

ABSTRACT

Parent Involvement in their Children's Education: The Experiences of six Inner City Parents

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Research overwhelmingly shows that parental involvement in their children's learning positively affects the child's academic performance. My goal as the principal of an inner city primary school is to provide leadership in the creation of a positive learning environment through the involvement of parents in the educational enterprise. It is with this goal in mind that I undertook this qualitative case study to examine the experiences of six inner city parents and their practices concerning their involvement in their children's education. The data were collected over a two year period mainly through conversations, focus group discussions and observations at home, school and in other settings. The main research findings are that the parents are involved in many ways in their children's education at home and at school; when parents have good communication, caring and trustful relationships with school staff, they are motivated to be more actively involved in their children's educational development; the parents are a valuable untapped resource that can be used to benefit the school and their children; school personnel, especially the principal must take the lead in establishing a partnership relationship with parents. The lessons I learned from doing this research have deepened my understanding of what parental involvement means to these parents, and this is helping me to improve my practice as a principal and also as a parent. This study provides critical information for parents, principals, teachers and policy makers attempting to implement parent involvement initiatives, as well as implications for further research.

Key words: parent involvement, school community, principal leadership, school-home communication, parent-teacher relationship.