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Increasing Family Engagement with Seesaw

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Capstone Project: A School Improvement Plan

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Abstract

This school improvement plan was developed to increase family engagement using technology within an elementary classroom in a public school district. Research has shown that family engagement can positively impact student achievement. Within a school, it is important that responsibility is shared between parents and teachers and a trusting relationship is developed in order to support student growth and achievement. Existing research on family engagement and the use of technology contributed to the improvement plan. The main components of this improvement plan include creating the communication tool, Seesaw with families, and involving families in their student's daily school learning activities at school and at home.

Keywords: Family engagement, school improvement plan, Seesaw

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Increasing Family Engagement with Seesaw

Healthy communication between teachers and parents have struggled to exist for many years. Approximately 59% of parents' report never receiving phone calls from elementary school teachers, and worse, less than half report being "very satisfied" by their parent-teacher communication (Waterford, 2018). The effectiveness of communication between teachers and parents, in relation to student achievement and student attendance, has a great importance. Healthy communication between teachers and parents provides many benefits to teachers, the school, the parents, and the students, therefore it is important to implement an effective strategy in which provides healthy communication between teachers and parents to exist. The problem is that family engagement in elementary schools lack communication between the school and home (Good et al., 1997; Lawson, 2003). With our world becoming more digital friendly, many schools and families have access to technology that can help decrease some of those communication barriers that exist in our society, while also increasing family engagement.

Communication has long been an important aspect in education. It is important for teachers, students, and parents to work together and communicate in order to best help the student be successful in a learning environment. Parent and teacher communication begins at the start of a school year and lasts until students move onto the next grade. Communication between teachers and parents is often the first step to long-term family engagement (Waterford, 2018). For teachers, in order to increase parents' support with their child's education, it is important that communication exist so that there is a better understanding of the issues. However, healthy communication has not always been easy for teachers and parents, and there have been some communication barriers preventing healthy communication to exist in schools. The communication barriers can be categorized in schools as either school related and parent related.

“School-related obstacles are described as the inability to provide communication support, lack of system knowledge, and failure to develop alternative strategies. Parent-related ones are described as family status, pragmatic concerns (such as non-flexibility of parents’ work hours, etc.), and psychological barriers (negative experiences about schools etc.)” (OZMEN et al., 2016, p. 8). While it is known that communication is important in regards to a student’s learning experience, it is also important to know that communication can happen in many different ways in order to increase family engagement within an elementary classroom. Communication can happen in-person through conferences or during pick-up times and drop-off times, or communication can happen through telephone or through email. Other aspects of communication in schools can be nurtured through school or class newsletters or other online forums, in which the school makes intentional effort to connect with home (Kelty, & Wakabayashi (2020).

With our world becoming more and more digital friendly, teachers are finding ways to communicate to students and parents through many technological applications. Additionally, there is a huge impact on communication in schools, and it is important for parents and teachers to communicate in a way that will benefit the students learning. As more and more digital natives now have school-aged children, many parents prefer tech-based communication (Waterford, 2018). The purpose of this school improvement plan is to engage in the impact that Seesaw has on teachers, students, and parents in an elementary classroom. The subjects in which are a part of this school improvement plan are parents and teachers. The setting in which this school improvement plan takes place is an elementary classroom in a suburban town. The data for which that will be collected as a goal for the improvement plan is organizing families to engage in at least two learning activities at home per month and share these learning interactions with teachers using the technology application, Seesaw by written text, photographs, or video.

The goal is to discover how much of an impact communication is in an elementary setting and if the technological application, Seesaw can assist in increasing family engagement within an elementary classroom. According to Kelty & Wakabayashi (2020), Engagement is fostered when two-way communication is fostered between the school and home, where parents can initiate and direct interactions through the use of technology.

Peer-reviewed resources for this school improvement plan were compiled from the DeWitt Library at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa. A study titled “A Systematic Review of the Impact of Technology-Mediated Parental Engagement on Student Outcomes” conducted by researchers See et al., (2021) found scant evidence of improvement in children’s school outcomes from digital devices or software applications that were effective in supporting parental engagement. With software applications being relatively low cost, this is a cost-effective way to engage with parents with positive results on children’s education (See et al., 2021). Additionally, technology-based communication is a “new frontier” in many ways because it’s constantly changing and encompasses so many outlets (Waterford, 2018). Therefore, technology is a huge benefit to increasing family communication and engagement.

