

The Implementation of Family Fun Activities and Family Involvement

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to both examine the level of parent involvement that exists and promote more parent involvement in the town of Farmville, Virginia by sending home one activity each day for one week with the young children from the Andy Taylor Center and Head Start. The goal is to provide families with a short daily activity that helps create a routine of family involvement, along with providing a form of family fun. Following the completion of the activities, a survey was sent home with the child for the parent to complete. This study is a mixed methods study that examines both quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative variable being examined is parental involvement and the quantitative variable being measured is race. The data that was collected consists of open-ended questions where the parents had a chance to share what was enjoyed about the activities, along with any advice for changing the activities. Additionally, the survey also had a portion of close-ended questions that asked questions regarding ethnicity, demographics and income. The very common themes that were noticed throughout the study consisted of family involvement, simplicity and enjoyment. Overall, all of the respondents showed a great amount of engagement with the activities.

### **Introduction**

A very big controversy that exists in today's society has highly to do with the effects that parent involvement has on a child's educational performance. The study at hand has the goal of determining if the implementation of family fun activities affects the level of parent involvement. Literature shows that at a time, a big divide existed between parents and the schools (Hill & Taylor, 2004). As time progressed, the family and school began to work as one which in theory would increase parent involvement and lead to better educational outcomes (Hill & Taylor,

2004). Epstein (2010) brings a new perspective to the table that suggests viewing students as children rather than simply students. This allows for the parents and the educator to be seen as one entity which will in result increase parental involvement and lead to better educational outcomes for the child. Additionally, literature shows that many minority ethnic groups show low rates of parent involvement which in many cases lead to poor education outcomes for the child (Shah, 2009). Shah (2009) states that the biggest way to improve the poor education outcomes of the children is to increase the parent involvement of the parents. The purpose of this study is to determine how a daily activity will affect the rate of parent involvement in a child's life and education process.

### **Literature Review**

Over the past several decades, a significant amount of data has arisen that significantly supports parental involvement being essential for positive student academic achievement (Pryor, 1996; Epstein, 2010). The definition of parental involvement is not defined exactly the same among all scholars, but can generally be described as the values taught to the child by a parent, the amount of communication between a parent and child, the amount of communication between a parent and the child's educator, the amount of involvement and supervision a parent has over the child's educational process and the rules and consequences the parent has set in place for the child to obey by (Epstein, 2010). The amount of parental involvement is often very different in each family, race and economic status often play a big factor (Hill & Taylor, 2004). In today's time, statistics show that 20% of parents have reported having little involvement in the educational process of the youth (Goldfarb et al., 2017). In the town of Farmville, Virginia, a single activity will be sent home with young children from the Andy Taylor

Center and Head Start each day for one week. The goal is to provide families with a short daily activity that helps create a routine of family involvement, along with providing a form of family fun. In this study, the three themes that will be studied are general parent involvement, race and parent involvement and activities that promote parent involvement.

### **Defining Parent Involvement**

Among each of the articles that were studied, a consensus that was found is that in order to increase parent involvement, the family and the school need to be able to collaborate together. Prior to the mid nineteenth century, a big divide existed between parents and the schools (Hill & Taylor, 2004). The schools were seen to be the ones responsible for handling the educational process and the parents were seen to be the ones responsible for instilling the children with good moral, cultural and religious values (Hill & Taylor, 2004). As time evolved, the family and school began to work as one. The thought was that if the family and school are both working to achieve the same goal, the student is more inclined to achieve academic success (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Additionally, Hill and Taylor (2004) expands on two major mechanisms that are encouraged by parental involvement, social capital and social control. Social capital educates parents on parent skills and provides information which assists parents on helping children with school activities and assignments (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Additionally, it teaches the parents the expectations set in place by the school as far as behavior and educational expectations. Hill and Taylor (2004) Social control serves as a tool that helps parents develop a consensus for kind behavior that is acceptable for the child. In the journal written by Hill and Taylor (2004), a lot of great points are made but still lacks tools to help ethnic groups that are unfamiliar with the American school-system culture and low

economic groups that lack the amount of time to be involved with the child's educational process. Overall what was found was that if both social control and social capital are used, the child is much more likely to achieve academic success (Hill & Taylor, 2004).

