



Differentiated Parenting: Integrating Parents and Families into the Continuum of Birth-Age Eight Education Systems

Patricia A. Edwards, Ph.D.

Michigan State University

President, International Reading Association

July 19, 2010



Objectives

- The purpose of this presentation is to:
 - Highlight the importance of family engagement
 - Define Parent Involvement/family engagement
 - Discuss the terms differentiated parenting and parentally appropriate
 - Acquaint participants with a variety of strategies for working with families

Did You Know?

- 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 valid and valuable.
- Many family forms exist and are legitimate.

Reasons for the Limited Participation of Families in Life Inside School and the Overall Lack of Commitment to Parent Involvement

- The ill-defined nature of parent involvement
 - The ambiguous nature of teacher expectations for parents
 - Narrow views of school-family connections
 - The lack of appropriate structures and strategies for involving parents
 - Teachers' perceptions of parents and communities
- Edwards (2004)

Reasons for the Limited Participation of Families in Life Inside School and the Overall Lack of Commitment to Parent Involvement

- A history of distrust in family-school interactions
- Parents' sense of inadequacy and powerlessness in schools
- The changing nature of parents' roles in children's lives
- An exclusion of parents from activities within schools reflective of parents' social class, race, and ethnicity

Edwards (2004)

Epstein's observation should encourage you to consider a number of questions:

- What is our school's history of involving parents and families?
- What is our school's philosophy regarding parents' involvement in school activities?
- What training and skills do we need for involving parents in school affairs?

- "One way to start improving your school's parent-school partnerships is by assessing present practices," says Joyce Epstein at Johns Hopkins University. The following questions can help you evaluate how well your school is reaching out to parents.

Which partnership practices are currently working well at each grade level?

• Which partnership practices should be improved or added in each grade?
How do you want your school's family involvement practices to look three years from now? Which present practices should change and which should continue?
Which families are you reaching and which are hard to reach? What can be better done to communicate with the latter?
What costs are associated with the improvements you want? How will you evaluate the results of your efforts?
What opportunities will you arrange for teachers, parents, and students to share information on successful practices in order to strengthen their own efforts?

• **Type I-Parenting**
Goal
Help all families establish home environments to support learning.
Practices
School provides suggestions for home conditions that support learning at each grade level.
School provides workshops, videotapes, and/or computerized phone messages on parenting and child-rearing at each grade level.
Outcomes
For parents-increased self confidence in parenting, increased knowledge of child development.
For teachers-understanding of family cultures and values.

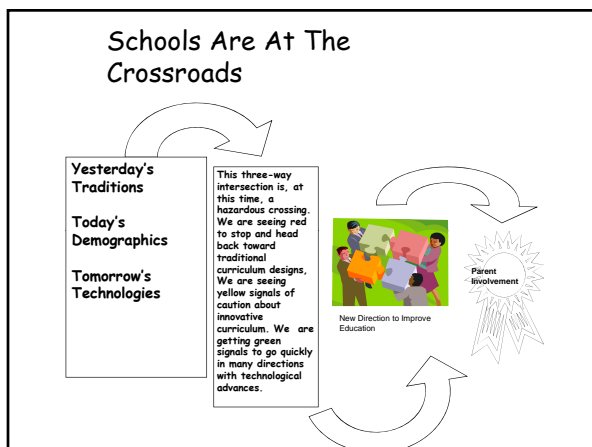
• **Type II-Communicating**
Goal
Design more effective forms of communication to reach parents.
Practices
Teachers conduct conferences with every parent at least once a year, with follow-ups as needed.
Language translators are provided for minority families.
Weekly or monthly folders of student work are sent home and reviewed, parental comments returned to teacher.
Outcomes
For Parents-understanding school programs, monitoring child's progress.
For Students-better decisions about courses and programs.
For Teachers-use of parent network for communications.