The issues that arise in schools is the lack of family involvement, which can affect student achievement. The National PTA reports that the most accurate predictors of student achievement in school are not family income or social statuses, but instead is the extent of family involvement in the child’s education at school (Brooks, 2019). Both teachers and students in classrooms across the country are affected by the communication barriers that can exist. Technology applications that can be incorporated in the classroom provides a unique opportunity to decrease these communication barriers between teachers and parents. One technology application in which can decrease these communication barriers is Seesaw. Seesaw can be defined as a way to

create a learning journal that is student-driven in a digital portfolio and provides a secure and private place to keep students' assignments and projects (Johns et al., 2017). Seesaw provides schools as a way to communicate with parents and families, and provides them with an opportunity to see what their child is doing with their time in school.

As part of the process in creating a plan for increasing family engagement, a review of research was conducted to learn more about the communication barriers that may exist, the benefits of family communication and family engagement, and how Seesaw can be used as a tool to increase family communication and family engagement. The studies compiled were current within the last 10 years and published in a peer-reviewed journal. Studies regarding a technology-based students and family engagement program, involving parents in their children's academics and using technology to increase parental involvement in the classroom were reviewed. Ultimately, 20 sources were selected based on relevance and support given to the present study. Through this literature review, research and data will be analyzed and synthesized to show the benefits of family involvement in elementary classrooms, explain how family involvement can be implemented and supported in schools, and show the many ways families can have a positive impact on their children's academics. This literature review will then look at the specific technology application, Seesaw to implement into the classroom to determine if it can be used as an effective way to communicate with families and increase family engagement. Through review of these articles, it will be determined what will be written into the School Improvement Plan to best meet the needs of the school.

Review of the Literature

One thing a lot of educators see each year is a lack of family engagement in their child's education. This could be due for many reasons such as families not having access to devices in

which the communication from the teacher occurs or families do not understand their important role in their child's education. School can sometimes be very difficult for students so it is important to involve families in their child's education at school and at home. The best ways to increase family engagement based on many studies that were reviewed in this literature review are through many different strategies and communication techniques between the teacher and the families.

Family Engagement Defined

The importance of family engagement includes many benefits to a child's education such as improving their learning and development. Family engagement is the process used to build genuine relationships with families. When family engagement occurs, there is a shared responsibility and a trusting relationship between the family members and the educators. Kelty and Wakabayashi (2020) describe family engagement as a way to "improve classroom dynamics and increases teacher expectations, student-teacher relationships, and cultural competence, regardless of student's age groups." In order to fully understand family engagement, we must differentiate it from the term parental involvement. Parental involvement is determined when families of students participate in their student's activities. However, according to Kelty and Wakabayashi (2020), family engagement is composed of ensuring that parents play an active role in developing their child's learning, that parents are actively involved in their child's education at school, and that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included in any decision-making.

Liang, Peters, Lomidze, and Akaba (2020) describe family engagement as listening to parents' concerns, thoughts, and dreams and building a partnership with them. In contrast, they described parental involvement as the school identifying what the needs and goals are and telling

parents how they could be involved to help. Parent partnership refers to parents and staff to work together in respectful and mutually supportive ways, creating an environment in which understanding, trust, and respect can flourish (Comer & Haynes, 1997). Strong parent and teacher partnerships need to be intentionally created. When educators and parents work together as partners, they create important opportunities for children to develop social, emotional, and academic competencies (Albright, Weissberg, & Dusenbury, 2011).

Garbacz (2019) described a systems-level framework that uses evidence based practices to provide proactive behavior support for students called school wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS). Using this framework, family engagement is linked with evidence-based practices, embedded in existing systems, and organized for implementation. Garbacz (2019) emanates the framework from being organized in a Tier 1 PBIS of family engagement that identified intervention components to hypothesize active properties of family engagement in Tier 1 PBIS which include participation in PBIS at school, implementation evidence-based parenting practices at home, and communication with school staff.

Additionally, Garbacz (2019) lists six objectives to support implementation of family engagement in PBIS. These six objectives include creating a school wide vision for family engagement, identifying sources of family engagement evidence, engaging families to co-create PBIS at school, providing families with the knowledge and skills they need to use positive behavior support at home with their children, forming and strengthening positive relationships between families and educators, and aligning PBIS at school with parent use of positive behavior support at home (Garbacz, 2019). Using this framework and the focus of family engagement in PBIS, there is more attention on partnering with families. This allows the school to move away from involvement and towards engaged partnership.

Strategies for Family Engagement

Family engagement in schools is essential to ensure optimal learning for students. However, research has shown that family engagement can fluctuate depending on cultural diversity. Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin, and De Pedro (2011) suggest that it is more common to see barriers exist in urban, low-income, immigrant, minority, and working-class parents. “Language barriers, work schedules, and a sense of disenfranchisement have generally resulted in lower levels of (at least visible) parent involvement by working-class parents, in particular, those from ethnic and racial minorities” (p. 73). When proposing strategies to increase family engagement, it is important to consider equitable collaborations in ways that include cultural diversity such as cultural, class, and language.

