

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND PARENT ENGAGEMENT



By Larry Ferlazzo

BEGINNING THE PROCESS

	INVOLVEMENT	ENGAGEMENT
Whose energy drives it? Who initiates it?	Ideas and energy come from the schools and government mandates. They tend to “sell it.” School staff and public institutions might feel they know what the problems are and how to fix them, and determine the criteria to use in evaluating success.	Ideas are elicited from parents by school staff in the context of developing trusting relationships. They emerge from parent/ community needs and priorities. More parent energy drives the efforts.
What is the invitation?	Parents might be irritated—pushed to do something staff might perceive as important. Parents are asked to do things without necessarily having a trusting and reciprocal relationship with school staff.	Parents are agitated—challenged to do something they feel is important. Staff members learn what is important through developing a relationship.

ROLES OF PARENTS AND SCHOOL STAFF

	INVOLVEMENT	ENGAGEMENT
What is the role of the parent?	She is a volunteer who is generally directed by school staff toward completing tasks, or a client who receives services and information.	She is considered a leader (or potential leader) who is integral to identifying a vision and goals. She encourages others to contribute their own vision to that big picture and helps perform the tasks that need to be achieved to reach those goals.
What is the role of the teacher/school librarian?	He is more of a social worker who does things for parents, or tends to tell them what they should be doing with their child.	He is more of an organizer who helps parents do things for themselves and elicits from parents ideas about what the parents and school staff could be doing to better help the children and the community.
What is the role of the administrator?	She develops the vision and assigns tasks to parents to help accomplish them.	She encourages parents and staff to help develop a joint vision, and helps develop leadership abilities while recognizing that tasks are just a tool toward that end.

PURPOSE, DECISION-MAKING, AND PARTNERSHIPS

	INVOLVEMENT	ENGAGEMENT
What is the purpose?	Support students by strengthening and assisting school programs and priorities.	Support students by developing parent relationships, strengthening families, and improving their local communities
Decision-making power	School staff might look at power as a finite “pie”—if parents get some, then schools lose some. The staff members are the experts.	There is recognition that more possibilities are created when more stakeholders have power to make real decisions—the “pie” gets bigger. Parents are recognized as co-educators and experts in their own right.
What kinds of partnerships are developed?	“Narrow and shallow.” Schools might get gift certificates from businesses, or staff might initiate bringing social services to school sites with minimal parent input. Police, for example, are brought in to deal with campus safety issues.	“Broad and deep.” Assistance is provided by community groups and universities on leadership development and other issues <i>parents</i> identify. Partnerships are developed with businesses, the police, local political bodies, and other entities to respond to communitywide issues.

In case you missed it!

LMC is pleased to bring this snapshot from *Building Parent Engagement in Schools* by Larry Ferlazzo and Lorie Hammond. *Building Parent Engagement in Schools* is available from Linworth (an imprint of ABC-CLIO); ISBN: 978-1-58683-342-8; www.abc-clio.com/product.aspx?isbn=9781586833428.

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