• **Type III-Volunteering**
Goal
Recruit and organize parent help and support.
Practices
Set up parent center where volunteers can meet and where resources for parents are located.
Send out annual postcard surveys to identify all available talents.
Outcomes
For Parents-understanding teacher's job, increased comfort in school interactions
For Students-practice in communicating with adults
For Teachers-readiness to try programs that involve parents in new ways

• **Type IV-Learning at Home**
Goal
Provide ideas to parents on how to help child at home.
Practices
Distribute calendar listing possible topics for discussion by parents and students.
Outcomes
For Parents-interaction with child as student at home.
For Students-achievement in skills practiced.
For Teachers-better, more efficient designs of homework assignments.

• **Type V-Representing Other Parents**
Goal
Recruit and train parent leaders.
Practices
Become involved in independent advocacy groups, and participate in and/or lead PTA/PTO or other parent organizations.
Outcomes
For Parents-input into policies that affect child's education.
For Students-rights protected.
For Teachers-awareness of parent perspectives for policy development.

- I coined two terms: *differentiated parenting* and *parentally appropriate* (Edwards, 2004). I proposed the concept of *differentiated parenting* as a way to urge schools not to place all parents into one basket. When schools design programs for parents, one size does not fit all. I used the term *parentally appropriate* to stress the point that “because parents are different, tasks and activities must be compatible with their capabilities” (p. 83). This is not to say that parents’ goals for their children vary greatly (they all want their children to succeed in school), but it’s clear that their children perspectives, and abilities affect their capacity to support their children in particular ways.



Schools are communicating with a variety of parent groups

- Unwed teenage mothers
- Two-parent homeless families
- Single-parent families
- Stepfamilies
- Working mothers
- Foster families
- Grandparents
- Families living in rural or urban poverty
- Families who home school

Schools are communicating with a variety of parent groups

- Migrant families
- Two-parent families
- Low-literate parents
- Culturally diverse parent groups (i.e., Native Americans, African Americans, etc.)
- Extended, reconstituted or blended families
- Unemployed parents



Parents

- Parents are the “first and most significant teachers in the lives of children” (Edwards, Pleasants, & Franklin, 1999)
- Parents can have a significant impact upon the academic achievement and literacy development of their children (Edwards & Pleasants, 1998; Kidd, Sanchez, & Thorp, 2004)
- Parents who support their children’s academic achievement often hold powerful visions of school success

What is VISION?

- Vision is defined as “the act or power of imagination”
- Vision is comprised of two important parts:
 - (1) Image of the “ideal”
 - (2) Sense of Purpose, Objective, or “Mission”

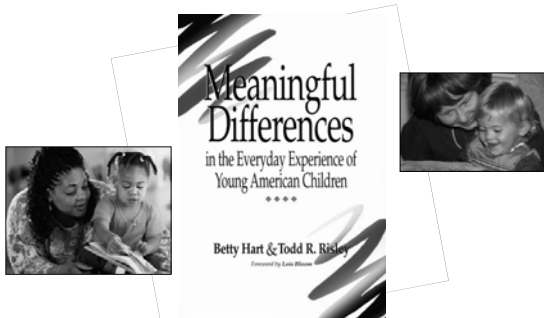
**Supporting Academic Achievement
through PARENT VISION**

- V** Visualize your child(ren)'s academic success everyday
- I** Initiate Relationship with Teachers
- S** Share Literacy Experiences at Home
- I** Incorporate School Lessons into Home Life
- O** Open up and Share Important "Parent Stories" with Teachers
- N** Network with Other Parents

**PARENTS Who Achieve Their
VISION
Help Children Achieve
SUCCESS**



Language



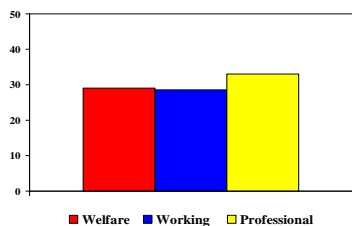
Hart and Risley (1995) conducted a longitudinal study of children and families from three groups:



