple questions. Out of those four questions the answers that we received back to the following question were shocking, "How many meetings/workshops did you or your family attend last school year? 1, 2-3, 4-5, 6 or more?" The following chart shows the results:



The percentage of how many parents only attended 1 meeting last school year was shocking. This gave a bit more of understanding why this project wasn't successful. Parents aren't taking time to attend meetings nor events that are put together for them. These meetings are educational and beneficial for parents and students, but parents aren't taking advantage of these opportunities.

Furthermore, what this project did achieve was that it gave the opportunity for GHS to realize that their communication and reaching out to parents needs to improve. The following chart shows the results of what 50 parents had to say about the communication system at GHS:



There are plenty of different strategies that can be used when reaching out to parents. For example, one strategy is reaching out to parents personally while they are outside in the parking lots waiting for their child to come out of school. GHS needs to feel that they have done all they could in reaching out to parents, as well as, tried different ways of communication.

Strengths/Successes

Although, the project wasn't successful it did receive support and strength by Patty, Parent Involvement Coordinator. When I expressed that I wanted to begin educational workshops that would consist of both parent and student Patty was really impressed of what I had in mind. She asked me to personally pick out the topics and planned the workshops on how I would want them to be, and then she would give me feedback and suggestions. Patty was really helpful in this matter, she gave me her full support and was there every step of the way. Even though, the project wasn't successful Patty pushed me to do some research and find out why parents weren't as involved with school meetings or events as before.

Limitations/Challenges

There were a few challenges with this project. First of all, I knew that there was a need of getting parents more involved, but I wasn't sure how it could be done. When I asked Patty, what are the areas that needed improvement in regards of getting parents more involved, she mentioned the lack of attendance in meetings, workshops, and special events. Then I decided to start some educational workshops for both parents and students with the mentality that it would be nice to have both the parent and their child learn while interacting together for an hour once a week for 1 month. However, when my vision didn't come out as I had hoped it became a challenge to figure out what was the next step. After, meeting with Patty and discussing our evaluation I decided to do more research into why parents are not being more involved.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Overall, this project didn't do no harm to the agency nor did it become beneficial. Therefore, this project shouldn't continue at the agency. The amount it takes to try to put these workshops for parents it's exhausting, and then to have no one show up is heartbreaking. GHS

needs to focus more on the bigger issue, which is what can be done so parents can begin to show up. I would recommend GHS to not only focus on the education of the students, but also to take time and make the parents feel more welcomed and acknowledge. Not only will the school benefit from getting more support from some parents, but the low grades and poor behavior of some students will decrease because of parent involvement.

Personal Reflection/Final Thoughts

Personally, I learned plenty from doing this project. The amount and commitment it takes to plan, organize, put together, and get it started can be overwhelming and exhausting. I was able to understand how much parents and their attention to the education of their child is necessary and it can't be ignored. There are plenty of students at GHS who are failing without caring for their future, and it the parents of these students are nowhere to be seen. My time at the agency really gave me an eye opener to see how slowly we are losing the next generation to social media and how little they care about their lives after high school. Unfortunately, there are plenty of students at GHS who have little hope and no dreams for their future.

Furthermore, lack of parent involvement is seen more in public schools than in private schools. Reasons are because families that send their children to private schools are able to afford it, have receive scholarships, and can maintain the cost, meanwhile, public schools are given limited amount of funds per year. Due to limited funds public schools can't focus just their attention on parents, and private schools can. They have more 1 on 1 interactions with parents and they make parents feel more welcomed, while public schools pay less attention since they also have a larger number of students enrolled than private schools. However, public schools shouldn't push parents to the side and make them feel with little importance. Public schools must

find resources, make changes, and look for better ways to communicate with parents and make them feel needed and that they play a big role in the education of their child.

Lastly, I would advise future capstone students that choose to work at this agency to go in with an open mind and an open heart. The student population at GHS is low income, most students are Hispanic and Indigenous. There are plenty of students at GHS that do not speak English since it's not their first language. There are many students that lack parental support and attention, and this were the job gets hard for teachers, counselors, and the support system. Therefore, as an intern at GHS one must pay close attention to the needs of the students and offer support when needed.

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Appendices

Scope of Work

Activities	Timeline/Dates
Meet with Patricia to finish putting together the implementation plan for the project.	May 11, 2018
Meet with Patricia to set a date for the first workshop and talk about snacks for all four parent workshops.	June 14, 2018
Meet with Patricia to discuss final decisions on the workshops.	August 2018
<u>First workshop</u> : Building Relationships Between Parents and Teens	October 11, 2018
Review evaluation with Patricia	October 12, 2018
1 on 1 meeting with Katie in regard to project	October 18, 2018
Discussed post-survey results with Katie	October 23, 2018
Phone calls to 50 parents to ask pre-survey questions	October 29-30, 2018
Discussed pre-survey results with Katie	October 31, 2018

Pre-Post Survey for Parents

1. What do you expect to get out of these parent and students workshops?

2. How many meetings/workshops did you or your family attend last school year?

1 2 - 3 4 - 5 6 or more

3. If you did attend parent meetings, overall, were they well prepared and interesting?

Yes always

Usually

Not usually

Never

4. If you did attend parent meetings, overall, did they provide you with useful information?

Yes always

Usually

Not usually

Never

Work-shop Evaluation Form for Students

1) What is your overall assessment of the event? (1 = insufficient - 5 = excellent)

1 2 3 4 5

2) Which topics or aspects of the workshop did you find most interesting or useful?

4) Knowledge and information gained from participation at this event?

Met your expectations Yes No Somehow

5) How do you think the workshop could have been made more effective?

7) Comments and suggestions (including activities or initiatives you think would be useful, for the future)

THANK YOU!

Post-Survey for Parents

1. Do you think GHS has a good communication system with parents?

Yes or No? Why?

2. What are your recommendations for the school to improve their communications system?

3. How many meetings/workshops have you attended since the beginning of this school year?

___ 1 ___ 2 - 3 ___ 4 - 5 ___ 6 or more