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Parental Involvement Impacting Student Academic Success in AVID

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Abstract: Student academic success is a product of many factors, but it is important to investigate which factors are most influential when it comes to increasing student success. Recent literature investigates parental involvement as one of these factors, and evidence indicates that increased involvement typically results in increased academic success. The current study examined the impact of parenting, communication, learning at home, and volunteering (according to Epstein, 1997) on academic success. Participants included parents of 7th grade students who are involved in the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program at a school district in Northern Colorado. Parents completed surveys measuring the four components of parental involvement listed above. Data analysis compared these indicators of parental involvement to the students' grades. Particular types of involvement showed correlations between increased involvement and increased success. Results from this study increase understanding related to the type and level of parental involvement that parents provide for children in this program, and its impact on their academic success. This contributes to possible improvement in the AVID program, along with further research in this area.

Keywords: *student academic success, parental involvement, AVID*

Though many factors can lead to academic success, it is hard to pin down a key factor. Factors including socioeconomic status, peers, teachers, faculty, or rigor of school are often influential on a child's academic success. Yet, overall, parents may be the most significant factor influencing academic success and achievement in students. Parents who are supportive and involved with their child create a positive learning environment and emphasize the importance of education. It is important to examine whether there is a strong relationship between parental involvement and student academic success. More specifically, it is important to investigate what kind of involvement influences success the most. Although parental involvement may be only one of many factors impacting success, it may be the most significant.

Within the past few decades, an increasing number of schools have been implementing programs to encourage students to gain skills not included in school curricula. Many of these programs recruit a specific population and others teach a specific set of skills to students involved in the program. Programs like these provide students with intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. One such program is the Advancement via Individual

Determination (AVID). The program's mission is "to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society" (AVID, n.d., p. 3). AVID students are not the students who are excelling but neither are they those who are completely falling behind in terms of grade point average. These students are often missed in school because they are not being tutored and are not in advanced courses. The majority of AVID students are minorities of Latino and African-American backgrounds (AVID, n.d.). The AVID program focuses on individual determination, but it is interesting the lack of attention it pays to parents and their involvement. Parental involvement has been shown to increase academic success and achievement (Epstein, 1997), yet AVID does not pay much mind to how parents are able to impact a child's progress. It is important to acknowledge how involved AVID parents are with their students and whether it impacts how well their children are doing academically.

AVID's goals and initiatives are primarily geared towards college readiness and academic success (AVID, n.d.) through individual determination by accessing their skills and resources. AVID activities help students develop

academic and social skills for success, become their own educational advocates, get motivated for college, experience rigorous reading and writing curriculum, and participate in extracurricular events (AVID, n.d.). It is interesting though, that AVID, whose initiatives focus on academic success and achievement, does not acknowledge the impact that parents may have on their children's academic progress. It is important to acknowledge whether parents of AVID students have an impact on their academic success and achievement. If correlations or links are found between parental behavior and increased student success, the information could be very beneficial to current and future parents as well as educators.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parental Involvement

A number of researchers agree that greater parental involvement increases a child's academic success and achievement. It is important to develop a broad understanding of what parental involvement entails, according to previous research. Scholars in this field cover a number of characteristics that they consider "parental involvement." Parental involvement may include anything related to encouraging students to do well in class, encouraging good grades, engaging in extracurricular activities, being supportive of furthering their child's education, helping with homework, or being involved in school activities.

A child's performance is often parallel with the amount of involvement that a parent has in the child's social and academic life. Fan and Chen (2001), as well as Topor, Keane, Shelton, and Calkins (2010), analyzed different levels of involvement. These authors highlight inconsistencies in multiple studies examining parental involvement and the many definitions of that term. For example, Fan and Chen (2001) investigated parent-child communication, home supervision, educational aspiration for children, and school contact and participation. Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) considered parental involvement as home discussion, school communication, home supervision, and school participation. While these are good examples and ways that parents can be

involved, some studies are overly broad in their definition of parental involvement, while others demonstrate a specific meaning of parental involvement. The correlation of student academic success may be discovered by gathering the most common yet impactful ways a parent can be involved with their child as a student. Although the definition of parental involvement may be inconsistent throughout the literature, parental involvement at all levels tends to have a positive impact and influence on a student's academic performance (Henderson & Berla 1994; Houtenville & Conway 2008).