- Professional families
- Working-class families
- Families on welfare

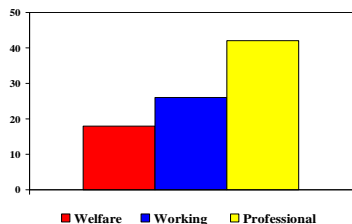
Interactions

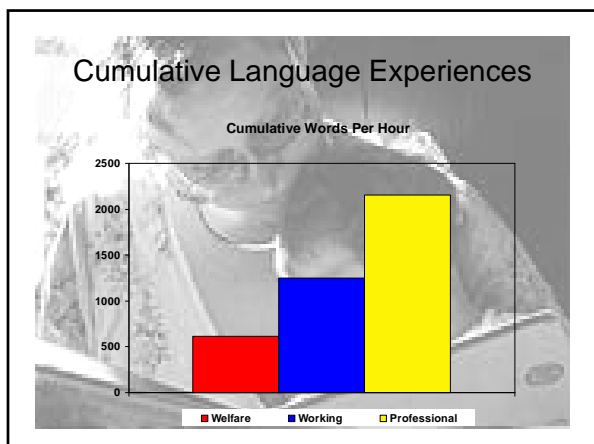
Hart & Risley compared the mean number of interactions initiated per hour in each of the three groups.

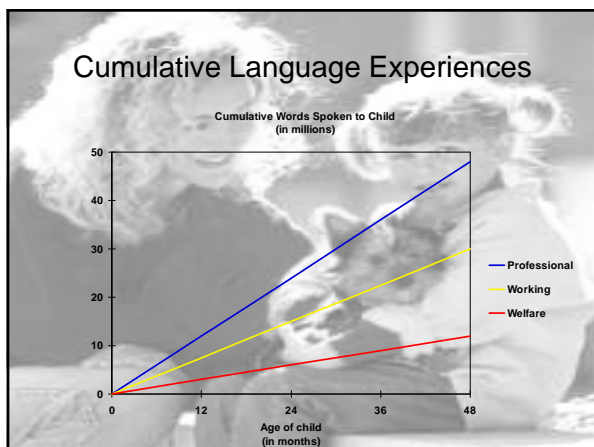


Interactions

Hart & Risley also compared the mean number of minutes of interaction per hour in the three groups.







Research

Family Involvement and Student Achievement

Predictors of student achievement


Not income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family is able to:

- Create a home environment that encourages learning
- Express high (but not unrealistic) expectations for their children's achievement and future careers
- Become involved in their children's education at school and in the community


A New Generation of Evidence (Henderson & Berla, 1994)

Research → **Family Involvement and Student Achievement**

Factors over which parents exercise authority:



Absenteeism
Reading materials in the home
Television watching



account for nearly 90 percent of the difference in eighth-grade math test scores.

NAEP, 1994

Research → **Family Involvement and Student Achievement**

The mutual benefits of family involvement

Students benefit by:

- Higher grades
- Better attendance and homework completion
- More positive attitudes
- Higher graduation rate
- Greater enrollment in college

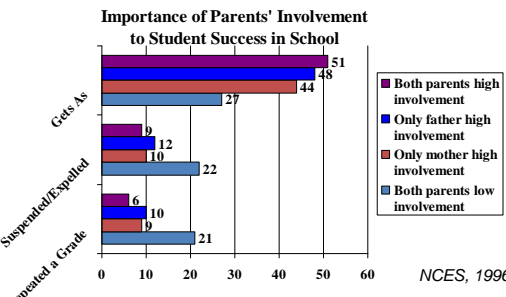
Schools benefit by:

- Improved teacher morale
- Higher ratings of teachers by parents
- More support from families
- Better reputations in the community

A New Generation of Evidence (Henderson & Berla, 1994)