Ishimaru (2019) examines strategies for engaging non-dominant parents and families in education in three distinct organizational efforts within a shared cross-sector collaborative context. More specifically, Ishimaru (2019) proposes a conceptual framework of equitable collaboration to analyze the strategies employed in three efforts to build family participation in schools within a cross-sector collaborative. The strategies suggested imply specifying the dimensions in order to build capacity and relationships rather than just “fix” families as past efforts on family engagement suggests. For example, conventional approaches to parents have been unidirectional such as flyers being sent home in backpacks as a way to communicate. However, in an effort to implement more equitable collaborations, reciprocal strategies should be considered in order to help leverage the existing resources, capacity, and culturally embedded knowledge of families so they can, theoretically, build family support and engagement as well as improve schools (Ishimaru, 2019).

Additional research on strategies for engaging families was conducted by Bachman, Anderman, Zyromski, & Boone (2021) and included research-based strategies for middle-level educators to effectively communicate with parents to bolster developmentally appropriate family engagement. According to Bachman, Anderman, Zyromski, & Boone (2021), students benefit from parental support for learning that is developmentally appropriate, and age-appropriate boundaries and positive relationships resulting in the perception that adults in their lives care. The researchers found when taking these strategies and utilizing them with support from open lines of communication and effective partnerships between schools and parents, can support the academic success of middle school students and build collective trust between educators and parents.

Use of Seesaw

Although there are many strategies to involve families in their student's education, technology can be of a highly useful tool to accomplish increasing family engagement. In the past, it was common to see learning produced in paper-based portfolios, however since the turn of technology, many portfolios based on learning have been digitalized in commercially produced platforms such as the technology application, Seesaw. This allows families to access information about their children's learning on computers and cell phones at any time of the day or night and can even be shared on social media. White, Rooney, Gunn, and Nuttall (2021) claimed that education documentation has thus become both a mode of knowledge production and a locus of enjoyment for families and educators who can not only 'see' learning, but map out, narrate, share, and archive learning based on seeing children as learners through visual means.

Additional research on incorporating Seesaw in education was conducted by Buchholz and Riley (2020) and explores one kindergarten teacher's approach to using Seesaw to make the process of early literacy learning visible to families/caregivers, moving the conversation between school and home from what is being learned to how learning happens. According to the research study, Mrs. Riley, the kindergarten teacher, for many years, invited families into the classroom so students could share a recent project, a learning experience, or even a paper-based portfolio with self-selected work samples. However, each time, she noticed many families could not attend these events and she saw how this affected her students emotionally and mentally without anyone in attendance. With the option to utilize Seesaw in her classroom, Mrs. Riley was able to help families develop stronger relationships with their own young children's literacy learning. Buchholz and Riley (2020) claims that "when teachers leverage digital tools for pedagogical documentation, they can make largely invisible learning processes visible, helping nurture a move from families' involvement in school to their knowledgeable, child-centered engagement with their child's learning" (p. 68).

With family engagement becoming a greater priority in schools, it is important for schools to consider the role technology can play in increasing that engagement. Ball and Skrzypek (2019) conducted a quasi-experimental study with a pretest–posttest design that included 63 students with 25 students in the comparison group and 38 students in the intervention group to explore both student and family engagement, as well as literature on the use of technology in schools, to implement and test Closing the Broadband Gap (CBBG). Results indicated that the use of technology, such as Seesaw is useful in promoting family and student engagement by altering home and school contexts in ways that promote development of important facilitators of engagement.

Benefits of Family Engagement using Technology

In today's world, technology has grown a significant amount and is an important and regular part of everyday life. Many technology tools can be used in an education system to improve communication, provide parent education, and increase family engagement. Home-based, rather than school-based, involvement in supporting learning has the greatest impact on student learning (Olmstead, 2013). According to Goodall (2016), technology can allow parents of such young people to have the information from and contact with schools that will help support learning, while respecting both the independence of the pupil and the increasingly busy lives of many parents.

Using mixed-methods data composed of surveys and semi-structured interviews, Olmstead (2013) studied whether emerging technologies facilitate better parent-teacher communication and parent involvement. Data was collected through surveys and semi-structured focus group interviews in order to see the relationship between parents' and teachers' perceptions of student achievement when technology is used as a way to communicate between parents and school. Reactive and proactive family involvement was analyzed to see parent and teacher's beliefs on involvement in school. Results revealed that parents and teachers both place a high value on proactive parent involvement, which entails that parents do not need to physically be at school to be involved in their child's education. Instead, technology can be used as a way to facilitate that involvement.

Additional research on family engagement using technology was conducted by Moorhouse and Beaumont (2020) and included one teacher's use of a digital learning platform, Seesaw, with his third-grade English language writing class. In order to conduct the study, it was important to the researchers that the students and parents be competent users of the technology

platform. Therefore, the students and parents needed to be trained on how to use Seesaw. After training was accomplished, Seesaw was integrated into the classroom in order to conduct the research study.

