Working with Native Families: Barriers and Opportunities

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Available online at: https://www.parentcenterhub.org/naptac-tier2-outreach/
Overview of Presentation

- How parent involvement impacts student achievement
- Early educational experiences of Native American parents
- *And now?* Present-day educational experiences of Native American parents
- Benefits of family engagement
- Connecting with Native American parents
- Resources
Research indicates that parent involvement is a strong predictor of student success in school.

- Parent – child relationship
- Home – school partnership
- Parent support for learning outcomes
Before and After Student Photos

Zuni students (c. 1880) and later with school uniforms

Navajo student (c. 1882 & 1885)
Early Educational Experiences of Native American Parents

Educated within the Native community

Missionary-based schools (began in 1770s)

Schools of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) (c. 1860) and boarding schools (1870s)

Public schools (c. 1910)
Present Day Educational Experiences of Native American Parents

And today?
Where are Native children being educated now?

▪ Public schools
▪ Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools
▪ Parochial schools (e.g., Catholic schools)
▪ Private schools
My son got into trouble at school. The Principal came to the house to explain. We don’t have a phone. That was respectful, even though it was a bad thing.

It’s good to know what your child is doing - both good and not so good.

The parents had to help out for a class project. The teacher helped out too. We had fun and so did our children.

We didn’t have the money to buy school pictures for our child. She took a picture of our child and printed a couple of pictures. Our child was so happy. That was really nice of the teacher to do that.

The teacher came to the Pow-Wow. My son was proud to have his teacher see him dance. She was surprised that he could keep in step. We invited her to eat with us.
The teachers and aides don’t want to help the children even when they ask for help.

I try to meet with my child’s teacher, but she leaves as soon as the children leave. Isn’t she interested in the children?

The grading system is confusing. My child makes good grades on the tests (mostly B’s), so why did he get a D at mid-term? It doesn’t make sense.

I try to get to the meetings, but I work late and they won’t change the time.

The Principal just stays in his office. He doesn’t like to talk with the parents.

We only see the teacher at report card time. But if I ask questions, she says she’ll call me, but I never hear from her. I guess she’s not really interested.

The teacher sends home notes for class projects and trips that cost money. Since I don’t have the money, I just keep my child home.
Benefits of Parent & Family Engagement

- Children attend school regularly
- Children and parents have positive attitudes about school
- Children are less likely to drop out and more likely to graduate from high school
- Children are less likely to engage in destructive behavior
- Children from diverse cultural backgrounds benefit when parents and professionals work together
Connecting with Native American Parents

Respect Parents

- Acknowledge & *welcome* parents
- Treat parents as *partners*
- *Include* parents in training and activities
Connecting with Native American Parents

Establish Trust

- Communicate with parents *consistently*—and not only at parent conferences

- Connect with parents *beyond* school events (e.g., cultural and community events)

- Reach out to parents

- Engage them in discussion about their child or child’s interests
Connecting with Native American Parents

Support Participation

- Identify parent mentors
- Check to make sure parents understand the info you’ve provided

Offer multiple ways to participate

Provide parents with tools to participate effectively, such as:
  - definitions of terms
  - data
  - grades
  - how to navigate systems
  - how to access resources
Connecting with Native American Parents

Promote Parent Engagement

Create a safe space where parents can share

Ask parents for their input

Offer trainings & support at times & places convenient to parents

Provide basic resources parents need to attend meetings (e.g., childcare, transportation)

Follow up!
Other Suggestions & Observations

**Invest in parent outreach**

- Learn about the history & culture of the Native communities you serve
- Learn and use the times & methods of communication preferred by parents
- Be persistent, consistent, & authentically engaged

**Learn together**

- Listen to & learn from Native parents
- Provide training to your staff to support their work with Native families
- Train | support | advocate for Native parents
Thanks for attending this webinar.

NAPTAC

All of NAPTAC’s products are available at the Center for Parent Information and Resources:

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/welcome-to-the-naptac-library/

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