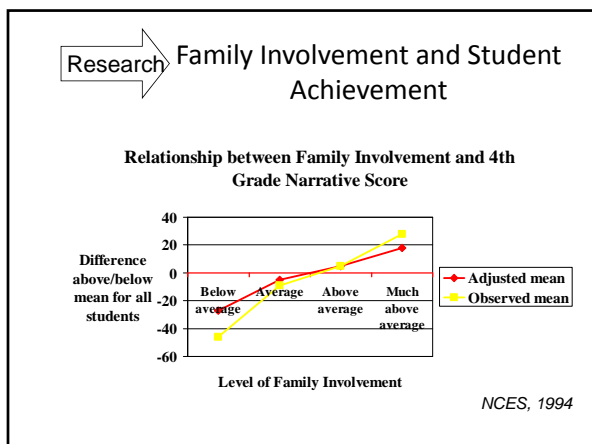
Research → **Family Involvement and Student Achievement**

Importance of Parents' Involvement to Student Success in School



Category	Both parents high involvement	Only father high involvement	Only mother high involvement	Both parents low involvement
Gets As	51	48	44	27
Suspended/Expelled	6	12	10	22
Repeated a Grade	9	10	9	21

NCES, 1996




Opinion → **According to Teachers**

#1

According to teachers, the “single most important thing public schools need to help students learn” is INVOLVED PARENTS.


Public Agenda, 1996

Opinion → **According to Our Young People . . .**

 Teenagers with strong emotional attachments to their parents and teachers are much less likely to engage in high-risk activities.

Add Health study, 1997

72% of children, ages 10-13 said they would like to talk to their parents more about schoolwork. Almost 50% of older students, ages 14-17 agreed.

National Commission on Children, 1999 

Opinion

According to Parents . . .



The vast majority of parents believe that their child's success is directly related to their active involvement in the child's formal education (National PTA, 1993).

40% of parents believe they are not devoting enough time to their children's education (Finney, 1993).



Opinion

According to Employers



89% of company executives identified the biggest obstacle to school reform as lack of parental involvement (Perry 1993).



At the Palisades Education Summit of CEOs and Governors, employers pledged to "adopt policies to support parental involvement in their children's education and in improving their local schools" (1996 National Education Summit Policy Statement).

President Lyndon B. Johnson State of the Union address, January 8, 1964



The legacy of the War on Poverty remains in the continued existence of such federal programs as **Head Start** and **Job Corps**.

President George H. W. Bush (Daddy Bush)



**"By the Year 2000 -
All children in America will start school ready to learn.**
The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.

All students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, the arts, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our nation's modern economy.

United States students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.

Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Every school in the United States will be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

The nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century.

Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children."

President Bill Clinton—State of the Union Address, January 23, 1996

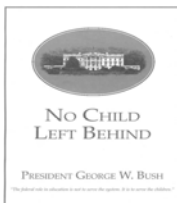


- "Parents who know their children's teachers and help with the homework and teach their kids right from wrong—these parents can make all the difference."

President George W. Bush



Reading First
Early Reading First



Because of No Child Left Behind, closing the achievement gap is now a national priority.

President Barack Obama—September 8, 2008, Dayton Ohio Speech



- [Success] starts in our families. Because no education policy can replace a parent who's involved in their child's education from day one—who makes sure that their children are in school on time, helps them with their homework after dinner, and attends those parent-teacher conferences. No government program can turn off the TV set or put away the video games or read to your children.

It will be the goal of this administration to ensure that every child has access to a complete and competitive education from the day they are born to the day they begin a career ... we know that the most formative learning comes in those first years of life.

President Obama
February 24, 2009



Envisioning the Great Divide



Home



School

Did You Know?