Many researchers use Epstein's (1997) six levels of involvement to measure parental involvement and its effectiveness. These include parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community. Epstein addresses challenges within each type of involvement but most importantly explains how each type of involvement benefits the students, parents, and teachers. Epstein has the most concrete and logical theoretical framework of types of involvement (Epstein, 1997) and presents an ideal relationship among school, family, and community.

Epstein's first type of involvement is parenting, which she defined as a family who creates a home environment to supplement a child's academic needs (Epstein, 2007). According to a recent study, increased parental involvement was significantly related to an increased academic performance of the child (Topor, et al. 2010, p. 24). Sui-Chu & Willms (1996) further examined this relationship as well. When parents practice good parenting, students gain awareness in how important it is for them to succeed and that their parents care for them.

The second type of involvement is communicating; communication is important to keep a strong school-to-home and home-to-school understanding of child's standings (Epstein, 1997). Parents who communicate with their child and with their child's school are more actively involved and therefore have a better understanding of what their child should be doing

and what the expectations are of them. According to Epstein (1997), having good communication with the school allows parents to understand what is expected of their student, monitor progress, and respond effectively to their child's needs. Students in return will likely maintain good grades since their parents consider it important.

Communication between the school and parents forms a connection that helps to strengthen a child's academic progress.

Recruiting and organizing parents for help and support is Epstein's third type of involvement (Epstein, 1997), also known as volunteering. Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) researched this type of involvement by measuring the number of parents who volunteered at a school. The study showed that parents from higher socioeconomic status typically volunteered more and overall, children of parents who had volunteered more ranked higher in academic success and achievement. By volunteering, parents become active members of the school community and gained skills to better assist their child in learning. By volunteering, parents are also able to learn about the resources available to their child and themselves to better accommodate their child's academic learning needs.

The fourth type of involvement is learning at home, achieved by guiding parents and families to help their student with homework and school activities (Epstein, 1997). Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) measured how often parents were home after school, parents monitoring of homework, and parent-child discussions of school activities. Parents who provide a learning environment at home teach their child that learning is an important and valuable aspect of life. Learning at home encourages students to keep up with their work and academic progress, and staying involved in this process gives parents an update on how their child is doing and what they are learning. It is important for parents to practice learning at home in order for children to gain learning skills and appreciation for education.

Epstein's (1997) types of involvement help families understand that their level of involvement

are a key factor in helping students reach their maximum learning potential. Schools and families working together is an effective way to help students become successful. According to Henderson and Berla (1994), "when parents are involved in their children's education at home, their children do better in school. When parents are involved at school, their children go farther in school, and the schools they go to are better" (p. 15). Family involvement can go as far as making the school better, and more importantly can increase child success and achievement.

Academic Success and Achievement

Parental involvement is important to examine because any type of relationship that makes a strong academic student can help create a better path for students to be successful in the future. Parental guidance has shown to be a strong factor of academic success and achievement. Increased success and achievement is a topic of interest for educators and parents in order to gain the best understanding of how to accommodate a child's learning needs. More research on this information will help give future educators and parents' guidance on helping their students and children to be successful in school.

Academic success is often defined by a child's current academic standings, while academic achievement is related to their overall goals and aspirations. However, most studies intertwine the terms "academic success" and "academic achievement" to mean the same thing: their current progress and standings as a student. Success and achievement are often calculated by grade-point average (GPA) or test scores. Fan and Chen (2001) investigated overall grades as well as test scores in mathematics, reading, science, social studies, and music, when determining achievement. Houtenville and Conway (2008) also looked at the results of standardized tests to determine a child's academic achievement. Some researchers administered specific tests to the students to determine achievement. For example, Topor et al. (2010) measured academic performance by individually administering the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test-Second

Edition and also having the teachers complete the Academic Performance Rating Scale on the students. Although most authors measured academic achievement by tests or GPA, some were specific to a subject like math or science. Students who are doing well are achieving the standards set for them and therefore have accomplished success and achievement.

Current Evidence

The above researchers investigated parental involvement and the impact it makes on a child in school; most studies looked at GPA or test scores as a determinant of success or achievement, and used varied definitions of “parental involvement” in their research. The construct of parental involvement includes a vast number of characteristics which fall under the idea of an involved parent. Certain researchers (Fan & Chen, 2001) argued how the inconsistent definition of parental involvement makes this relationship hard to explain or fully understand.

