
PARENTS ENGAGEMENT MODULE

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MELODY

METHODS FOR LEARNING
DISORDERS IN YOUTH



Table of Contents

PARENTS ENGAGEMENT	3
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	3
COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT THEORY	4
SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY	5
ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY	6
PARENT INVOLVEMENT MODELS	9
KEY STEPS TO ORGANIZE A TEAM OF PARENT MENTORS	13
PARENT MENTOR TRAINING OBJECTIVES:	15
EXAMPLES OF TRAINING CONTENTS:	15
TRAINING FORMAT.....	17
SUMMARY.....	18

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Parents Engagement

MENTORING FOR PARENTS

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this module are:

- To improve the quality of the education
- To help schools and teachers build parent teams.
- To strength the family-school relationship.
- To support the families through the learning process.

Key concepts: Learning Environment, Parents Engagement, Empowerment, Mentoring For Parents

REFLECTION

Some parents feel anxious about reading to their children, particularly if they struggle with their own literacy skills. Others worry that they can't afford the same sort of books or trips out that other families can. Schools also do not always know how they can work with families most effectively.

Sir Kevan Collins

Theoretical framework

School and family should form a team in the process of educating children and young people, it is no good for the school to have good educational planning if at home the child / young person does not have family support for the continuation of school learning (Dessen & Polonia 2005, quoted by Silva & Moreira, 2013).

Successful parental engagement programs aim to:

- make families active participants in the life of the school,
- ensure parents feel welcomed and connected,
- engage families in meaningful communication about student learning,
- empower families to be effective advocates



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- connect students and their families to expanded learning opportunities.

When there is family engagement, not only there are better school outcomes, but there are also “differences in behavior and attitudes,” students are more committed and not prone to deviant behavior (alcohol, drugs or violent behavior).

Research shows that increased parent engagement increases student attendance, credit attainment, academic achievement, behavior and social skills.¹

There are three major theories related to parent engagement:

- Piaget’s Cognitive Development Theory;
- Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory;
- Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory.

Cognitive Development Theory

Jean Piaget proposed a theory of cognitive development in children and emphasized the constructive role of experience with peers and family members. To Piaget, cognitive development was a progressive reorganization of mental processes because of biological maturation and environmental experience. The goal of the theory is to explain the mechanisms and processes by which the infant, and then the child, develops into an individual who can reason and think using hypotheses.

Children are born with a very basic mental structure (genetically inherited and evolved) on which all subsequent learning and knowledge are based. As they grow older, children become active learners with a constant drive to match their internal constructions (their view of the real world) and external constructions (the external realities they face in their surroundings) (Piaget, 1981). They assimilate new learning and accommodate their incorrect views of the world more quickly if they are more actively involved with family, people and things in their surroundings. They also learn best when they have

¹ CommunitySchoolsToolkit-CPD-CEJ.pdf



opportunities to interact with their environments, and particularly with their parents who are a vital part of children's environments (Athey, 2007).

In this way, this theory supports the idea that parent's engagement is a crucial factor in children's development and achievement.

EXAMPLE

Parent engagement activities such as practicing interactive homework creates opportunities for students to interact meaningfully with their parents such that children construct their knowledge within both a social and physical environment through this process (Bailey, Silvern, Brabham, & Ross, 2004).

Sociocultural Theory

Lev Vygotsky emphasized the relationship between human beings and their environment, both physical and social, in his Sociocultural Theory. Vygotsky states cognitive development stems from social interactions from guided learning within the zone of proximal development as children and their partner's co-construct knowledge.

Vygotsky's theory differs from that of Piaget:

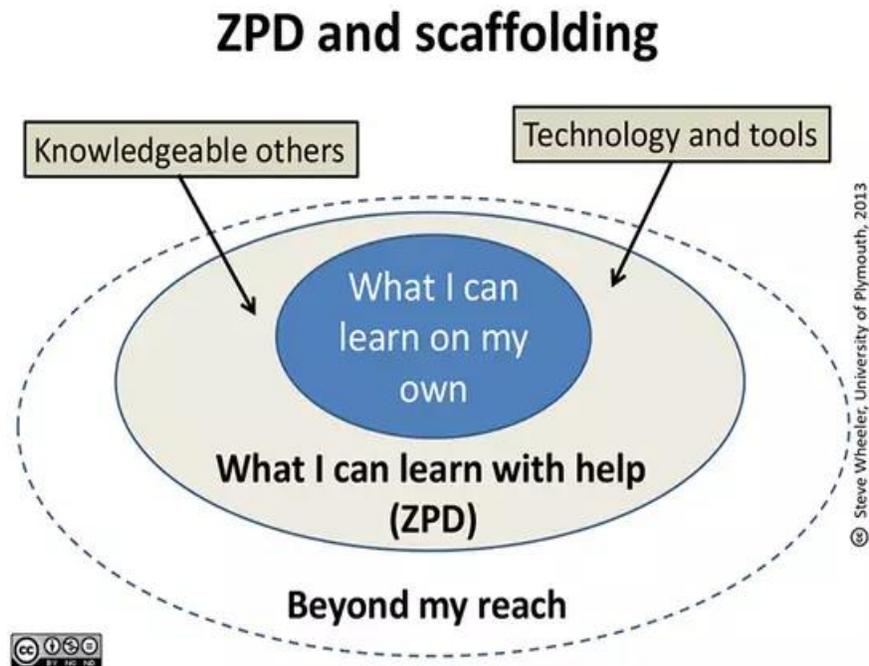
- more emphasis on culture affecting cognitive development;
- more emphasis on social factors contributing to cognitive development;
- more (and different) emphasis on the role of language in cognitive development
- adults are an important source of cognitive development.

In Vygotsky's theory, the environment in which children grow up will influence how they think and what about they think. The interaction between children and their family members in the community is so important for their learning and development because their first teacher is the family and their first learning takes place in the community.



Vygotsky focused on the internationalization of knowledge (knowing how) by addressing the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as a concept to argue that children have levels of problem-solving ability (Prior & Gerard, 2007).

The ZPD is the area where the most sensitive instruction or guidance should be given - allowing the child to develop skills they will then use on their own - developing higher mental functions.



However, he introduced another level that refers to the interaction with peers as an effective way of developing skills and strategies.

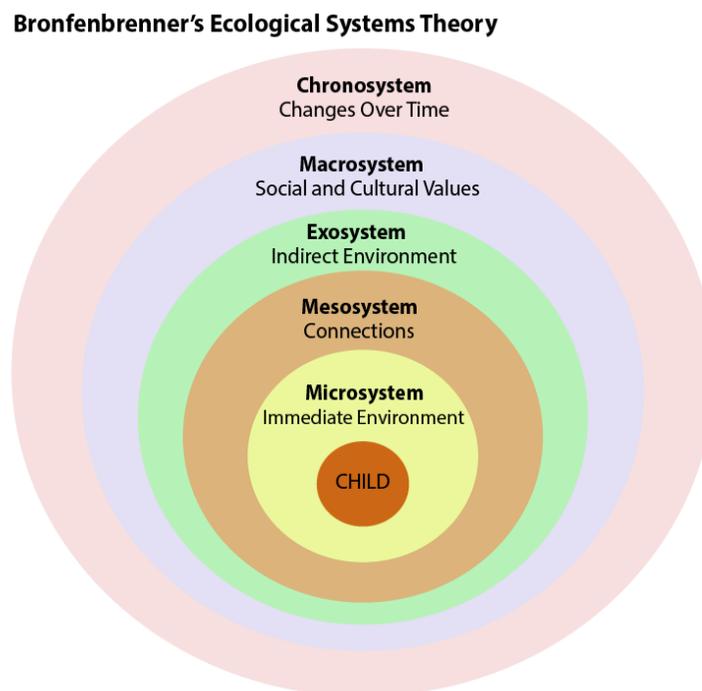
Given the relationship between learning and development, his theory supports the idea that a child's home life and the relation with parents contribute greatly to the development and academic achievement.

Ecological Systems Theory



The Urie Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory emphasizes the importance of studying children in multiple environments, also known as ecological systems, in an attempt to understand their development. Children typically find themselves enmeshed in various ecosystems, from the most intimate home ecological system to the larger school system, and then to the most expansive system, which includes society and culture. Each of these ecological systems inevitably interact with and influence each other in all aspects of the children's lives. The ecological environment is pictured as a nested arrangement of concentric structures, with each of these structures contained within the next.

This theoretical approach focuses on the developing child and the child’s interactions with people, objects, and symbols in “proximal processes” across multiple settings, contexts, and environments (Prior & Gerard, 2007). This model organizes contexts of development into five levels of external influence and these levels are categorized from the most intimate level to the broadest.



