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From Valuable to Essential: A Shift in Perspectives of Parental Roles in Education during COVID-19
by

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Abstract

For students attending a regular school, parental engagement impacts student achievement more than many other factors. This impact on student achievement increases as parents take greater ownership and interest in their child's education. Within the literature examined, the most important factor impacting student achievement was parental expectations. Locating education in the home does not necessitate increased parental engagement as can be seen comparing the results of distance education with homeschooling. For educators to increase parental engagement, lessons may be learned from models of parenting intervention. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the education of students moved from school buildings to homes where the roles of parents have increased and teachers are limited to communicating from a distance. This increased reliance on parents in the education of their children can be viewed optimistically with the potential of positively impacting student achievement during a pandemic and, possibly, beyond.

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Cards sent on Mother's Day and Father's Day show the value placed on parents. Perhaps with equal emotion, parents are often criticised for how they have raised their children. Too often educators join in both the praising and blaming of parents and often view themselves as rescuing children from their parents. My hope is to convince educators of the value all parents bring to student achievement and to shift from blaming parents for their child's failures to valuing and supporting them as their child's essential teacher.

Many times I have sat and listened to a lecture on the unchanging nature of schooling and how similar schools are now compared to previous generations. During COVID-19, schooling did change abruptly with a sudden increase in reliance on parents. A change of this magnitude, even for a short duration, may have a lasting impact on the relationship between the home and the school.

Due to the school closures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of the parent increased and the need for educators to work in tandem with them also increased. During this pandemic, a time of significant structural changes in education, educators could either view the situation as hopeless and headed for failure, or they could realign their efforts to utilize one of the most powerful factors in education: the parent.

In this paper, I present a synthesis of my learning from my masters program at the University of Alberta on the topic of parental engagement, its impact on student achievement, and a potential paradigm shift during the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in early 2020. I compare the role and impact of parents based on the type of schooling their children attend, whether this is a physical school, an online school, a homeschool, or a displaced school. My

goal is to better understand how educators can maximize parental potential in order to improve education for all students, even after students are able to resume normal school attendance. The lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic may also be of benefit to future classroom-based education.

The impact of the parent in school-based education

There is much support in the literature for parental involvement having considerable impact on student learning in regular schools. The constructs with the greatest impact on student achievement are those determined by the parent (Leithwood, Sun, & Pollock 2017). Examining nine meta-analyses, Wilder (2014) found parental involvement positively impacted student achievement regardless of how parental involvement was defined or how student achievement was measured and this held true at all grade levels and in all ethnic groups. The home environment was the greatest external factor impacting student achievement (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993).

The value of parental involvement impacts government decisions with regard to the structure of education. The Alberta government has, for many years, required educational leaders to encourage the involvement of parents in the life of the school and the education of their children (Alberta Education, 2018). Education systems have encouraged parents to become involved and this has resulted in an increase in parental involvement on a large scale, however, the anticipated student achievement has not increased as expected (McCormick et al., 2020). Though much of the literature repeatedly links parental involvement to student achievement, a broad increase in parental involvement has not produced the results that would be expected.

One reason why parental involvement is not having the expected results may be due to the low influence invitations for involvement have on parents. According to Hoover-Dempsey

and Sandler, (1997) a school's invitation for becoming more involved is a low motivator for parents. Even when a parent chooses to become involved due to an invitation, it has little impact on student achievement (Kuan & Chuen 2017). Inviting parents to become involved in their child's education has a low success rate in terms of the numbers of parents becoming involved as well as the student achievement that results from this involvement.

Another reason for the unexpected low results from increased parental involvement may be as a result of parents being involved in less impactful ways. Often government expectations for involving parents are broad, permitting considerable flexible interpretation as to how to involve parents. However, not all forms of parental involvement impact students equally (McCormick et al., 2020).