Fan and Chen (2001) believed that the small amount of empirical data lessens the understanding of efficient parental involvement. They measured a number of characteristics that entailed parental involvement, including educational expectations and aspirations for children, communication, supervision, participation in school activities, and other general involvement. However, overall the researchers discovered a medium effect. The purpose of their study was to determine which definition of parental involvement was most likely to increase academic success and achievement. Specifically, they found that home supervision had a low relationship with success and achievement, whereas parents’ expectations and aspirations for their children had the strongest relationship (Fan & Chen, 2001).

Creating a home environment supportive of learning typically incorporated encouraging good grades, keeping up with schoolwork, and understanding the expectations of their student not only inside, but also outside of the classroom. Communicating and holding discussions about school, as well as learning at home, had the

strongest relationship to academic achievement (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). The better understanding a parent has of their child’s academic expectations and the more a child knows that their parent is involved, the better a child does academically.

Moreover, Houtenville and Conway (2008) found that parents attending school meetings had a positive relationship with academic achievement. When parents play roles of teachers, supporters, advocates, decision-makers, and learners, children do better academically (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Epstein’s (1997) levels of involvement have been tested and evaluated in many studies, and have been shown to affect a student’s academic success and achievement. It is important to acknowledge the significant positive relationships between parental involvement and academic success and achievement.

Not all studies support that parental involvement has a positive relationship with academic success for children. According to Sui-Chu and Willms (1996), no clear-cut relationship between parental involvement and academic success has been identified. It is important to examine these findings as well to see how previous research influences the research project. Some researchers worked off of Epstein’s (1997) theoretical framework but also chose other gaps or factors to examine, such as socioeconomic status or race. For example, Lee and Bowen (2006) examined five of Epstein’s levels of involvement but examined them amongst demographic characteristics such as race, socioeconomic status, and gender. Overall, Lee and Bowen (2006) found that minorities had lower parental involvement which often times resulted in low academic achievement. There was a slight gap between white students’ increased academic achievement compared to African American or Hispanic/Latino students (Lee & Bowen, 2006). According to Lee and Bowen (2006), only parental involvement at school and parents’ educational attainment were significant factors of involvement that showed increased academic achievement. All other levels

had little to no correlation to increased student achievement.

Parental involvement may be most valuable when students are younger and more dependent on their parents. For example, Catsambis (2001) suggested that parental involvement is much stronger in early adolescence, rather than high school. Coleman (2009) received unexpected results as well. Coleman predicted that there would be a significant relationship among parental involvement, student motivation, and academic achievement. However, a positive relationship was only found between student motivation and academic achievement (Coleman, 2009), not between parental involvement and academic achievement. Some researchers have even found results that parental involvement hinders academic success. According to Robinson and Harris (2014), more children attained higher levels of achievement when parents were less involved, compared to the children whose parents were more involved. Results vary by study; therefore, it is important to evaluate which attributes of parental involvement or other unrelated factors lead to academic success and achievement with students.

Conclusion

In previous studies, researchers have defined parental involvement by a number of different characteristics. Although parenting can be considered, the most consistent characteristics fall best under Epstein's (1997) theoretical framework. The frameworks of parenting, communicating, volunteering, and learning at home seem most beneficial to student academic success and are discussed in this project. This research project primarily focused on parental involvement for AVID students in middle school. The overall program does not emphasize parental involvement, but the particular program included in the study does incorporate parental effort in academic success.

Because studies have claimed that parental involvement positively influences academic success and achievement, it is essential to apply this claim to children who are in programs which

already promote academic success. This study examined how specific parental involvement positively or negatively influences and affects a child's academic success in relation to AVID students. This project addressed the following research questions:

1. What kind of parental involvement influences an AVID child's academic success? More specifically, how do parenting, communicating, volunteering, and learning opportunities at home influence an AVID child's academic success?
2. How does the amount of parental involvement affect an AVID child's academic success?

I hypothesized that all four levels of parenting will significantly, positively correlate with students' GPAs, and the total level of involvement will also significantly correlate with GPA.

METHODS

Participants

Participants included in the current study were parents of middle school children in a school district in northern Colorado. This district was chosen due to access, previous experience working with the district, and ability to continue working with the schools in this area. The researcher was hired with the district as an AVID, Advancement Via Individual Determination, tutor. An AVID tutor can work with AVID students who are in middle and high school.