(C) The Psychology Notes Headquarters <https://www.PsychologyNotesHQ.com>

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory Levels:

- The microsystem is the smallest and most immediate environment in which children live. As such, the microsystem comprises the daily home, school or daycare, peer group and community



environment of the children. This level is the closest to the child. Family members, classmates, teachers, and caregivers are some of the main settings that can be included in this definition.

- The mesosystem connects the microsystem and exosystem. The mesosystem encompasses the interaction of the different microsystems that children find themselves in. It is, in essence, a system of microsystems and as such, involves linkages between home and school, between peer group and family, and between family and community. For example, if a child's parents are actively involved in the friendships of their child, they invite their child's friends over to their house from time to time and spend time with them, then the child's development is affected positively through harmony and like-mindedness.
- The exosystem consists of one or more settings that do not involve the child as an active participant. Extended family members, parents' workplaces, local school boards, and the media are considered some of the settings and institutions at this level. These elements indirectly influence the child. For example, if extended family members support the parent psychologically and financially, this parent tends to have a more positive attitude at home.
- The macrosystem is the largest and most distant collection of people and places to the children that still have significant influences on them. This ecological system is composed of the children's cultural patterns and values, specifically their dominant beliefs and ideas, as well as political and economic systems.
- The chronosystem adds the useful dimension of time, which demonstrates the influence of both change and constancy in the children's environments. The chronosystem may include a change in family structure, address, parents' employment status, as well as immense social changes such as economic cycles and wars.

Regarding on Bronfenbrenner's theory, we can deduce that children's school experience is not just made up of interactions between them and the school or teacher. It also includes a broader system involving parents, family, and community. As a result, understanding the influences of a child's



environment provides theoretical support for the idea of parent involvement in young children's education.

By analyzing the mentioned theories, we can conclude that it is essential that families actively participate in the educational process of their children, effectively performing their educational functions. The school should elucidate parents on how to do so, thus promoting parental attitudes in school. It is up to educators/teachers to promote countless possibilities for engagement and participation, the partnership between school and family is fundamental to the teaching-learning process of children.

LINKS AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhcgYgx7aAA>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=47&v=yY-SXM8f0gU&feature=emb_logo

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HV4E05BnoI8>

Parent Involvement Models

To understand parent involvement in education, several models have been developed and are commonly used in the field. Some are more popular and considered more practical. For example, Epstein and Hoover-Dempsey are two major figures who are the most widely recognized and broadly used.

The **Model Epstein**, a main figure in parent engagement research and practice, introduced six types of parent engagement:

- (1) parenting - helping all families establish supportive home environments for children as students;
- (2) communicating - establishing effective two-way communication about school programs and children's progress;
- (3) volunteering - recruiting and organizing parent help and support at school, home, or other locations.
- (4) learning at home - is providing information and ideas to families about how to help their children at home with their learning;
- (5) decision making - having parents serve as representatives and leaders on school committees;
- (6) collaborating with the community - identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to improve school programs.



Epstein's parent engagement model is comprehensive and helpful, but it is more focused on educators' side of the process.

EXAMPLE

School staff, mainly teachers, can initiate most of the parent engagement activities as mentioned above. However, the main actor is the parent, for this reason, the parents' side needs to be a major domain in a model if their engagement is to be analyzed and enhanced.