Impactful Aspects of Parental Engagement

To be able to categorize types of parental involvement, Goodall and Montgomery (2014) created a continuum of activities constituting parental involvement under the agency of the school on one end of the continuum and on the other end of the continuum, activities which constitute parental engagement with their child's learning under the agency of the parent. Activities which fell towards the involvement end of the continuum impacted student achievement much less than did activities that fell towards the engagement end of the continuum (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). When a parent takes more ownership of the student's learning, the impact on student achievement is greater. In contrast, when a parent is following the advice of the school, student achievement is less impacted. The actions of assisting with homework or volunteering at the school have less impact than when parents take more initiative in what their child learns and determine how they will assist their child in learning.

Parents are often more engaged during the early years of their child's education. Looking at the journey of a child from birth to adulthood, the parent is often the primary teacher of the child for the first years, a time during which the child learns to walk and talk and begins to socialize with others. Many children arrive at school on their first day already knowing some foundational reading and writing skills. Though not all parents engage in their preschool child's education equally, a challenge for educators is to grow or maintain high levels of parental engagement during their child's school years.

The types of parental engagement which have greatest impact on student achievement are often indirect. According to Hong and Ho, (2005) the indirect effects of parental engagement are greater, longer lasting, and evidenced across cultures. Things like parent attitudes, goals, self-perceptions and degree of optimism have a greater impact than particular actions taken with their child. A parent who places high but realistic goals for their child's education has a greater impact on student achievement than assisting their child with homework, or reading with the child.

A prevailing theme across the literature examined is that parental expectations have the most impact on student achievement (Leithwood, Sun, & Pollock 2017; Hong & Ho, 2005; Wilder, 2014). When parents place high expectations on their children, this impacts student achievement more than other types of parental engagement. A characteristic which may be closely linked to parental expectations is the communication between the parent and child about the child's education. The amount of parental communication between the parent and student about the child's education impacted the student's academic achievement (Hong & Ho, 2005). Even in the simple act of discussing their child's education with them, parents play a critically important role in the education of their child.

Using a different lens to compare parental engagement activities, McCormick et al. (2020) found greater impact when parents assisted in teaching skills that are unconstrained; that is, skills able to be continually improved upon. When parents teach their children constrained skills, such as letter recognition, a skill for which mastery is possible, this has less impact than teaching unconstrained skills, such as vocabulary. In general, McCormick et al. (2020) found children from lower socioeconomic status (SES) homes benefited more from instruction in unconstrained skills than children from higher SES homes. This finding may be valuable for reducing the SES gap in education.

In examining the reasons parents involve themselves in their children's education, Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler, (1997) found the sense of responsibility parents have in educating their children was the highest motivator, followed by the parent's confidence level in being able to improve their children's academic success. Kuan and Chuen (2017) also found parental self-efficacy to be an important factor for parents to become engaged in their children's education. When parents feel they should assist and can assist, then they are more likely to assist. Realizing the impact of parental engagement and the influence parental self-efficacy has on parental engagement may open possible considerations for how to improve the education of students.

In summary, parents have the most impact on their child's academic achievement when they have high expectations of their child, they take greater ownership of what and how to teach them, and the concepts they focus on are unconstrained. Their greatest impact is indirect. The main reasons parents choose to become engaged in their children's education is a sense of responsibility for their child's education, and having confidence they are able to assist. Combining the more impactful aspects of parental engagement with the greater influencers of

parental engagement may provide avenues for educators to not only increase parental roles in the education of their child, but also improve student achievement as well.

Home-based Education

Since parental engagement impacts students in school, what happens when the school is less involved, such as in various forms of home-based education? Due to its variation, I categorize home-based education into three types: distance education, homeschooling, and displaced education. Distance education includes online schooling as well as print-based schooling; the former utilizing the internet to deliver digital content and the latter utilizing the mail system to deliver printed content. In both cases, a teacher at a distance directs and evaluates the education of the student in the home. In contrast to distance education, homeschooling is directed and evaluated by the parent. Though a parent directs and evaluates their child's education, they are able to select external resources to assist them. Displaced education is school-based education that has been relocated into the home due to school closures. The reason I have categorized displaced education uniquely is due to the involuntary nature of this home-based education on both the part of the parent and the teacher, as well as the lack of teacher preparation time prior to commencing and the lack of parental implementation time due to other commitments.

