

Defining Newcomer Parent Engagement

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Foundations of
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80 % of parents engaged in educational, cultural, and religious activities every week with their children. These activities are currently not part of the framework of parent involvement.

Parents say engagement is...

- SPENDING MORE TIME WITH THEIR CHILDREN
- KNOWING THE LESSON PLANS & CURRICULUM
- BEING MORE INVOLVED IN THE COMMUNITY
- FLEXIBLE, REGULAR COMMUNICATION WITH TEACHERS
- SUPPORTING SPECIAL INITIATIVES AT SCHOOL
- TALKING TO THEIR CHILDREN ABOUT PLANS AFTER GRADUATION
- USING INNOVATIVE RESOURCES TO HELP THEIR KIDS PREPARE FOR SCHOOL

Abstract

This study sought to describe how newcomer parents in York Region engage in their children's education. It drew on the knowledge of parents attending workshops at a community and immigrant services agency, as well as Joyce Epstein's comprehensive framework of parent involvement. We found that parents may be highly engaged but have that engagement missed by teachers because they do not participate in parent-teacher committees. Currently, this is the first study in York Region to propose alternative ways of bringing parents and teachers together in schools.

We would like to thank Dr. Atsuko Matsuoka, whose insight and guidance made this all possible.

"Focus is on what parents can do to help the school realize its intentioned outcomes for children."

1. How are newcomer parents in York Region (involved) in their children's education?

72% were able to spend enough time each week with their children.

3/4 talked about homework each week
2/3 DID SO EVEN THOUGH THEY FELT THEY DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME TOGETHER

2. How do newcomer parents understand (engagement)?

60% were actively involved with a community organization

82% WERE PART OF ACTIVITIES & EVENTS AT THEIR CHILD'S SCHOOL

"Power & authority is shared by educators and parents. The agenda being served is mutually determined and mutually beneficial."

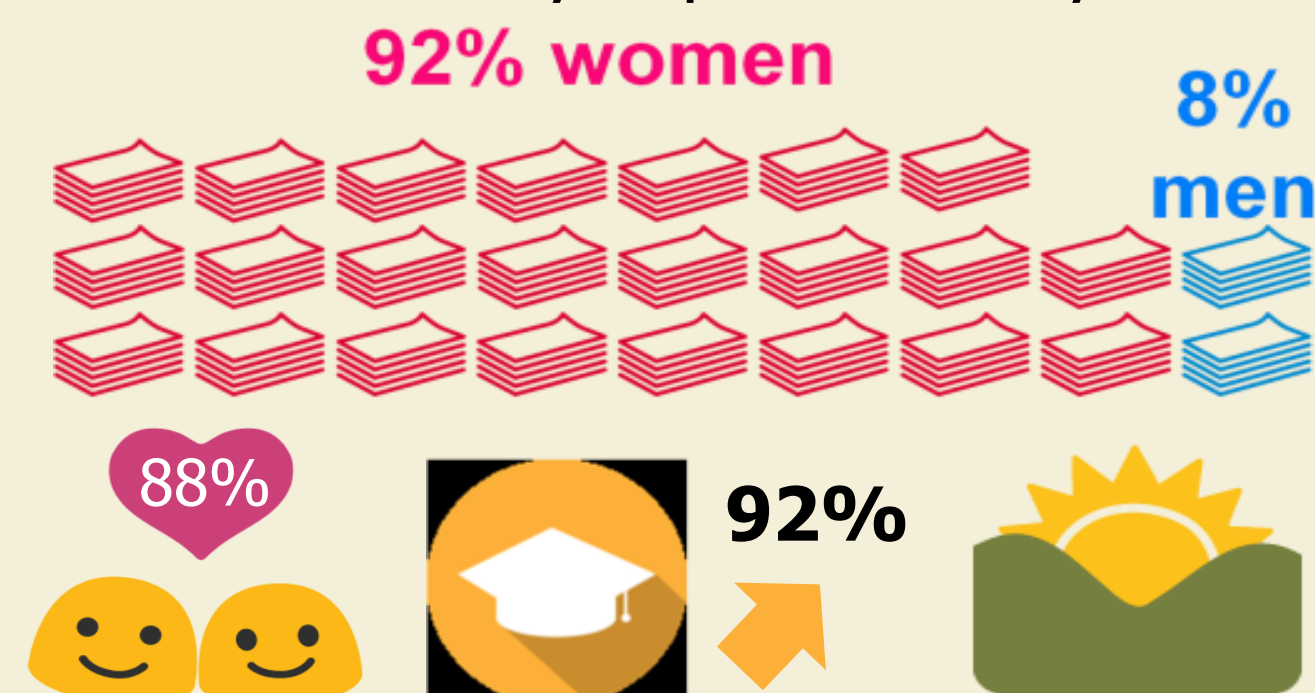


Most parents were NOT part of parent-teacher committees

1/6 RARELY OR NEVER COMMUNICATED WITH TEACHERS

Methods

This study used non-probability purposive sampling of newcomer families in York Region. Parents filled out an anonymous survey with multiple-choice questions asking how often they did activities from Epstein's 6 Levels of Parent Involvement. The survey also had 5 semi-structured and open-ended questions asking parents about how they engage, as well as well as whether they experience any barriers in doing so.



Joyce Epstein's 6 Levels of Parent Involvement

PARENTING • LEARNING AT HOME • COMMUNICATING
DECISION MAKING • VOLUNTEERING
COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY

Conclusion and Future Directions

The newcomer parents in this study were highly engaged and involved in their children's education, but may have that engagement missed by teachers because they don't participate in parent-teacher committees. Further research should determine whether newcomer parent engagement differs from that of non-newcomer parents and whether income, gender and the number of parents in the home are mediating factors. Educational bodies and community and immigrant service agencies should consider using modern technologies to make communication between teachers and newcomer parents more regular, flexible and transparent with regards to class curriculums.