Title: Reappraising parent involvement for children with intellectual disabilities: Can fathers be involved too?

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REAPPRAISING PARENT INVOLVEMENT FOR CHILDREN WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES CAN FATHERS BE INVOLVED TOO?

CHRISTINE CLARKE
Reappraising Parent Involvement for children with Intellectual Disabilities
Can fathers be involved too?

Workshop for the MINDS Millennium Symposium on Intellectual Disability

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Session outline

- Clarification of the term ‘Parents’.
- Definitions of Parent Involvement (PI).
- Examples of PI especially in Singapore.
- Important issues to keep in mind when working with parents and families.
- Involving fathers and other family members.
- Planning for different levels of family involvement.

Some selected research finds about Parent Involvement.

- Grolnick et al (1994 & 97) found that marital status & parent education were related significantly to P.I.

- Dauber & Epstein (1993) however found that higher parent education levels were related to more home & school based P.I. but not marital status.

- Parker et al (1987) and also White, Taylor & Moss (1992) criticized much of the P.I. research for not defining P.I. adequately and by basing most findings on small sets of survey items that fail to delineate the multiple ways that parents can be involved in their children’s education.

- Fantuzzo et al (2000) pointed out the need to look at what types of P.I are developmentally appropriate for children at different ages and levels of development as well as what are culturally appropriate behaviours.

- They suggest a more developmental-ecological model as a conceptual framework for understanding the multidimensional nature of family involvement based on the work of Brofenbrenner (1986) and Epstein (1995)

- They developed a Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ) as a rating scale for parents of young children and their teachers to indicate the nature and extent of their involvement.
Types of Parent Involvement

Epstein listed 5 major types of P.I.

- Child rearing (including health & safety).
- School-home communications (general & specific information on child’s progress).
- Parents as volunteer helpers in school
- P.I. in learning activities at home
- P.I. involvement in governance & advocacy as decision makers.

Why is P.I. important? Some assumptions.

- Children with disabilities often have difficulty transferring skills learned in one context into another.

- It is assumed that P.I. in intervention programmes may improve parent’s understanding of their children’s development and capacities and may help them to develop appropriate expectations for their children’s futures.

- It is assumed that, by helping parents to acquire the skills to teach their children, parents’ competence and confidence will increase, benefiting the family as a whole.

Examples of Parent Involvement in Singapore
Issues when working with families of children with ID

- The emotional reactions that parents experience when their child is first diagnosed may resurface at anytime.

- Every family is unique. Families exist within a social context. The workings of the entire family system rather than individuals or dads must be considered.

- Living with a child with ID places additional strains on marital and family relationships.

- Siblings of children with ID may have special needs too or may have emotional problems.

- Grandparents may find it particularly difficult to come to terms with their grandchild’s disability.

Some research findings into the involvement of fathers and other family members

- Turnbull (1993) and Phares (1997) noted that there had been little research done on how fathers of young or handicapped children and adolescents were involved or included in educational/therapeutic settings.

- Brinker (1992) noted discussions on family-centred practices in special education generally use the terms ‘parents’ and ‘family’ when they actually mean ‘mother’. Her research found that fathers who did try to get involved in the child’s education reported finding themselves often being rebuffed.

- Turbiville et al (2000) completed a survey of parents and teachers in 6 states in the USA about how fathers participated in their children’s education.

Involving fathers and other family members

Some of the barriers to father’s involvement found by Turbiville and colleagues:

- Father’s work schedules.

- Different male & female interaction styles (especially as the majority of early years and special education teachers are female).

- Perceived power differences between men and women (many of the women teachers reported that they found men threatening to work with).
Why involve fathers?

- Research has demonstrated that children do benefit academically and socially when fathers are involved (e.g. by attending school meetings, parent-teacher conferences, school or class events or by completing voluntary work in school).
- It also helps to unify the whole family unit
- So what steps can be taken to involve fathers more?

Survey results on how to involve fathers more

*What the teacher's thought:*
  - Organise male only activities e.g. fathers groups.
  - Have a class topic on fathers/mea.

*What the father's said:*
  - Recognise that all fathers are not the same - 'one size doesn’t fit all'
    Talk to us about our needs.
  - Organise family events or at least activities/events for both parents together.
  - Be invited personally (& appreciated) for their involvement.

Planning for Family involvement

Some of the things we can find out about the family:

- The schedule for each family member (Life style survey and daily schedule)
- Who are the main caregivers for the ID child?
- What are their hopes, fears and dreams for their child (MAPS – The McGill Action Planning System) and for their family as a whole?
- What are the special skills and interest of each family member?
- How do they want to be involved with their child with Ids and with the school?
Preschool research project
Clarke, C (1997-2000)

Parent evening workshops on:
- School readiness skills.
- Management of time, homework, behaviour.
- PI curriculum & teaching techniques

Parent and Child 'Guided Play sessions (Saturdays)
- Play based activities guided by preschool teachers & researcher
- Parents information & sharing session

Of the 144 participants in this ‘Getting Ready for school’ project over 1/3 of the participants were fathers. 10% of the children had special needs.

Activities for Family involvement
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# Lifestyle Survey

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<th>Sub-environments</th>
<th>Age-appropriate Activities</th>
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# Daily Schedule

Name: __________  Age: ______  Date: / /  Team member: ____________________________________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Sub-environment</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Present Level of Performance</th>
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Family Involvement Questionnaire Factors

Item content by factor

School-Based Involvement
- I volunteer in my child's classroom
- I participate in parent and family social activities with the teacher
- I participate in planning classroom activities with the teacher
- I go on class trips with my child
- I talk with other parents about school meetings and events
- I participate in planning school trips for my child
- I meet with other parents from my child's class outside of school
- I hear teachers tell my child how much they love learning
- I participate in fundraising activities in my child's school
- I feel that parents in my child's classroom support each other

Home-Based Involvement
- I spend time working with my child on number skills
- I spend time working with my child on reading/writing skills
- I talk to my child about how much I love learning new things
- I bring home learning materials for my child (videos, etc.)
- I spend time with my child working on creative activities
- I share stories with my child about when I was in school
- I see that my child has a place for books and school materials
- I take my child places in the community to learn special things (i.e., zoo, museum)
- I maintain clear rules at my home that my child should obey
- I talk about my child's learning efforts in front of relatives
- I review my child's school work
- I keep a regular morning and bedtime schedule for my child
- I praise my child for school work in front of the teacher

Home-School Conferencing
- I talk to the teacher about how my child gets along with his/her classmates at school
- I talk with my child's teacher about classroom rules
- I talk to my child's teacher about his/her difficulties at school
- I talk with my child's teacher about school work to practice at home
- I talk to my child's teacher about my child's accomplishments
- I talk to my child's teacher about his/her daily routine
- I attend conferences with the teacher to talk about my child's learning or behavior
- The teacher and I write notes about my child or school activities
- I schedule meetings with administration to talk about problems or to gain information
- I talk with my child's teacher on the telephone
- I talk with my child's teacher about personal or family matters

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References

References for the presentation.


Additional References which may be useful on this topic