Distance Education

In distance education, the teacher is not located near the student. Communication between the teacher and student is less frequent than in a classroom situation and parents typically play a greater role in their children's education.

Having been employed by the Alberta Distance Learning Centre (ADLC) for the past two decades, I have been able to access student achievement results over many years and compare

them to the provincial averages on the standardized tests administered by the Province of Alberta. Over this time, one of the most consistent results from the school has been the insignificant difference between grades students obtain on provincial examinations at the ADLC as compared to the provincial averages. However, the course completion rate at the ADLC is lower than many schools in Alberta. Due to the differences between the ADLC and other schools within Alberta with regard to the enrollment and reporting processes, it is difficult to determine how much the ADLC results are impacted by these differences.

Based on results from state-run and charter virtual schools, Molnar et al., (2019) reported concerns about low achievement results of virtual schools in the U.S. According to Molnar et al. (2019), the graduation rates of virtual schools was significantly lower than the national average, and the pupil teacher ratio was on average more than double the national average. A concern arises whether financial decisions in virtual schools are impacting the achievement results. It is also difficult to determine the reasons students are enrolled in virtual schools. With the ADLC, for some students distance education is their last hope for graduation, having not been successful in their previous school.

It is difficult to generalize the results of all distance education schools and the concomitant roles of parents, because the models employed vary considerably. Different models may suit different students or circumstances differently. For example, some distance education schools employ more synchronous models while others employ more asynchronous models. In more synchronous models, teachers meet regularly with all of their students and there is typically more communication between the teacher and the student. Synchronous learning is more motivating but asynchronous is more effective for learning complex content (Hrastinski, 2008). Asynchronous learning provides access to learning for those who are unable to meet at the

scheduled times. Within asynchronous courses, almost all of the communication is focussed on learning, whereas in synchronous courses, nearly half of the communication focuses on providing social support or the planning of tasks (Hrastinski, 2008). These variations in models of distance education impact the role of the teacher, the student, as well as the role of the parent.

Since all models of distance education are under the direction of a teacher, the parent's role leans towards the involvement end of the spectrum as opposed to the engagement end. This does not limit a parent to only functioning under the agency of a teacher any more than it would in a regular school. However, the parent is directly observing student learning under the agency of the teacher for extended periods of time and this may impact their motivation to engage in the student's learning at other times.

Distance education, especially asynchronous models, have the advantage of affording students the opportunity to progress at a slower pace in order to increase their understanding. This opportunity is offset with the challenge of being able to keep pace with their learning. Students may prefer higher marks over a timely completion of the course. Another factor that may increase the amount of time a student spends in a course is the nature of the course itself. Having been the coordinator of online course development for many years, I am aware of the challenges teachers have in knowing their course materials are observable by higher authorities at any time. Teachers who write these courses at the ADLC feel they cover the curriculum more thoroughly than when they taught the same courses in their face-to-face classrooms previously. When considering the role of the parent in what may be a more time consuming course for the student, the parent may lose motivation for further engaging the student in additional learning. I have frequently had to respond to complaints from parents who have expressed concerns about the extensive time requirements of the ADLC courses. Though distance education may be a

learning environment which is closer to the parent, the added time requirements may reduce the motivation for a parent to engage in their child's education.

The amount of literature I was able to find addressing the parental role in distance education was not as abundant as I had hoped. Additionally, the literature I did find did not clearly identify the models of distance education being employed. Despite these short-comings, the literature does support the notion of a limited role provided by the teacher to the parent, even though the parent engages in most of the interactions with the student. In one study, Smith (2016) found parents of students with disabilities in an online learning environment appreciated being able to be more involved in the student's education but found the courses to be too inflexible to adequately meet their needs. In an online school in Utah, Borup, Graham, and Davies (2011) found that despite a high volume of student-parent interaction and infrequent interaction between the student and the teacher, the teachers limited the role of the parent to dealing with the content and not the pedagogy. When examining this situation from the lens of the student, their primary source of instruction and assistance came from the parent, whose role is restricted, while the teacher, who had a more complete teaching role, was not readily available to communicate with. To increase the parent's role, Borep et al., (2011) suggest providing parents with teaching tips and other pedagogical aids.