LINKS AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

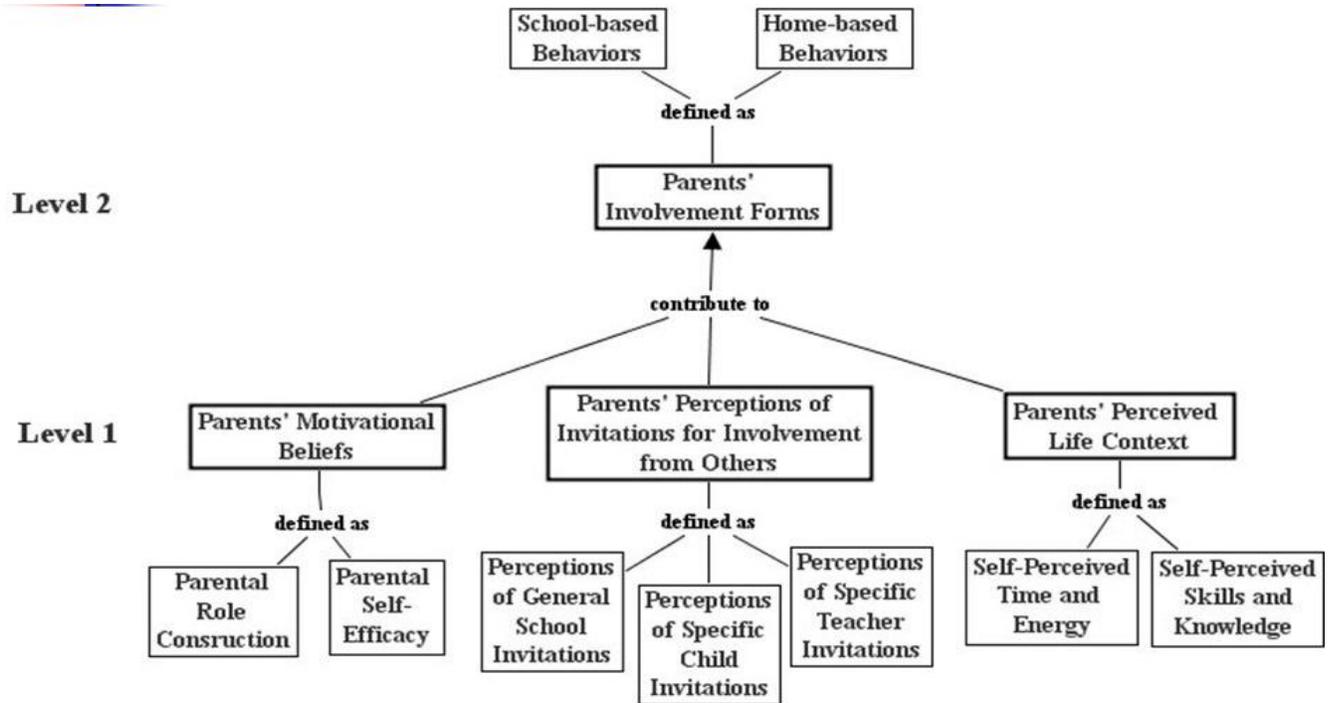
<https://www.sps186.org/downloads/table/13040/6TypesJ.Epstien.pdf>

<https://engagingparentsinschool.edublogs.org/2014/02/17/infographic-tips-for-teachers-on-family-engagement/>

The Model **HooverDempsey and Sandler** is more than a typology and helps researchers wanting to analyze the perceptions and beliefs of parents' engagement in their children's education, which is so important in their decisions and the entire parent engagement process. They presented a comprehensive model from the perspective of parents about the parent engagement process based on a psychological perspective. This model not only contends with specific types of parent engagement but also endeavors to explain why parents choose to be involved, how they choose specific forms of engagement, and how parent engagement makes a difference (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).

Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler Model





While developing and revising this model their understanding of parent engagement practices included:

- parent-child communication about schoolwork;
- supervision of homework;
- educational aspirations for children;
- school contact and participation;
- provision of school supplies;
- parent-teacher conferences;
- parent engagement in classroom volunteer work;
- parent engagement in tutoring at home;
- parent engagement in carrying out home instruction programs designed or suggested by teachers to supplement regular classroom instruction.

DID YOU KNOW?

Parent involvement is often more of a "doing to," while engagement is a "doing with."



TIPS FOR TEACHERS ON FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

- Welcome every student's family as your education partner.**

Assume every family wants the best for their children. Parents look to you as the expert. Guide them on what you think they need to do to help their student achieve success.
- Communicate frequently and in the way that works best for each family.**

Whether via phone, email, text message or handwritten notes, communicate with each family in a way that not only reaches them—but also generates a response. Include positive feedback to build trust and respect. Seek translation support from your school if there is a language difference.
- Teach families how to support student success.**

Like students, families don't know the education terminology you do. Describe what you need families to do at home in simple and specific terms. Use examples whenever possible. The more you share, the more families will understand their role as your education partner.
- Encourage families to speak up for the needs of their student.**

Let families know that they are your education partner. Explain that you need them to share the other factors that may affect their student's performance so that you can help navigate challenges or offer more support.
- Share power with families and students when working to improve the school.**

Empower families and students to contribute their voices, time and energy to making your school a better place to learn—and to work.
- Collaborate with community partners that can support families.**

Learning happens in the classroom, in the home and in the community. Connect families to the resources available to enrich the educational experience.