As new thoughts arose, it began to be believed that in order for the family and the school to be able to collaborate together, the individual educating the student needs to be able to view the student as a child rather than just a student. If the educator sees the student as simply a student rather than a child, the educator will in most cases perceive the family and schooling process as two separate entities (Epstein, 2010). When the parents and school both see the student as children, they can be seen as partners with the goal of improving the students educational and developmental process (Epstein, 2010). This will create an array of benefits for the student. Epstein (2010) makes many great points throughout his journal, essentially setting the framework for parental involvement. By Epstein's publication of *School/Family/Community Partnerships: Caring for the children we share*, Epstein (2010) opened the door for many other sociologists to explore the issues of parent involvement and help find new ways to increase parent involvement. Both Epstein (2010) and Hill and Taylor (2004) are concerned with educating individuals on the implications that parent involvement has on a child's academic success. Hill and Taylor (2004) bring social control and social capital into the discussion which adds a new approach to increasing parent involvement.

### **Race and Parent Involvement**

A significant amount of research shows that parental involvement in the child's educational process is significantly absent in many minority families. In the study (Shah, 2009), it is believed a way to increase the parental involvement of the minority children

and in result, make a change to the poor academic performance that is very common among minority students, is to increase the involvement of the minority parents. Shah (2009) uses original survey data from 324 Latino parents in the city of Chicago to test the hypothesis. What the author finds is that when minority individuals are in positions of power in the school system such as educators, school administrators and school board members, Latino parents increase their parental involvement (Shah, 2009). The study also calls for the increased representation of minority individuals in positions of power within the school system, claiming that the increased minority presence will not only increase parental involvement, but fill the needs of current diversity requirements (Shah, 2009). Shah (2009) fills in many gaps for the study at hand and generally adds a great amount of different perspectives to the study at hand.

### **Activities that Promote Parent Involvement**

What literature shows is that children who have stronger bonds with parents and more parental involvement are less inclined to participate in deviant behavior (Goldfarb et al., 2017). Studies show that certain activities promote stronger parent involvement, which reduce the likelihood of participating in deviant behavior down the road. Goldfarb et al. (2017) examines the relation between family activities and disciplinary issues within the school, 8,984 youth were interviewed. Additionally, Goldfarb et al. (2017) examines the type of activities that reduce disciplinary issues within the school. The family activities that were measured were family dinners, fun activities and religious activities. What was found was that boys who participated in regular religious activities were less likely to be suspended from school and were less likely to perform badly in school (Goldfarb et al., 2017). It was also found that for girls who participated in both

regular religious activities and girls who participated in regular family dinners were less likely to be suspended from school (Goldfarb et al., 2017). In the study Goldfarb et al. (2017), the amount of family activities studied truly lacked. The findings do hold some statistical value but more family activities studied could have improved the study.

In conclusion, the study at hand will greatly expand on the themes general parent involvement, race and parent involvement and activities that promote parent involvement. Farmville, Virginia is a place with many individuals that come from many different backgrounds. Analyzing the collected statistics from the various families will add a significant amount to the race and parent involvement theme by being able to have insight on many diverse backgrounds. Additionally, being able to see how five different family activities affect family involvement will add much to the study. This study will vary differently from the reviewed literature, due to the fact that it will examine three separate themes rather than focus heavily on one. Helping promote stronger parental involvement is the first step to achieving higher student success.

### **Data and Methodology**

#### **Instrument**

A survey questionnaire was created by the 50 members of the Social Research and Program Evaluation team at Longwood University. The survey asked both open and close ended questions. The survey questions were designed to evaluate SMART objectives of the five activities that were completed the previous week by the Head Start and Andy Taylor Center families. Items were included that also addressed demographic information, enjoyment of activities, family involvement and completion of activities. Hard copies of the questionnaire were delivered to Head Start and the Andy Taylor Center.

**Sample**

The non-probability sample for this study was based on 100 children (ages three to five). Seventy-nine children attend Head Start in three counties. Head Start is a federally subsidized preschool for families with economic need. Twenty-one children attend the Andy Taylor Center which is located on a college campus, and families apply and pay for their children to attend. Attached to the questionnaire was a children's book to incentivize families to return the survey. Guardians of the children were asked to complete the survey and return it to the preschool the next day. Teachers sent a reminder home with children to return any outstanding questionnaires. This resulted in 20 questionnaires being returned. Overall, there was a 20% response rate.

**Quantitative Analysis**

Quantitative analysis of the returned surveys is based on the close ended questions. For this study the dependent variable is family involvement. The item for the questionnaire that was used to operationalize this was, how involved was your family throughout the activity? The answer choices for this item were 0-10, 0 being not at all and 10 being a great amount. For this study, the independent variable I used was race. The item for the questionnaire that was used to operationalize this was, what is your race/ethnicity? The answer choices for this item were Latino/Hispanic, White, African-American, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, Middle Eastern, Multiracial and other. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze these variables.