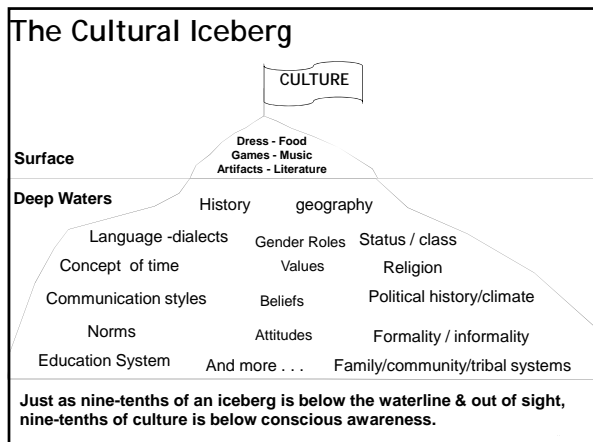
- Families send children to school, where they hope their children will become learners with the tools they need to succeed in life. Schools take children from and send them back to their families, where they assume the families will provide the support that children need to grow and learn. This circle, in which home and school share the resource of children, is one that has been the focus of development and debate.
- (*Representing Relationships Between Parents and Schools: Making Visible the Force of Theory*, M. Elizabeth Graue)

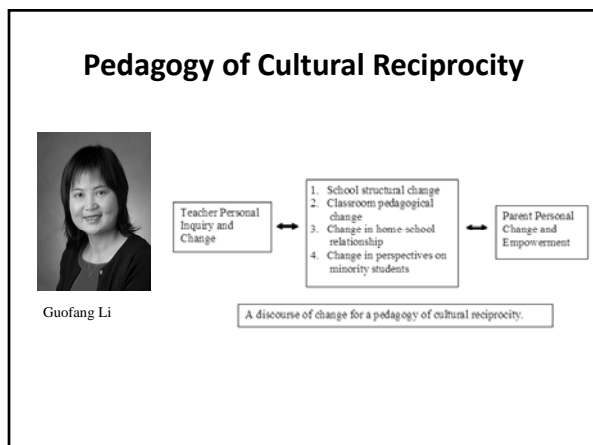
- Tell me what to do.
- Tell me about the cultures of these students.
- Give me some tips to help me teach them.
- I have heard that these students learn differently.
- What does research say about the way these students learn and are socialized?

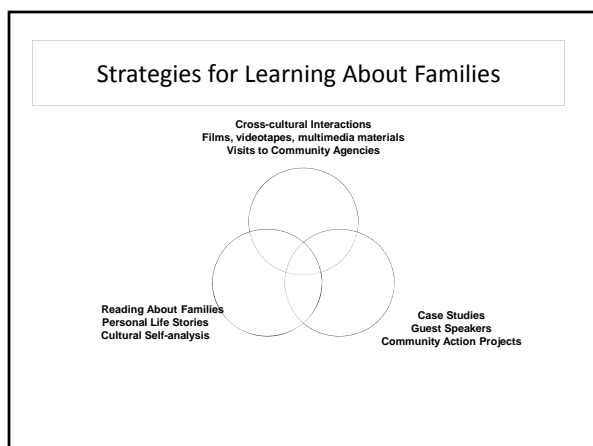


Teacher Education

“Many teachers find themselves ill-prepared to comprehend the multiple cultures that students bring to the classroom, let alone bring dignity and respect for those cultures. They are taught subject matter, but not what to do when the subject matter does not pertain to the life experiences of the students. Teacher education programs rarely prepare teachers to make education meaningful to diverse groups of students” (Krevotics & Nussell, 1994, p. xi).







Community Mapping

- Community mapping is both the recovery and discovery of the connections and common ground that all communities share. This emerging cartographic practice is a vital part of a worldwide movement for participatory learning, community empowerment and sustainable planning. Maps visually represent worldviews and knowledge and therefore have unique spatial power. Community mapping assumes that ordinary people and communities can make maps to express the stories about their lives and home places. Community mapping, as a learning and planning process, facilitates such story telling and community maps represent the stories.