Academic achievement in distance education may have lower completion and graduation rates than in the regular classroom, despite the learning occurring closer to the parent. It would appear parental involvement is not as effective in distance education. However, the role of the parent in distance education is limited to being under the agency of the teacher. Parents may spend more time assisting their children in a distance education setting and this may reduce their energies to initiate further educational opportunities with their child under their own agency.

Distance education may demonstrate the reduced impact of parental involvement under the agency of the school. To improve student achievement, distance education schools may consider increasing the agency of parents.

Homeschooling

Homeschooling is a term with a variety of definitions, however, in this paper, I define homeschooling as education occurring under the direction of the parent. In homeschooling, the parent is responsible for determining which resources to use, the learning activities to engage in, and the assessment of the student. Based on this definition, parents who actively homeschool their children are very engaged in their children's education and the education system has less of a direct impact.

Comparing the results of homeschooling with those of public schooling is challenged by the ability of homeschooling parents to choose outcomes which are different from the public school. There are also many styles of homeschooling with considerable differences from each other. Furthermore, parents vary in their training and experience in education. Homeschool parents are also not compensated monetarily and therefore are often unable to devote as much time to teaching their children as are teachers in a school. Offsetting this disadvantage is the smaller class size in the home and the depth to which parents know and care for their children.

Despite the differences between homeschooling and public schooling, the majority of empirical research on homeschooling reveals a positive effect academically, socially, and on success indicators in adulthood (Ray, 2016). Homeschool students, on average, score well on standardized tests and perform well in post-secondary education (Ray, 2016). A longitudinal study of Canadian homeschool students found that as they moved into adulthood, their average wage was higher than the Canadian average for their peer group, they were also more likely to

have undergraduate degrees and equally likely to have graduate degrees (Van Pelt, Neven, & Allison, 2009). In comparing the results of students with learning disabilities in a homeschool environment with those in the public school, Duvall (1996) found the homeschool students' results in reading and writing were higher and their math results were similar. Koçak (2020) interviewed parents of students with ADHD and found they opted to homeschool their children as a result of feeling their children's needs were not being met in the classroom. Overall, the parents were satisfied with the results of homeschooling (Koçak, 2020). Cheng, Tuchman, and Wolf, (2016) also found parents who chose to homeschool their child with special needs were more satisfied with the education of their child than those who sent their child with learning disabilities to school.

Most of the literature I found did not differentiate results based on the style of homeschooling. However, Martin-Chang, Gould, & Meuse, (2011) found the results of homeschool students from more structured parent-directed environments had significantly higher achievement results compared to those from less structured student-centered environments. Parents in the less structured environments would provide considerable freedom to their students to select their own activities and what they chose to learn and, in contrast, parents in more structured environments commonly used textbooks and other resources to guide the learning (Martin-Chang, Gould, & Meuse, 2011). It would appear parental engagement in a homeschool setting increases student achievement more than student initiated learning does.

Overall the results of homeschooling are positive. A high level of parental engagement even with limited support from a teacher, is an effective means of education. Even special education when delivered in the home produces a higher level of satisfaction from the parent. When comparing homeschooling results with those of distance education, it would appear the act

of locating education in the home is insufficient to produce strong results and it is valuable to more thoroughly engage parents.

Socialization in Home-based Education

A valuable aspect of education is socialization. Societies, governments, and families, endeavor to have their children integrate well. Perhaps the most controversial question I receive about home-based education centers around socialization. For many, even if home-based education produces satisfactory student achievement, if it does not appropriately socialize students it is not a good option.