**Qualitative Analysis**

Qualitative analysis of the returned surveys was based on open-ended questions. The open-ended questions on the survey were, "What did your family enjoy most about these activities? Why?", "What did your child learn from these activities?" and "What recommendations would you suggest to make these activities better?". To answer the research

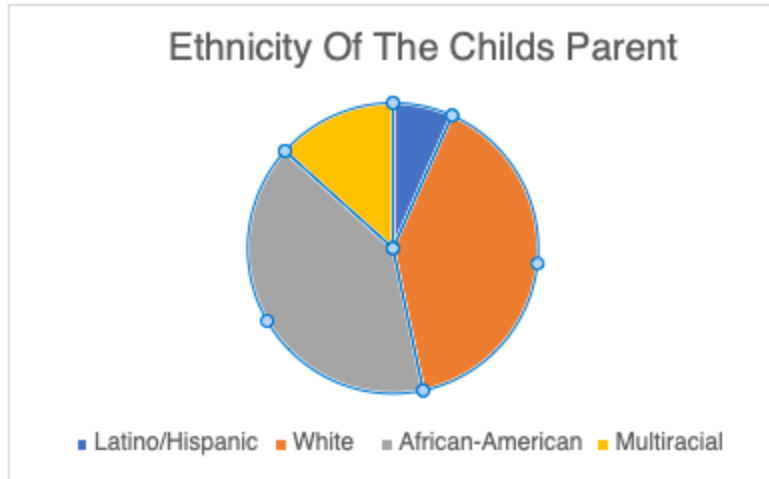


question, “In what ways does the implementation of family fun activities affect family involvement?”, inductive open coding was used to determine reoccurring themes in the respondent’s responses.

## **Findings**

### **Quantitative Findings**

The dependent variable for this study is family involvement. The variable is measured by asking open and close ended questions. The question being examined in this study is “How involved was your family throughout the activity”. It is measured on a 0 to 10 scale, 0 being not involved at all, and 10 being involved a great amount. The mean found is 7.857143. The standard deviation found is 2.282278. The independent variable for this study is race. The variable is measured by asking “What is your race/ethnicity?”. The answer choices for this survey question are Latino/Hispanic, White, African-American, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, Middle Eastern, Multiracial and Other. After examining the survey responses, we received one parent who selected Latino/Hispanic, six parents who selected White, six parents who selected African-American and two parents who selected multiracial. The results indicated that 40% of the parents identified as White, 40% of the parents identified as African-American, 20% of the parents identified as Multiracial and 10% of the parents identified as Latino/Hispanic. The bivariate variables that are being compared are parent involvement and race. Considering the survey return rate was so small, no real assumptions can be made in regards to the relation of the parents' race and the amount of parent involvement that exists. Overall what was found was that the majority of children were involved in family fun activities a good amount but not perfect.



### Qualitative Findings

After receiving and evaluating the data that was received from the open-ended portion of the family fun activity survey, many common themes were found among the surveys that were returned. The three themes that can easily be identified from the surveys are family involvement, simplicity and enjoyment. The first theme recognized throughout the various surveys was the level of parent involvement that occurred while taking part in the activities. The respondents left open-ended feedback where they had the chance to share what was enjoyed most about the activities, as well as leave any suggestions or helpful feedback.. Respondent 4 stated that “spent time together, the talks, learning”. Respondent 9 stated “Doing them together” when asked what was enjoyed most about the activities. Respondent 10 stated “Doing them together. Alexa says she loves doing things with mom and day. Overall, many parents suggested that a daily activity increased parent involvement. The second theme recognized was simplicity. Respondent 3 stated that “We really enjoyed how simple the activities were and how much our child enjoyed them, even completing some with siblings”. Respondent 2 stated “learned how to cut and glue and how to trace better” Respondent 1 stated “Easy to follow instructions” What was found throughout the surveys was that the activities were simple but were able to help the children learn. The third

theme recognized throughout the various surveys was enjoyment. Respondent 5 stated “It’s fun when you want to do something fun and enjoyable for the kids and the family” Respondent 7 stated “We enjoyed putting all the shapes together on the pizza survey”. Respondent 8 stated “having a good time”. Generally what was found throughout the surveys was that the parents, families and the child themselves found a great amount of enjoyment from a single daily activity.

### **Conclusion**

The main purpose of this project was to determine the effects that a single daily activity completed by a parent and child have on parent involvement. Various variables were examined throughout the study that include the level of parent involvement, the race of the parent and the activities that were completed. Overall, what was found throughout the study was that a single short daily activity has a significant impact on increasing parent involvement. No direct correlations were able to be made in regards to the connection between race and parent involvement in this study. Additionally, what was observed throughout the study was that short simple activities that are enjoyable can significantly increase parent involvement. Overall, parent involvement is a vital part of a child's educational process and will have a big impact on the child's educational outcomes.

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