Community Mapping

- An *inquiry-based* method that can:
 - Give us the tools to better understand the social, cultural, and political contexts of families
 - Offer insights into the needs of a particular school community
 - Uncover local knowledge sources and resources
 - Identify household skills, specializations, and competencies
 - Architecture
 - Geographical landscape
 - Employment trends/unemployment (economic climate)
 - Bookstores & Libraries
 - Community service providers
 - Housing
 - Demographics and demographic shifts
 - Recreational facilities
 - Businesses
 - Historical legacies

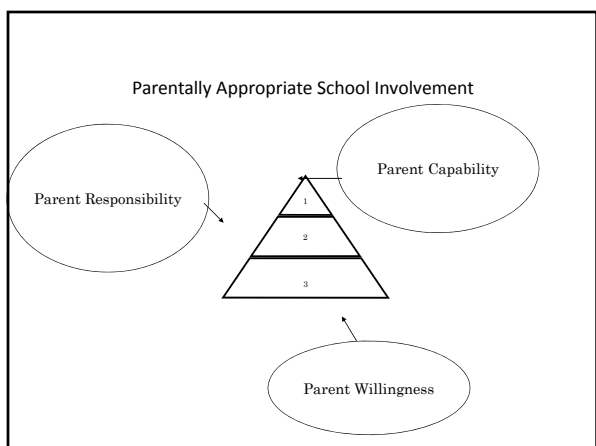
Community Mapping

- Scout
- Map
- Observe and Note-take
- Photograph/Videotape
- Tabulate
- Collect
- Interview

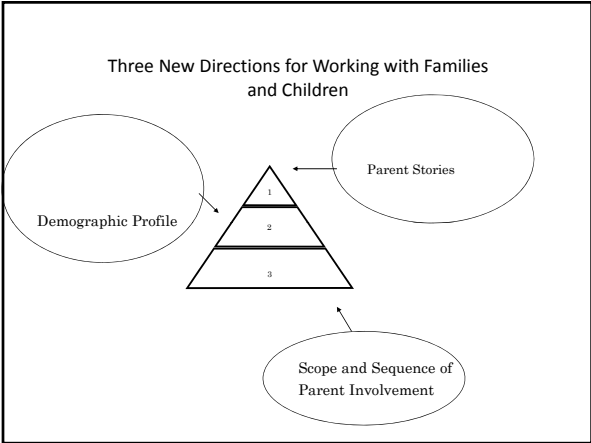
- Parents differ in their perceptions and conceptions about school and the schooling process.

Schools Need to Determine

- What activities parents feel **capable** of doing
- What activities parents are **willing** to do
- What activities parents feel **responsible** for fulfilling



- Gathering information of this nature could possibly build better home-school connections between the school and the wider variety of parent groups.



Parent Stories

What are Parent Stories?

- According to Vandergrift and Greene (1992) "every parent has his or her own story to tell" (p. 57)
- Coles (1989) further contends that "one's responses to a story is just as revealing as the story itself" (p. 18).

One Dimensional Questions

- How many hours per week do you routinely spend reading stories to your child?
- Have you set aside a certain time every day to read to your child?
- Do you encourage your child to read or tell you a story?
- Do you provide books and magazines for your child to read?
- Do you talk and listen to your child?
- Do you and your child visit the library regularly?
- Are you selective in the TV programs your child can watch?
- Do you talk about and discuss the program with your child?

What are Parent Stories?

Although multicultural curriculum in teacher preparation programs has helped "the cultures" of school accommodate the customs of other cultures; multicultural education has not permeated pedagogy. Too often teachers focus on large or historical cultural traditions in their classrooms and fail to consider the "personal knowledge" of students that accompanies those traditions. Therefore, I offer parent stories as a mechanism for helping teachers consider the "personal knowledge" of families and children. (Edwards, 1999, *A path to follow*)

What are Parent Stories?

Parent “stories” are the narratives gained from open-ended conversations and/or interviews. In these interviews, parents respond to questions designed to provide information about traditional and nontraditional early literacy activities and experiences that have happened in the home.

(Edwards et al., 1999, pp.xxii-xxiii)

What are Parent Stories?