Burbules (2013) valued social interaction for the purposes of creating meaning and having emotional connections. In an online education environment, or even in reading a book, a person is able to have a meaningful and emotional experience which they remember and which they feel connected to (Burbules, 2013). Cain (2013) argued, not everyone benefits equally from group interaction and many, especially introverts, benefit from some alone time. Many leaders and scientists have been introverts (Cain, 2013). For an introvert, home-based learning may provide rich opportunities for meaningful contemplation. Therefore, all forms of home-based education can be valued as places of meaning and memories with some students valuing this more than others.

The rise of social media, which is accessible in most homes, is an avenue for more expansive socialization than the home alone can provide. The rise of social media has permitted couples to commence relationships online ending in marriage. Business partnerships and interest groups of many types have formed online and often exist only online. Opinions vary as to the value of social media as a means of socialization; however, this has opened up more opportunities for socialization for students in home-based education.

According to the research, homeschool families make efforts to be involved socially, they have higher quality relationships with close friends and adults, they have a positive outlook on life, exhibit fewer behavioral problems, and as adults, show a strong sense of social responsibility (Medlin, 2012). Pearlman-Avnion, and Grayevsky (2019) found homeschool students were as engaged civically as their peers in regular schools, however, the more years they were homeschooled, the lower their sense of social self-efficacy was in comparison to their peers.

With regard to socialization, homeschooling has some advantages and disadvantages as compared to public schooling. The actions of homeschoolers as they become adults demonstrates they are reasonably well adjusted socially and are as involved civically. The area in which homeschoolers may be most challenged socially is around social self-efficacy, feeling less confident than their public school peers in being able to build interpersonal relationships.

Parents play a key role in socialization for homeschool students. Based on the research results, they take this role seriously and are relatively successful in it.

Displaced Education

During the recent COVID-19 school closures, teachers and students were only provided the options of distance education, homeschooling, or a combination of the two. The reason I categorize displaced education as a unique form of home-based education is it stands out from homeschooling and distance education in three distinct ways. First, teachers were in the midst of a school year when suddenly their plans, which were intended for the face-to-face classroom, now had to be delivered at a distance. Teachers could not easily adopt distance learning resources since they were unfamiliar with these resources, also their own plans which were in the midst of being implemented did not easily transition to premade plans developed by someone

else, and funding for additional resources was limited. Secondly, families were also unprepared and many families did not have anyone available to support the instruction of their child at home and many did not have the infrastructure to facilitate distance education. Finally, students during COVID-19 restrictions were more isolated than is the case with home-based education normally. Prior to this pandemic, home-based students were able to be involved in local sports teams, community events, attend various clubs, participate in church, and even go on trips, visit libraries or museums, or take on a part time job. During COVID-19, students were much more confined to their homes and were required to socially distance whenever they encountered someone else.

The full impact of displaced education may take some time to accumulate, yet the literature already contains preliminary findings. Teachers felt challenged in delivering education at a distance and especially valued training in the areas of technologies needed to communicate at a distance (Clausen, Bunte, & Robertson, 2020). Teachers sensed an ever-widening homework gap and lacked strategies in how to compensate for this (Clausen, Bunte, & Robertson, 2020). Educators found engaging the students in learning activities was challenging (Borup, Jensen, Archambault, Short, & Graham, 2020). In Vietnam, the grade of the student, their career aspirations, as well as their socioeconomic status affected student learning habits (Tran et al., 2020). In Nigeria, the personal characteristics and personality of the parent, along with their socioeconomic status impacted the amount of learning activities families engaged in (Olaseni & Olaseni, 2020). Based on the results of a survey of Czech families, children typically spent from two to four hours each day on school work, and parents assisted them for approximately half of this time explaining instructions from the teacher, verifying that previous work was completed, and teaching new concepts (Brom, Lukavsky, Greger, Hannemann, Straková, & Švaříček, 2020). It is important to note only a small fraction of families who

responded to the survey in the Czech Republic were from a lower socioeconomic status (Brom et al., 2020).

The early literature I found suggested the learning gap among students may widen with displaced education during this pandemic. Teachers had not been properly prepared for this event and homes were also struggling to accommodate home-based education. The roles of parents may not be consistent or clearly defined, yet early indications are that parents impact student achievement considerably.

