Ray Rivas,

It is a well-known fact that parent involvement in school enhances the overall educational experience for students and will improve academic and behavioral performance.  Even though many positives are directly linked to active involvement from parents, some schools are still lacking in their efforts to promote their partnership.  Schools need to make parent involvement one of their top priorities in order to garner optimal performance from all students.  Kuo (2016) states, “when children know their parents care about their school lives and provide them with needed assistance, they tend to work harder in school, possess more positive personality traits, and have better relationships with their peers” (p. 201).  To achieve successful parent involvement at school takes careful planning and preparation.  It needs to be done in a way that ensures all parents feel welcomed, supported, respected, and included.

At my school, we have many activities taking place that promote the inclusion of parents in our school.  We value their opinions, and try to let them know they are vital stakeholders that enhance our everyday classroom experiences.  At Bowling Green Elementary School, we have an actively involved Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) that is comprised of numerous parents and teachers at our site.  They hold multiple fundraisers during the school year, which help us purchase educational resources for our students.  Additionally, they actively participate in our parent nights to encourage other parents to become more involved in school and in their child’s education.  Another way our school encourages parent involvement is having a School Advisory Council (SAC), which is also made up of parents, community members, teachers, and school leadership.  During these meetings, our parents are able to comfortably and openly express their opinions about important school matters, and are part of a group vote that makes decisions for our school.  Additional parent involvement activities at our school include: parent nights, parent newsletters, and parent involvement surveys.

After thinking about what I would like to see added to our list of parent involvement activities at our school, I feel the most beneficial will be parent trainings.  Our school is a Title I school, and our entire student population is considered low socioeconomic status and is provided with free breakfast and lunch.  Our families do not have the means to provide educational resources at home for their children, which is where I think our school can step in and help.  We can provide trainings to our parents and families on the many free educational resources that are available for use at home.  Many parents want to help, they just do not know how to help.  By providing ongoing parent trainings throughout the year, we can assist parents with this need, and build positive relationships between home and school during the process.  Another activity that I would like to see take place at our school to promote parent involvement in school and prevent the summer slide from happening is opening up our school library one day a week throughout the summer for checkout services.  This will put literature in the hand of our students and families, encourage them to keep up with their reading during the break, and help the parents feel welcomed into our school.  Kuo (2016) explains, “if having a home library seems challenging to some parents, teachers can encourage parents to use public libraries or school libraries to support their children’s literacy development” (p. 203).  I feel that by incorporating both of these ideas into our school’s effort to increase parent involvement will show our parents that we support them as they help their children go through their educational experience.

As a school leader, I play a vital role in the incorporation of the new ideas and activities.  To assist in the preparation for the parent trainings, I need to research the various free educational resources that are available, and become well versed in the structure of each program.  I would like to be the one who leads the trainings to show my support, especially to our Hispanic families, as I am bilingual and can translate the information to them directly.   Being that I am an employee that works during the summer, I can directly assist with the scheduling and availability of our school’s library throughout the break.  Ultimately, promoting parent involvement starts from the top.  School leadership needs to let all faculty and staff know that building relationships with our stakeholders is a requirement.  This begins with modeling positive, supportive behavior towards parents, and encouraging them to be present within our building whenever possible.  I feel that it is imperative for school leaders to be present at all events that include parents, provide assistance whenever it is needed, and offer a friendly smile during all encounters.

Reference:

Kuo, N.C. (2016). Promoting family literacy through the five pillars of family and community engagement (FACE). *School Community Journal, 26*(1), 199-221.