Over the course of the research study, students completed seven writing tasks, resulting in an average of 45 items per student being uploaded to Seesaw. These items included drafts, group work, published work, and reading aloud of published work. Additionally, the teacher would send messages to parents on the Seesaw platform to inform them of the learning progress and activities, and encourage them to continue their involvement on the platform (Moorhouse & Beaumont, 2020). Results indicated that parents responded very positively to the use of Seesaw and valued the opportunity it provided them to be involved in their child's English language writing. One benefit included the idea of parents being able to see students' work in real time as something that appealed to students and allowed them to stay motivated by the involvement of their parents on the technology platform.

Summary

The issues that arise in schools is the lack of family involvement, which can affect student achievement. Both teachers and students in classrooms across the country are affected by the communication barriers that can exist. Technology applications that can be incorporated in the classroom provides a unique opportunity to decrease these communication barriers between teachers and parents, and help with family engagement. One technology application in which can decrease these communication barriers while also increase family engagement is Seesaw. Seesaw provides schools as a way to communicate with parents and families, and provides them with an opportunity to see what their child is doing with their time in school.

School Profile

The school improvement plan that is presented in this paper has been developed for a year-round elementary school in a public school district located in central Iowa. This school is the only open-enrollment school in the district, and therefore serves students from one larger town, as well as different surrounding smaller towns. The town in which this school and district serve most to is comprised of 20,837 residents, with a median household income of \$66,260 (Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates, n.d.).

District Student Characteristics

In the 2021-2022 school year, the school district enrolled about 3,675 students in grades pre-Kindergarten through twelfth grade with a student-teacher ratio of 17 to 1 (Niche, 2021). According to Niche, the school district is ranked 58 of 304 for best school districts in Iowa with teachers being ranked as 92 of 316. The school district consists of four elementary schools, one junior high school, and one high school. According to state test scores, 83% of students are at least proficient in math and 80% in reading (Niche, 2021).

Looking at the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) status, there are two schools in the district who are targeted for ESSA support. One being an elementary school with an overall score of 55.28, which is considered commendable, and the other one being the junior high school with an overall score of 54.54, which is considered acceptable. There is only one school in the district with an overall score of 60.81, which is considered high performing and that is the year-round elementary school in the district. The year-round school is the school focused on in this school improvement plan.

The district's student demographic profile for the 2021-2022 school year included 50.9% male students versus 49.1% female students. Along with this, it included 90.1% White students, 4.1% Hispanic students, 3.8% Multi-Racial students, 1.0% Black students, 0.7% Asian students, 0.1% Native American students, and 0.1% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students (Iowa Department of Education, 2022). There is an 11.9% performance of students with disabilities on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for assessments compared to 88.1% performance of students that do not qualify for an IEP. Along with this, there is 1.6% performance of students who are English Learners on assessments compared to 98.4% who are not, as well as 29.3% performance of students who are low socio-economic status on assessments compared to 70.7% performance of students who are not (Iowa Department of Education, 2022). These demographics were considered in the development of the school improvement plan.

Year-Round Student Characteristics

The year-round school's mission and vision includes a positive learning community that will stimulate rigorous academic growth of all students engaged in a broad spectrum of learning opportunities resulting in productive, contributing citizens prepared for success in life. In the 2021-2022 school year, the year-round school enrolled nearly 433 students and serves students kindergarten through fifth grade. The student population in the year-round school is made up of 50% female students and 50% male students. Additionally, the year-round schools enroll 20% economically disadvantaged students and the school's minority student enrollment is 6%. Demographics for enrolled students during the 2021-2022 school year included 94.2% White, 1.4% Hispanic or Latino, 0.9% Black or African American, and 0.5% Asian or Pacific Islander (Iowa Department of Education, 2022).

At the year-round school, 83% of students scored at or above the proficient level for math, and 75% of students scored at or above the proficient level for reading. When comparing the year-round school to the rest of the elementary schools in the district, the year-round school did better in both math and reading. The district for the 2021-2022 school year, 78% of students tested at or above the proficient level for math, and 72% of students tested at or above the proficient level for reading. In addition to this, the year-round school scored better in both math and reading compared with students across the state of Iowa. In Iowa, 68% of students tested at or above the proficient level for reading, and 70% tested at or above the proficient level for math (Iowa Department of Education, 2022). These scores rank the year-round school as 192 out of 614 Iowa Elementary School for reading, and 105 out of 614 Iowa Elementary School for math, which meets expectations on both math and reading performances.

