

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

Parent Involvement Impacts Student Achievement



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



Teachers should communicate so we can understand.

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.

My child's teacher welcomes us and talks to us. She's always glad to see us even at the grocery store.

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.

Positive

My child's teacher does home visits to show us how to help our child. At first I was embarrassed, but she showed us what to do. Our daughter is happy and is more excited to learn.

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

Negative

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

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?

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.

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.

Benefits of Parent & Family Engagement



- Children attend school regularly
- Children and parents have positive attitudes about school
- Children are less likely to dropout 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/](https://www.parentcenterhub.org/welcome-to-the-naptac-library/)

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