The AVID student profile consists of students with academic potential (AVID, n.d.). Students with academic potential are considered students whose GPA falls between a 2.0 and a 3.5, who have average to high test scores, demonstrate college potential, and most importantly, have drive and determination (AVID, n.d.). Additionally, in order to be an AVID student, the student must either be the first who plans to attend college in their family, have low income, are a member of a group of underserved individuals in higher academia, or fall under special circumstances (AVID, n.d.). Students in the AVID program are encouraged to further pursue

their education by teachers and the program initiatives and goals. AVID is an elective course which prepares students to succeed with their current curriculum by incorporating the WICOR (Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading to Learn) method.

For data collection, the study focused on parents of AVID students at a middle school in northern Colorado. The sample contained two classes of seventh grade students, a total of 46 students. The majority of the students at the school are minorities from low-income homes. The students have developed a relationship with the researcher through AVID tutorials and classes, which may have influenced their parent's decision to participate in the research project. The parents received informed consent forms prior to participation in the study.

Although parents are not an emphasis with AVID overall, the school district does include them when it comes to academic success. The AVID parent encourages their student to achieve academically, they participate in AVID events, maintain contact with the school coordinator, and often choose to volunteer for school activities or become members of the AVID site team (AVID, n.d.).

Materials

Materials utilized in this study included parental consent forms, a parent survey, and a demographic form. Students took letters of parental consent home with them along with parent surveys and demographic forms. If the parents chose to participate, they kept their letters of consent and returned their survey back to school with their child. The parental consent form provided clear direction that it was a voluntary survey.

The parent surveys consisted of fourteen questions ranked on a Likert scale. The first half of the survey ranked from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree, and the other half ranked from frequently/always, usually, somewhat, rarely, and never. The first half of the questions addressed the first research question (which types of parental involvement influenced

student success). The second half of the questions were in regards to level of involvement (the second research question). Four questions related to parenting, four related to communicating, three related to learning at home, and three related to volunteering. Thus, the four levels of parental involvement were included in the study. The demographic page asked questions about the student including age, gender, race, current grades, and the parent's relationship to the student.

Data Analysis

Once materials (parent surveys and demographic forms) were collected, numerical identifiers were assigned and data analysis began. The data from the surveys were entered into an Excel spreadsheet on a password protected laptop. The data collected was analyzed using the SPSS program. Descriptive statistics were computed for all variables, including measures of distribution, central tendency, and variation. In addition, correlations among parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, amount of parental involvement and student academic success were examined.

RESULTS

Of the 46 surveys handed out, 28 were returned. It is important to note that the surveys were filled out by parents. Students' ages ranged from 12 to 14 years. Eighteen of the students were female (64%), and 10 male (36%); 71% were Hispanic, 18% were white, 4% were African American, and 7% listed other for their race/ethnicity. Regarding the relationship of the participant to the student: 78% were mothers, 14% were an aunt or uncle, 4% were fathers, and 4% listed other for their relationship to the student.

Table 1 presents the sample size (n), means (M), standard deviations (SD), and correlations (r) between GPA and the five measures of involvement (parenting, communicating, learning at home, volunteering, and total level of involvement), as well as the intercorrelations among the five measures of involvement.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for Parental Involvement and Student Academic Success.

Measures	n	M	SD	Intercorrelations						
				1	2	3	4	5	6	
1. G.P.A	26	3.07	.67	----						
2. Parenting	28	18.64	1.64	.277	----					
3. Communicating	28	15.68	2.33	.515*	.610*	----				
4. Learning at Home	28	11.30	2.92	.410*	.573*	.707*	----			
5. Volunteering	28	6.68	3.02	-.191	-.039	.454*	.205	----		
6. Total Level of Involvement	28	20.55	5.81	.119	.239	.742*	.669*	.844*	----	

Note: * $p < .05$.

Results indicated parenting, communicating, learning at home, and total level of involvement all had positive correlations with the students' GPA. However, only communicating ($r = .515$, $p < .05$) and learning at home ($r = .410$, $p < .05$) yielded a significant relationship with GPA. Volunteering had a negative relationship with student's GPA, and was not significant ($r = -.191$, $p < .05$).

Additionally, there were seven significant intercorrelations among the measures of parental involvement. Parenting showed a positive significant relationship with learning at home ($r = .573$, $p < .05$). Communicating also showed a positive significant relationship with learning at home ($r = .707$, $p < .05$), volunteering ($r = .454$, $p < .05$), and total level of involvement ($r = .742$, $p < .05$). Learning at home showed a positive, significant relationship with total level of involvement ($r = .669$, $p < .05$). Lastly, volunteering had a positive, significant relationship with total level of involvement ($r = .844$, $p < .05$).