The year-round school staff includes three general education teachers for each grade-level, classroom associates, two special education teachers, two reading specialists, specials staff, a guidance counselor, one instructional coach, two AEA consultants, and an administrator. The staffing model for each general education classroom includes a general education teacher and one classroom associate, with additional support from a special education teacher when needed. The special education teacher provides support as written in the student's IEP. The AEA consultants provide support to students, parents, and school staff through building relationships and interpreting data for teachers and families.

Learning Goals

During the 2021-2022 school year, the year-round school focused on a Guidelines for Success Model. This model included guidelines for safety, trustworthy, respectful and responsible, on time and on task, neighborly, and growing. The model was designed with the

year-round school in mind in order to promote and encourage positive behaviors and character traits that will help students be successful at school as well as throughout their lives.

Additionally, the Guidelines for Success model is displayed prominently throughout Irving and is required to be topics of classroom and school-wide discussions between students and staff at the year-round school. The year-round school has a goal of being 80% or higher in our reading and math assessments. While this goal was met for math, it was not met for the area of reading. Between the past two years, the year-round school has actually decreased by 1% in the average score on the reading assessments.

Parent Involvement

In a survey given to third grade through fifth grade students at the year-round school during the 2021-2022 school year, 57% of students recorded that their parents were informed of when they were doing a good job in school (Panorama Education, 2022). In addition to this, in that same survey, 63% of students recorded that their parents were informed when they had done something wrong (Panorama Education, 2022). Parental involvement has been a topic of discussion at the year-round elementary for reasons such as social and emotional learning, as well as academic results. It is believed that one reason the year-round school's average score on the reading assessments was impacted is from lack of family engagement in the student's reading capabilities during school and at home. Because of this, the year-round school has decided to follow a Tiered Family Engagement Model. The purpose of this model is to promote a partnership between all stakeholders to work together to increase student achievement and support learning, while also being consistent about how partnership and communication works with elementary school families. The tiered model is segmented in four sections; district, school, teachers, and families. Each section represents the various ways stakeholders can participate in

creating a partnership that will lead to meaningful family engagement and student achievement.

While the model focuses on communication and partnership, the year-round school is determined to create a partnership with families and providing support to families to work on goals for overall achievement in the area of reading engagement at home. By the end of the year, all teachers in the year-round school will be utilizing the guidelines and practices to maintain the Family Engagement Model with the assistance of technology.

Family Engagement Needs

The Family Engagement Model uses a set of rubrics that can be used to inform decision-making and support the implementation of teaching practices in the elementary school setting. Strategies from the Family Engagement Rubric support the need for this school improvement plan. Teachers who implement the Family Engagement Model use the strategies from the rubric to assist in monitoring the progress of adopting practices from the Family Engagement Model. This rubric will be used to monitor progress twice per semester and will be used to guide the teachers next steps in increasing family engagement with technology in the elementary school setting. The rubric is divided into three main strategies that work together to help students and schools be successful. The rubric strategies and for the school-wide Family Engagement Model include:

1. Creating a welcoming and engaging climate with strong relationships and communications between families and school staff.
2. Partnering with families to support student achievement.
3. Investing families in school success.

(Flamboyant Foundation, 2019).

Each strategy is comprised of a set of objectives for family engagement in which the school will progress through four stages of development. The school improvement plan that is described in this paper will address the second strategy. The second strategy consists of four objects that include:

1. 2.1 The school prioritizes engagement opportunities that empower families to drive student achievement.
2. 2.2 The school invests families in setting student academic goals and monitoring progress.
3. 2.3 The school provides information and guidance for families to reinforce their student's learning.
4. 2.4 The school helps families to navigate and guide their student's learning.

The school improvement plan that is described in this paper will address the second strategy and objectives by developing a plan to involve families using technology in their child's academics within the school setting and home setting.

The Family Engagement Survey also provides evidence for the need for this school improvement plan. The author of this school improvement plan completed the Family Engagement Strategy to gather data in order to describe the current family to school relationship communication expectations in the year-round school. Results indicate a score of 11 out of 20, which indicate an average score of open communication and trust with families. This school improvement plan will include technology strategies that will increase these ratings.

School Data and Analysis

At the year-round school, there is a Condition for Learning Survey each family can take at the end of the year. This survey provides the school with an overview of how families trust

and feel towards the school’s communication and teachers’ relationship with their child. The intentions for the Condition for Learning Survey are to provide results for future planning in creating a welcoming and safe environment for students in which families can be active members in.

The Condition for Learning Survey on Panorama Education shows the percentage of families who were informed when their child did something good in school verses when their child has done something wrong. During the school year of 2021-2022, the year-round school had 14% of parents indicate that they were not informed when their child had done something good, while 72% of parents indicated they were informed as shown in Figure 1. In addition to this, 7% of parents indicated that they were not informed when their child had done something wrong, while 81% of parents indicated they were informed as shown in Figure 2 (Panorama Education, 2022).