- Victoria Purcell-Gates (1995) states: “When we seek to understand learners, we must seek to understand the cultural contexts within which they have developed, learn to interpret who they are in relations to others, and learn how to process, interpret, or decode, their world” (p. 5).
- Courtney Cazden (1989) states: “Teachers, like physicians and social workers, are in the business of helping others. But as a prerequisite to giving help, we have to take in and understand” (p. 26).
- Resnick (1990) contends that school is only one place where literate activities occur: To understand the literacy crisis and imagine possible solutions, it is essential to examine the nature of literacy practice outside school as well as within” (p. 170).

What are Parent Stories?

Brandt (1985) stated that:

- School may have the official mission to bring literacy to students, but it is much more accurate to say that students bring literacy—or rather literacies—to school. Home literacy comes embedded in complex social and emotional meanings that need to be acknowledged and built upon, not ignored or dismantled, in school. (p. 135)

What are Parent Stories?

- ...Not all people read and write with equal ease and fluency or use writing and reading in the same ways or for the purposes. In the long run, it may be useful to think of “multiple literacies.” The notion of multiple literacies recognizes that there are many ways of being—and of becoming—literate, and how literacy develops and how it is used depend on the particular social and cultural setting. (McLane & McNamee, 1990, p. 3)

What Happened During the Parent Interviews?

...A thinking voice: thinking to remember, thinking to get what happened into words, thinking to understand it and fit it together with present experiences...The inner voice would come as the [parents] became interested in rendering the past. It moved in as they came to trust [me] and out as they suddenly wondered what [I was] thinking of what they were saying (Cleary, 1991).

What Can Parent Stories Provide for Teachers?

- Routines of parents and children
- Parents’ recollections of their children’s early learning efforts
- Parents’ perceptions as to whether their occupations determine how they raise their children
- Descriptions of parents’ “teachable moments”
- Artifacts of children’s literacy histories (scrapbooks, audio cassettes, videotapes, photographs, etc.)

(Edwards et al., 1999, p.xviii)

What Can Parent Stories Provide for Teachers?

Parent stories can also provide teachers with the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the "human side" of families and children (i.e., why children behave as they do, children's ways of learning and communicating, some of the problems parents have encountered, and how these problems may have impacted their children's views about school and the schooling process).

(Edwards et al., 1999, p.xviii)

What Can Parent Stories Provide for Teachers?

Further, parent stories offer a route out of the blame cycle and the justification teachers sometimes give for not successfully teaching labeled at-risk. Parent stories allow teachers to identify what it means, specifically, when we use the words "home literacy environment" to talk about students' success or lack of success in school. By using parent stories in this way, teachers are able to look at specific issues, problems and strengths of homes, which influence the literacy development of students. This is the first step towards making connections between parent stories and how they can be used to better educate every child.

(Edwards et al., 1999, p.xxiv)

What Can Parent Stories Provide for Teachers? --A New Way to Listen to Parents

- Can you describe "something" about your home learning environment that you feel might be different from the learning environment of the school?
- Can you describe "something" about your home learning environment that you would like the school to build upon because you feel that this "something" would enhance your child's learning potential at school?
- Is there "something" about your child that might not be obvious to the teacher, but might positively or negatively affect his/her performance in school if the teacher knew? If so, what would that "something" be?

Some Closing Thoughts About Parent Stories

- If the way we teach is guided by the needs of developing children, then it will not only reshape our classroom *practice*, it will reshape our classroom *environment*.

- The classroom acts as a kind of aquarium, reflecting the ideas, ethics, attitudes and life of the people who live in it.

- All too often the classroom fails to act as a kind of aquarium.