EXAMPLES

The Parent Mentor Program is a United States recognized parent engagement model that builds deep and lasting relationships between students, teachers, and parents.

Parent Mentor Program is a holistic strategy to address equity gaps through supporting kids in classrooms, fostering deep and long-lasting parent-teacher relationships, providing a support network



for parents to pursue their dreams, and eventually leveraging community resources and support for fully funded and culturally responsive schools. ²

A Parent Mentor Program recognizes the link between the success of the school and the development of the community as a whole, providing an opportunity for parents to formalize their commitment through a written agreement in which they state what they would like to do and when they are available and also agree to be trained to be parents mentors. Often these parents are those that have liaisons and deep roots in their communities or have specific skills that are required to be parent's leaders.

Through these Parents Mentors schools improve their knowledge about families contexts through workshops in which the members of the students families, other caregivers and community members are empowered to work together and to make decisions that allow schools to access for example to the community resources often unknown to teachers. In other hand, Parents are more informed about School resources that are as well often unknown to parents (Clubs, Theater Group, Music Group, Dance Group, Support Classes...)

Parents Mentors are useful for:

- new parent support,
- parent literacy and education programs,
- support and training for childcare providers,
- develop peer-to-peer counseling to practice problem solving and communication skills.

Key steps to organize a team of Parent Mentors

1 – Examine which is the Model of Parents participation in your School;

² Illinois Statewide Parent Mentor Initiative



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- 2 -Identify resources eg: School Parent Organizations, Parents clubs, Volunteering associations, Child Protection Commissions, Teachers Associations or other professional Associations ...
 - 3 – Plan a training program for Parents to be Parents Mentors at your School and Community and all the Guidelines that can be useful to implement this model;
 - 4- Organize awareness sessions to explain to parents about the existence of this tool; how it can works and the advantages for students, school and the community;
 - 5 - Recruit approximately 10 parents per school and inform them about the written commitment and the Code of Ethics;
 - 6 - Welcome volunteers who want to use their skills and resources to help students succeed and are interested in searching for best practices of parent´s engagement that can be replicate and adapted to the context of their children's schools;
 - 7 – Implement the Training Program according the needs of your own School environment.



Parent mentor training Objectives:

The main objectives are:

To be effective partners in the education system

To provide knowledge and skills in the three areas of focus:

- Leadership development to equip parent leaders and parent leadership organizations with skills and mindsets;
- Education and information (improving the quality of information shared with families how schools run to develop effective communication tools,
- Organizing action to create their own leadership plan to reduce barriers to learning at home, school or in their community.

To ensure that parents have time to participate and prepare themselves for the school meetings.

To create a safe space to voice parents' concerns, to share ideas, ask questions, and engage.

To learn how to set positive boundaries, establish healthy standards for behaviors and recognize warning signs of risky behavior.

EXAMPLES OF TRAINING CONTENTS:

- How works the Education System;
- National legislation;
- The Special Education Process;
- Family Literacy;
- The Specific Learning Disorders and other learning difficulties;
- The annual educational goals for the student;
- The existing guidelines that allow parents to understand the methodologies and strategies to meet these goals;
- The instructional and related services required to meet those goals;
- Children language acquisition;
- Life Skills



In 1993, the Department of Mental Health of the World Health Organization (WHO) defined a list of ten **Life Skills**, such as:

1) **Self-awareness** includes our recognition of ourselves, of our character, of our strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help us to recognize when we are stressed or feel under pressure. It is also often a prerequisite for effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy for others.

2) **Empathy** is the ability to act immediately in the mood or situation of another person, even in a situation that we may not be familiar. Empathy can improve social interactions, for example, in situations of ethnic or cultural diversity. Empathy can also help to encourage nurturing behavior towards people in need of care and assistance, or tolerance, as is the case of people with mental disorders, who may be stigmatized and ostracized by the people they depend upon for support.

3) **Critical thinking** is an ability to analyze information and experiences in an objective manner. Critical thinking can contribute to health by helping us to recognize and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behavior, such as values, peer pressure, and the media.

4) **Creative thinking** contributes to both decision-making and problem solving by enabling us to explore the available alternatives and various consequences of our actions or non-action. It helps us to look beyond our direct experience, and even if no problem is identified, or no decision is to be made, creative thinking can help us to respond adaptively and with flexibility to the situations of our daily lives.