Figure 1

Conditions for Learning Survey Percentage of Positive Information From School

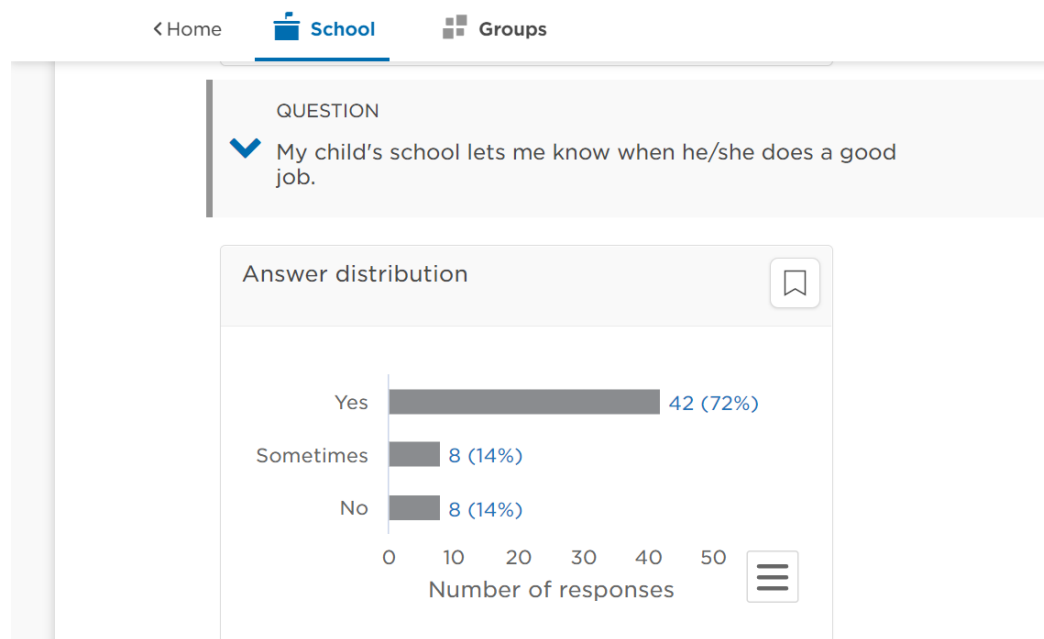
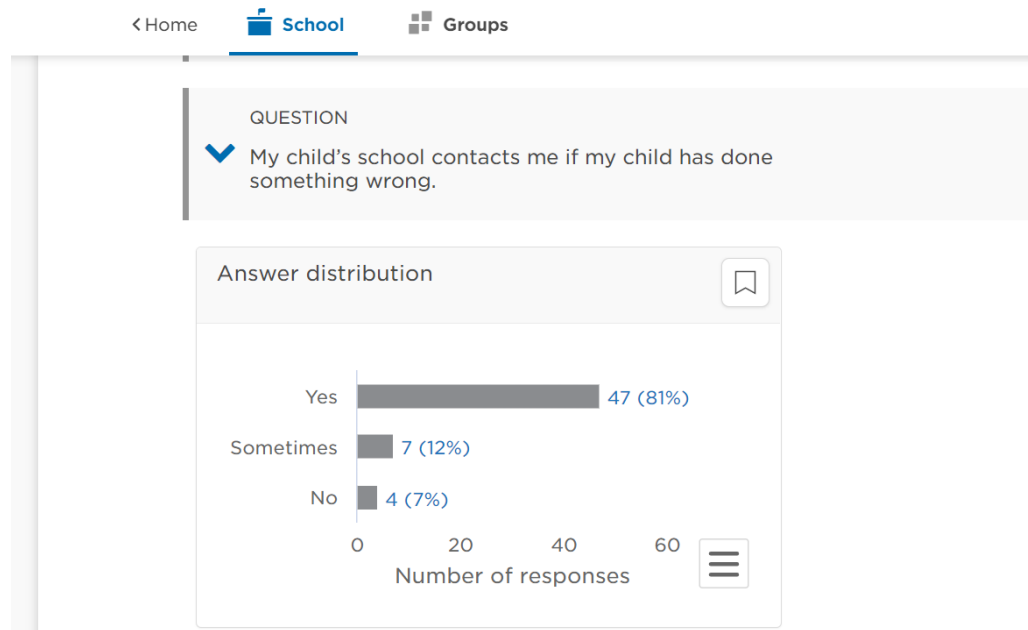


Figure 2

Conditions for Learning Survey Percentage of Negative Information From School



Analysis of Data

After examining the data, families are being asked several questions regarding their child's thought and feelings at school in a survey. Additionally, families are being asked questions regarding the communication from the school. Although the data can change year to year and teacher to teacher, we can take a look at the differences between both of these questions asked of families. For example, the percentage of the negative communication between teachers and families verses the positive communication between teachers and families. This gives us an idea on the situations in which families are being involved or communicated more on.