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of this study, there is a relationship between parental involvement and student academic success of 7th grade AVID

students, at least with regard to certain types of involvement. The first research question addressed whether parenting, communicating, learning at home, and volunteering impacted student academic success, as measured by GPA. According to the results, only communicating and learning at home showed a positive, significant relationship between parental involvement and higher GPA. These findings are consistent with Sui-Chu and Willms (1996), who also found that communicating, holding discussions about school, and learning at home had the strongest relationship to academic achievement.

Although parental involvement showed a positive relationship, the results were not significant, which is interesting because previous research has found that increased levels of involvement have related to students with higher academic success (Epstein, 1997). In the current study, volunteering showed a negative correlation to GPA. According to the results, volunteering had the lowest levels of involvement from parents who participated in the study. However, because of the low number of parents who volunteered, the data may not adequately represent parents who volunteer and the impact of this on academic success. Although the hypothesis in this study was that all four levels of involvement would positively correlate with GPA, the study only

found that increased levels of communication and learning at home correlated with increased GPA.

The second research question was related to whether amounts of involvement related to academic success. According to the results, there was a positive relationship between increased levels of involvement and higher GPA, but none of significance. Although the study did show correlations between types of involvement and GPA, it did not show a statistically significant correlation with increased success.

Although the study was only geared to answer two research questions, there were other significant data presented. The correlation statistics showed that parents who participated in one type of involvement were likely to participate in another type of involvement as well. The noteworthy relationships associated with one another were parenting and communicating, parenting and learning at home, communicating and learning at home, and communicating and volunteering.

Limitations

The current study did have limitations. The study was limited by the number of participants and therefore, could only show correlational results. The study also focused only on parent report, and did not obtain direct feedback from students due to data collection constraints. The parent survey was weighted toward parenting and communicating, which had more survey questions than learning at home and volunteering. The survey could have used the same number of questions for each level of involvement studied. Lastly, the second research question aimed at amount of involvement only emphasized communicating, learning at home, and volunteering, and did not include parenting.

Directions for Future Research

Previous research has shown a broad range of what scholars consider parental involvement. It is important to gather a popular decision on what parental involvement entails. Many use Epstein's framework of types of involvement, yet that is very broad as well. Narrowing down parental

involvement as parenting, communicating, learning at home, and volunteering, is a key factor to consider in future research.

Not only is parental involvement hard to define, but academic success and achievement also present difficulties. Many scholars interchange the definitions of each of these making them even harder to discern. Success and achievement are usually collected by GPA or test scores, although that really represents academic standings or progress. Achievement does relate to current standings, but has the attached meaning of goals, aspirations, or future. Most would consider achievement and success two things, yet they can be relatable. A clear, cut definition of these three terms is necessary for future research.

There is a need to examine how parental involvement changes between the transitions from elementary to middle school, middle school to high school, and high school to higher education. It is important to evaluate how parental involvement has made an impact on each grade level and how it affects students in the long run. It is especially important to see the differences when students are transitioning into a new type of school and grade level. These transitions are each accompanied by different levels of parental involvement. Typically parental involvement decreases from each transition since students become more and more independent and responsible (Catsambis, 2001). To better understand parental involvement and its benefits to student success, it is essential to evaluate these changes at each stage.

Lastly, it is important to evaluate parental involvement when students are in programs where they are being encouraged, tracking progress, and have access to educational resources. It is important to evaluate students in these types of programs to see how much of an impact parents are still making on these children. It would have been beneficial to use a larger pool of participants to get more significant statistics.

The study could be improved by using the same set-up with students who are not participating in a school implemented program

and see if parental involvement varies between the two. On top of programs supplementing the parental involvement aspect of helping children be successful, there are students who have little or no parental guidance and do well in school. It is important to examine the gap that lies between students who do well in school with and without parental guidance and what additional factors influence academic performance.

Overall, it is imperative to evaluate what impacts a student's academic success and achievement in order to continue encouraging students to do well. By knowing which factors influence success, parents can be educated on the factors which encourage success and achievement within their child, thus success might increase. The findings of this study show that parents who communicate with their student and their student's teacher, as well as create a learning environment at home, have students who have a higher GPA. There are patterns from the study which show that levels of involvement do correlate with higher GPA and student success. Further research with a larger pool of participants is needed in order to better evaluate how parental involvement impacts student success. Although parental involvement is only one of many factors that influences student success, research has shown that is it one of the most influential factors and therefore it is necessary to conduct further research on this topic.

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