The Impact of COVID-19 on the Future of Education

Unofficial surveys conducted by Alberta school divisions provide early indicators that a small percentage of parents whose children were in school previously, will be keeping their children home in September even if schools open. It is still too early to anticipate what schooling will look like during the remainder of this COVID-19 pandemic.

Perhaps a more important question around the impact of COVID-19 is whether education in Alberta, or globally for that matter, will ever be the same again? A change in education practices of this magnitude on a global scale may produce lasting changes extending beyond any pandemic. During this time the world has been a massive laboratory with numerous educational experiments going on simultaneously. It would not be surprising to see changed attitudes and approaches to education as a result. Questions coming to mind which are beyond the scope of the present work include, in this uncertain future:

1. What will the role of parents be?
2. Will home-based education be more acceptable by societies, or will societies choose to limit it?

3. Will parents be given more agency in the education of their children or will their agency be reduced?
4. Will parents move from needing to be rescued to becoming the rescuing agents?

Perhaps if we can learn to more fully utilize and support parents in the education of their children, students may experience improved results in the future.

How to Better Support Parents

During a time of school closures, when parents are expected to take on greater roles in the education of their children, the challenge of engaging parents in impactful ways becomes more critical to the success of students. In March of 2020, schools in Alberta were closed and students were required to be educated in their homes. Even though, through the use of technology, teachers were able to connect with and teach their students at a distance, the roles of parents significantly increased. What, before COVID-19, was considered valuable, now became essential.

One strategy for improving parental engagement may be through examining parenting interventions. Though the literature examined on parenting interventions focussed on behavioral issues, examining this literature may benefit parental engagement and student achievement. The models for effective parenting interventions in the literature may serve as a guide for developing models for effectively engaging parents. There may be similarities between the effective strategies used to impact student behavior through parenting and the effective strategies used to impact student achievement through parental engagement. I suggest analyzing parenting strategies with the lens of classroom management. Just as parenting strategies focus on child behavior and classroom management focuses on student behavior, perhaps parenting strategies

may impact student achievement in a similar capacity as classroom management impacts student achievement.

Classroom management impacts student achievement, self-efficacy, socialization, and other outcomes; and though the effect size is moderate, it is consistent across studies (Korpershoek, Harms, Boer, Kuijk, & Doolaard, 2016). According to Sims, King, Reinke, Herman, and Riley-Tillman, (2020) effective classroom management improves student engagement, social interactions, student achievement, and also reduces teacher stress. Overall, classroom management plays a significant role in student success (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993).

Just as classroom management addresses behavior in the classroom, parenting addresses behavior in the home. Concerns about student behavior in the classroom also exist in the home (Fettig, Schultz, & Sreckovic, 2015). Parenting interventions reduce stress on parents (Ruane, & Carr, 2018) which again is a parallel to the impact of classroom management on teacher stress. Furthermore, implementing parenting interventions reduces behavior issues in schools (Prinz, Sanders, Shapiro, Whitaker, & Lutzker, 2009).

The need for addressing behavior issues is critically important. It is estimated that 10% to 25% of children have disruptive behavioral problems (Fettig, & Ostrosky, 2011). Yet, despite the need for assistance with behavior issues, low participation and completion rates are a problem with parental intervention (Eisner & Meidert, 2011).

The impact of a low participation rate should not be ignored. On a large-scale implementation of parental intervention, Prinz, Sanders, Shapiro, Whitaker, and Lutzker, (2009) noted a significant reduction in child maltreatment with a large effect size. Prinz et al. (2009) implemented a five-tiered solution which ranged from media and mail communication to

seminars and extensive individualized training. Having a message with high saturation in a community may be more effective in garnering greater participation rates. When parents are exposed to parenting advice through the media and are more familiar with the assistance readily available to them, they may be more attentive to learning and implementing parenting skills.