School Weaknesses/Challenges

One of the highest areas of weakness indicated from the data on the Condition of Learning Survey is the higher percentage of negative communication between families and teachers. For example, when a student has done something wrong, the teacher is more likely to

communicate it with the families rather than when a student has done something well. This weakness shows the lack of consistency or expectations the school has for teachers when involving families in their child's academics or school life. Although, families reported they are informed when their child has done something well, the data shows they are more often informed when their child has done something wrong. The school's feedback can influence teacher and family relationships so it is important to provide more positive feedback than negative about students in school.

Additional Assessment Recommendations

Other assessments that would be necessary for data collection would be the Parent and Family Involvement in Education (PFI) survey. The PFI survey collects data about students and asks questions regarding school choice and various aspects of parent involvement in education (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). Some of the items that are asked on the PFI survey include help with homework, family activities, and parent engagement in schools. This survey is used for parent responders that have students in any grade from kindergarten to twelfth grade. The PFI survey allows a richer, more comprehensive view of family engagement in American education by surveying households on the specific subject.

Action Plan

The literature review has multiple strategies that can be utilized for the plan. The use of technology can be applied to increase family engagement, as well as communication. In addition to this, reciprocal strategies that help leverage the existing resources the school has and increase family knowledge on events or academics will build family support and engagement while also improving schools (Ishimaru, 2019). The plan further includes that family engagement can increase when communication barriers are identified and addressed. Strategies that are utilized to

address communication barriers between families and schools help student achievement and provides a positive student environment for students.

Information found within the review revealed that the use of technology, specifically the technology application, Seesaw, can help in engaging family members in their child's education. The focus will be on increasing family engagement that can eventually help student achievement. The strategies include using digital platforms to communicate and engage families, invite families into the classroom as volunteers or for presentations, assisting families in creating learning goals for their children, participating in at home learning activities, and creating a routine in which effectively communicates with families consistently. The strategies can play a crucial role in increasing family engagement that can also benefit student achievement in the classroom. The strategies can reinforce positive student outcomes, as well as improve teacher and teacher-to-student relationships, which overall impacts the school environment.

Steps for Solving the Problem

The use of technology, specifically Seesaw, is one of the major steps and techniques for increasing family engagement and communication in schools. Seesaw is an online application tool provided to schools as a way to communicate with parents and families, and provide them with an opportunity to see what their child is doing with their time in school. Additionally, it is used for teachers to also implement or design activities to assign students within the application. Seesaw creates a learning journal that is student-driven in a digital portfolio and provides a secure and private place to keep students' assignments and projects (Johns et al., 2017). This is useful in the fact that assignments and activities can be done all in one place and the parents or families of students are able to see the work provided and how their student is understanding the assignment or activity, which increases their engagement in their child's education.

First, it is important that the school or teachers ensure that all parents know and understand Seesaw and be competent users of the technology platform. Therefore, the school and teacher will need to implement time for students and families to be trained on how to use Seesaw. This can be done during the initial orientation meeting held at the beginning of the school year. Once training is completed, Seesaw can successfully be integrated into classrooms. Teachers will then verify during the September family conference that this chosen mode of communication is going well for families. Second, it is important that teachers provide support for parents in selecting a couple of learning goals for their child during the September family conference. In order for families to stay engaged with the goals, teachers will check in with families about their child’s learning goals and the progress they are making towards meeting their goals at least two times before the next family conference, which takes place in February. The third step is for families to participate in at least one learning activity at home per month and share these family interactions with teachers through the technology application, Seesaw by written comments, photographs, or videos. Figure 3 below shows an overall review of the steps in order for family engagement to increase within schools.

Figure 3

Steps to Family Engagement Information

Steps	Explanation of Steps	When Steps Occur
First Step	Families will be trained in Seesaw and Seesaw will be implemented in classrooms. Teachers will check in with	Beginning of the school year to Family Conferences in September

	families on how this chosen communication tool is going.	
Second Step	Teachers will assist in creating learning goals with families and continually check on their progress towards meeting those goals.	Family Conferences in September to Family Conferences in February
Third Step	Families will participate in at least one learning activity at home per month with their child and log it in the technology application, Seesaw.	Once a month starting in September after family conferences to the end of the school year.

Summary

Family engagement can play an important role in education, especially for young learners whose learning development changes frequently. In today’s world, teachers and schools can use technology to their advantage when incorporating family engagement in student learning. While technology can make a big difference for family engagement, it is important that many things are considered prior to implementing. These things could include technology availability for families, user-friendly applications, or access to Wi-Fi. Therefore, many steps should be taking prior to implementation in order to confirm family members will be able to handle a technology way of communication and being engaged with their child’s education.