Cultural Variables

- Sociolinguistics
- Social Organization
- Cognition
- Motivation

Areas of Potential Cultural Conflict

- Learning style
- Interactional or relational style
- Communication
- Differing perceptions of involvement

- Living
- Communicating
- Thinking

- Learning
- Interactions
- Perceptions

- According to Taylor & Dorsey (1988):
If we are to teach, we must first examine our own assumptions about families and children and we must be alert to the negative images in the literature...Instead of responding to pathologies, we must recognize that what we see may actually be healthy adaptations to an uncertain and stressful world. As teachers, researchers, [administrators], and policymakers, we need to think about the children themselves and try to imagine the contextual worlds of their day-to-day lives. (p. 203)

- In trying to understand families' home literacy environments we must also try to understand ourselves, true and false, personal perceptions and deceptions, the ethnocentrism of our own mental baggage. It is here that we, as researchers, educators, and policymakers who wish to enhance the learning opportunities of young children, must begin.

A Word of Wisdom from P. D. Pearson
Dean, Graduate School of Education, University of California--Berkeley

According to P. D. Pearson (1996),

Children are who they are. They know what they know. They bring what they bring. Our job is not to wish that students knew more or knew differently. Our job is to turn each student's knowledge and diversity of knowledge we encounter into a curricular strength rather than an instructional inconvenience. We can do that only if we hold high expectations for all students, and convey great respect for the knowledge and culture they bring to the classroom, and offer lots of support in helping them achieve those expectations (p. 272).

Demographic Profile

Why are Demographic Profiles of Families Important?

- Allow teachers to develop tailored-made parentally appropriate activities
- Help teachers take a look at the history of parent involvement at the school level
- Allows teachers to determine whether parent involvement has been effective or not

How can we use a Demographic Profile?

- Gives teachers a way to pinpoint where problems may be occurring
- Allows teachers to interact with families in a way that is specific to their needs
- Provides teachers with an in-depth look at the strengths of a family/community
- Gives teachers real data and removes the guesswork/judgments/assumptions about families
- Allows teachers to connect families on a grade-by-grade basis

Scope and Sequence of Parent Involvement

Why Develop a Scope and Sequence of Parent Involvement?

- Capitalize on the curriculum as a means of communicating with parents. It is an ongoing way to keep parents totally informed of their child's day, the school's goals and objectives...It's one way to begin to establish close, meaningful communication with busy parents... (p. 25)

Why Develop a Scope and Sequence of Parent Involvement?

Parent involvement is everybody's job but nobody's job until a structure is put in place to support it. (Epstein, 1987, p. 10)

Developing a Scope and Sequence of Parent Involvement: Some Advice

- Folk theories about students and families
- Cohesiveness of your instructional network
- Developing a shared vision

Sample of a Scope and Sequence of Parent Involvement

- Kindergarten – Sharing Time
- First Grade – Emergent Literacy
- Second Grade- Reading and Writing Connections
- Third Grade– Writing Process
- Fourth Grade- Content Area Reading
- Fifth Grade – Content Area Reading

Closing Comments

- Schools must be willing to work with new approaches to home-school interaction...[and] willing to restructure in ways that address families' needs for flexible times frames, childcare, and transportation. Schools may need to adopt an expanded definition of their mission and collaborate with other community service providers in providing educational services to parents whose life circumstances prevent them from being involved as they want to be ...If some parents are not going into the school, the school may need to go where the parents are and provide them with incentives and the support to become involved (Freedman, 1989)

Questions?



For More Information...

- Contact:
Patricia A. Edwards, Ph.D.
Michigan State University
Teacher Education Department
304 Erickson Hall
East Lansing, MI 48824-1034
Phone: 517 432-0858
E-mail: edwards6@msu.edu

Thank you

Disclaimer:

The information that is included in the conference materials or provided by conference presenters is intended to serve as a resource for participants. It should not be construed in any way as an endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education (Department) of particular materials, products, services, or approaches or as an attempt by the Department to mandate, direct, or control the curriculum, program of instruction, or assessments of a State, local educational agency, or school. Consistent with the appropriate Federal requirements, States and localities have the flexibility to determine how best to use Federal funds to help ensure that every student can read at grade level or above by the end of the third grade.