Parenting interventions are equally effective across geographic regions and cultures in that what works in one place works in another (Leijten, Melendez-Torres, Knerr, & Gardner, 2016). However, not all recipients of parent training benefit equally. Disadvantaged parents and children benefit less from parent training (Lundahl, Risser, & Lovejoy, 2006). Some of the loss of benefits for disadvantaged parents can be compensated for by individualizing the training. Parent training results improved for disadvantaged families when the training was provided through differentiated instruction (Lundahl et al., 2006). But the challenge of implementing individualized and differentiated training is the cost.

There may be ways to address the cost of individualized training while still retaining much of the effectiveness. Lundahl, Risser, and Lovejoy, (2006) found self-directed training offered to parents to be effective. Since parents often have busy schedules, allowing them to learn on their own time and at a location that is convenient for them makes this training accessible to parents who otherwise would not be able to access it. With the increased availability of the internet, other mediums of instruction are also available. Providing in-person training in the home is limited in reach and internet-based training is shown to be effective and may be a viable solution (Meadan & Daczewitz, 2015).

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, parents find themselves involuntarily in roles they are unfamiliar with, and often without sufficient time to appropriately engage in their child's education. This situation requires parents to form new skills, including skills of

classroom management. To promote the acquisition of these new skills, Szabo, Richling, Embry, Biglan, and Wilson, (2020) argued for presenting this situation in a positive light where learning new skills to assist others is seen as an act of heroism. Instead of feeling hopeless during forced school closures, it is valuable to focus on ways of optimizing the situation. Since parents play a major role in student achievement, and since parental expectations are perhaps the most influential aspect of parental engagement, this time of school closures should be a time of focussing on improving parental expectations. Parents should be encouraged with the knowledge of their own impact on student achievement and be encouraged to pursue further training in order to increase this impact.

Szabo et al., (2020) present a list of effective research-based practices and suggest implementing them based on an analysis of the situation. For example, a family-centered intervention focusing on routines is an effective way of improving behavior (Fettig, Schultz, & Sreckovic, 2015). One parent intervention program that has been implemented broadly, is the Triple P-Positive Parenting Program (Prinz et al. 2009). The Triple P system incorporates five levels of intervention ranging from use of media at a population level to individualized skills training for a parent, with goals of increasing parenting competence and reducing parenting practices that are dysfunctional (Prinz et al. 2009). The Triple P system provides systematic training for establishing a safe and positive home that has reasonable expectations and employs appropriate discipline (Prinz et al. 2009). Numerous meta-analyses of this system have shown it to be effective in improving behavior and reducing emotional problems in children (Ruane, & Carr, 2018). The intent in this paper is not to compare parent intervention programs but to indicate that such programs can be successful and may have potential in impacting student achievement.

Students are not the only ones to benefit from parenting interventions; parents benefit from them as well. Through parenting interventions, parenting stress is reduced, parenting confidence and satisfaction increases, and in two-parent families, the relationship between the two parents improves (Ruane, & Carr, 2018). Society at-large benefits as well. In a successful and large implementation of parenting intervention, the treatment of children improved (Prinz et al. 2009). Even without considering any potential benefit for student achievement, there is reason to promote parenting interventions during a time of isolation and increased stress.

Summary

Parents play an important role in the education of their children. This role has greater impact when parents take greater ownership of the education of their children. Not all forms of parental involvement have equal impact. Parental self-efficacy and expectations of student achievement are more impactful than actions parents perform under the agency of the school. Student success is lower when parents function under the agency of the school in a distance education setting, as compared to homeschooling under the agency of the parent. Simply locating the student in the home does not ensure increased parental engagement or improved student achievement. High levels of parental engagement, such as in homeschooling, can obtain positive student achievement results, even without assistance from a school or teacher.

In order to improve parental engagement, it may be valuable to learn from parenting intervention as a means of improving classroom management in the home. Parental engagement is not the easy road, but it is an effective road. Supporting parents in their role as primary educators of their children may improve student achievement. To engage parents effectively, I feel it is valuable for schools to shift from an attitude of rescuing children from their parents to

supporting parents in playing a pivotal, and possibly a heroic role in the education of their own children.

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