Implementation of School Improvement Plan

Increasing family engagement in the elementary setting will be centered around the main component of creating the communication tool, Seesaw with families. In addition to this, it will also be centered around involving families in their student’s daily school learning activities at school and at home. Throughout this component, teachers will focus on building strong relationships that are trustworthy for families, and supporting families to increase their understanding and awareness of what their child is doing at school. Additionally, teachers will focus on supporting families to increase their understanding of the technology application, Seesaw in order to engage in developmentally appropriate learning practices at home with their child.

An improvement plan would act as a great tool through which the implementation could be monitored carefully. The Family Engagement program will provide teachers with a document to guide them in using strategies to assist them in monitoring the progress of adopting practice from the Family Engagement Model and incorporating specific family engagement activities into their lesson plans. The document will include a section for communication, at-home learning activities in which involves families, and individual student goals. Table 1, below, is a timeline of the implementation of the school improvement plan. Listed in the timeline is what each month consists of and what resources are needed in order to support the process.

Table 1

School Improvement Plan Timeline

<p>Month 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the timeline 	<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022-2023 Timeline
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at the data from previous years to know where we fall short in family engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2021-2022 school data on family engagement
<p>Month 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule family orientation for families to be trained in Seesaw • Integrate Seesaw into classrooms 	<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seesaw family resource guide • Generate Seesaw code for each individual student through the Seesaw application
<p>Month 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule a time to check-in with families on the chosen communication tool, Seesaw for September Conferences • Design an individual student learning with families at family conferences 	<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher’s conference schedule • Examples of learning goal objectives
<p>Month 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a monitoring system to check in with families on student learning goals • Design at-home learning activities on Seesaw to provide families 	<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring schedule • Seesaw lesson library
<p>Month 5</p>	<p>Resources</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check in with families on the progress of their child’s learning goal • Review completion of at-home learning activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning goal progress data record sheet • Seesaw Application
<p>Month 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second check in with families on the progress of their child’s learning goal • Review completion of at-home learning activities 	<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning goal progress data record sheet • Seesaw Application
<p>Month 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule a time to check-in with families on how the progress is going for February Conferences 	<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher’s conference schedule

Plan for Monitoring the Success or Failure of the Interventions

For this school improvement plan, evaluation on interventions will consist of three major phases in order to monitor the success or failure of the intervention. The first phase focuses on before the implementation starts. The second phase focuses on the actual implementation. The third phase focuses on how long it takes to complete. The plan focuses on the evaluation of multiple areas of this intervention because it strengthens family responsibilities. In addition to this, it also offers teachers the opportunity to collaboratively work with families and address priority areas in their child’s learning that require improvements. The plan helps to increase

engagement this way with collaborative efforts from families and teachers working together, while also increasing family responsibilities at home.

Potential Barrier to Implementation

Challenges and barriers may occur when planning implementation of an educational plan. These challenges could include a lack of commitment towards the plan. If teachers are not committed to the process or have a fear of failing, the family engagement in their classrooms is compromised. Families also play an important role and it is important for teachers to be committed to their role. If teachers are not communicating with families or being clear on their expectations for family responsibilities at home, the process will not work effectively. In addition to this, it is important for teachers to be flexible in their planning throughout the months of implementing family engagement. Family engagement should be a year long thing, therefore the commitment from teachers and their flexibility to improve it should consist throughout the year.

Conclusion

Family engagement is an important component of education, especially early childhood education. It is important that a strong and trusting relationship is built between the families and teachers. In addition to this, trusting family and teacher relationship is crucial in order to increase family engagement in the classroom (Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative, 2020). This school improvement plan outlines strategies that will be used to increase family and teacher communication, as well as selecting learning goals with families for their children, and increasing the families understanding on different practices in which they can engage in learning activities in their home routines.

Strategies supported by current research, such as Moorhouse and Beaumont (2020) and Buchholz and Riley (2020), incorporated technology to increase family engagement were also implemented in this school improvement plan. The use of the technology application, Seesaw, allows for families to have the ability to have continuous contact throughout the day with family members to increase the engagement and closeness of their child's education. In addition to this, the plan supports the use of strategies that are a part of the Family Engagement Model that the year-round school will implement in the future in order to increase family engagement in the elementary setting.

Moving forward into the 2022-2023 school year, the outcome that is desired is for families to feel supported and excited to be engaged in their child's education while being properly equipped with the necessary information and resources. In addition to this, a desired outcome of increasing family engagement is that it will have positive academic results for students and create motivation for families to continue their engagement in their child's education for years to come. This school improvement plan allows teachers the opportunity to continue and increase the level of family engagement using technology in order to benefit student achievement in their classrooms.

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