5) **Decision making** helps us to deal constructively with decision about our lives. This can have consequences for health if young people actively make decision about their actions in relation to health by assessing the different options, and what effects the different decision may have.

6) **Problem solving** enables us to deal constructively with problems in our lives. Significant problems that are left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to accompanying physical strain.

7) **Effective communication** means that we are able to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally, in ways that are appropriate to our cultures and situations. This means being able to express opinions and desires, but also needs and fears. In addition, it may mean being able to ask for advice and help in a time of need.

8) **Interpersonal relationship skills** help us to relate in positive ways with the people with we interact. This may mean being able to make and keep friendly relationships, which can be of great importance to our mental and social well-being. It may mean keeping good relations with family members, which are an important source of social support. It may also mean being able to end relationships not safe or constructive.

9) **Coping with stress** is about recognizing the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how this affects us, and acting in ways that help to control our levels of stress. This may mean that we take action to reduce the sources of stress, for example, by making changes to our physical environment or lifestyle. Alternatively, it may mean learning how to relax, so that tensions created by unavoidable stress do not give rise to health problems.

10) **Coping with emotions** involves recognizing emotions in ourselves and in the others, being aware of how emotions influence behaviour, and being able to respond to emotions appropriately. Intense emotions, like anger or sorrow can have negative effects on our health if we do not react appropriately.



TRAINING FORMAT

Workshop sessions

- a maximum of 90 minutes in the end of the journey,
- a flexible agenda that can be improved with parents contribution after the first Workshop,
- teachers can be supported by other professional staff as facilitators,
- tasks distribution among parents according their skills and interests.

LINKS AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

University of Minnesota “Four Models of Parent Involvement Checklist”
<https://extension.umn.edu/parent-school-partnerships/four-models-parent-involvement>



LINKS AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement: Strategies for Family Engagement: Attitudes and Practices

National College for School Leadership: How to involve hard-to-reach parents: encouraging meaningful parental involvement with schools, 2011

Activities to Promote Parent Involvement download at:

https://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr200.shtml

Carson Middle School Proclamation & Certificates for School and Parents: The six slices of Parental involvement

Government Primary Schools Head Teachers' Training: Training Guide

North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists Office of Education: Home and School Association Handbook, 2001

Office of Education North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists: Lifeline: A Handbook for Small School Success, 2011

McQuiggan, M. and Megra, M. (2017). Parent and Family Involvement in Education: Results from the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2016 (NCES 2017-102). U.S. Department of Education. Washington

Project Appleseed: Strong families, Strong families, Strong schools.

Project Appleseed: 35 Weeks of Family Engagement Activities

mhtconsult: Stronger Children – Less Violence 2: Teacher's Handbook, 2015, Erasmus+ Programme

Ferguson, C. (2009). A Toolkit for Title I Parental Involvement. Austin, TX: SEDL, 2009

Freitas, L. C., Del Prette, Z. A. P. (2013). Habilidades sociais de crianças com diferentes necessidades educacionais especiais: Avaliação e implicações para intervenção. Avances en Psicología Latinoamericana, vol. 31(2), pp. 344-362.



LINKS AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Unesco (2004): Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments, 2015

The Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence & The National Mentoring Center at Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory: Training New Mentors, 2007

Tekin, K: Parent Involvement Revisited: Background, Theories, and Models, 2011

North, D., Sherk, J: Preparing Mentees for Success - a Program Manager's Guide,

MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership: How to build a successful Mentoring Program using the elements of Effective Practice

Illinois Service Resource Center: Parent Mentor Training, 2008

REACH Mentoring Program: Mentor Handbook 2019



SUMMARY

Research shows that increased parent engagement increases student attendance, credit attainment, academic achievement, behaviour and social skills. Teachers are aware of the different reasons for parent's disengagement and the theories that support the advantages of parent's participation. This module proposes the implementation of a tested model with positive results in student's families from specific groups. The main objective of this proposal is propose to school and teachers a very flexible tool to improve parent's participation by volunteering a small group of parents to train them for leadership and peer to peer mentoring. One of the advantages of this tool it comes from the need for no special resources other than the knowledge and skills of teachers, which in some way are transferred to parents and the parent's skills that are hat are put at the service of the school.

