



Barriers to Parent Participation in School Health Promotion

The barriers to effective parental participation in school-related health promotion activities has been documented in the education and health promotion literature (Fullan, 1991; Durkin & Kingdon, 1995; Mangham, 1992; White et al, 1992; Hahn et al, 1996; Liontos, 1992). These barriers need to be directly addressed in parent involvement programs.

Barriers for Parents

- Times for involvement are inconvenient for working parents
- Transportation and baby-sitting cost
- Cultural and language barriers
- Previous negative experiences or attitudes towards schools
- Feelings of inadequacy, failure and poor self-worth
- Confusion with education health jargon
- Failure by school to use multiple and innovative forms of communications (student's enthusiasm is best attraction)
- Lack of coordination between school and health agencies
- Communications from school usually focus on problems.

Barriers for Educators

- Minimal commitment to parent participation
Doubts about their abilities to work with at-risk parent
- Concern about sensitive health issues
- Concern that teaching authority will be undermined
- Lack of time and funding for school-parent communications
- Inadequate teacher access to communications technologies (e.g. voice-mail)
- Some parents are motivated by single concern only, and therefore are not representative
- Teacher expertise is not recognized

References:

- Durkin M & Kingdon H. 1995. *Effective Beginnings: A Guide to New Partnerships in Schools*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Home & School/Parent Teachers' Federation; Canadian Association of Principals.
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- Hahn EJ et al. 1996. Cues to parent involvement in drug prevention and school activities. *Journal of School Health*: 66(5):165-170.
- Liontos LB. 1991. *Involving the Families of At-Risk Youth in the Educational Process*. Eugene, OR: ERIC Clearinghouse on Education Management. University of Oregon.
- Mangham C. 1992. *Family Empowerment as an Approach in Substance Abuse Prevention*. A paper prepared for the Alcohol and Drug Unit, Health Promotion Directorate, Health Canada. (unpublished).
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