

THE UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM STUDIES

**ECUR 898.3 (07) ENGAGING PARENTS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING
Summer, 2010**

Monday, July 19th through Friday, July 23rd 1-3:50 p.m.
Wednesday, July 21st 5-9 p.m.
Monday, July 26th through Friday, July 30th 1-3:50 p.m.
Monday, July 26th 5-9 p.m.
Saturday, July 31st 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
Room 2001, Education Building

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Office Hours: By appointment

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*A one-way relationship isn't much of a relationship at all.
Limiting ourselves to telling families what we want or what they
should do does not take advantage of the rich experiences and
knowledge that every family brings with them to their children's
education. Nor does it respond to what all families need and want
from schools to create partnerships that effectively support
children's learning.*

(Graue & Hawkins, in Miller Marsh & Turner-Vorbeck, 2010, p. 123)

Course Description

The term “parent engagement” represents a conceptualization of the positioning of parents in relation to school landscapes as integral and essential to processes of schooling. You will learn about aspects of parent engagement which differentiate it from involvement and which create opportunities for parents to take their place alongside educators in the schooling of their children, fitting together their knowledge of children, teaching and learning, with teachers' knowledge.

Course Objectives

This course is designed to enhance your understanding of what parent engagement is – and is not, conditions which invite engagement, the complexities and multiplicity inherent within it, and possibilities within your own curriculum-making for working alongside parents in respectful, caring, and committed ways. In this course, you will:

- differentiate between communication with parents, parent involvement, parent engagement and parent leadership,
- explore, affirm, and/or challenge your beliefs and assumptions about parents,
- consider contextual factors which invite or prevent authentic parent engagement,
- re-conceptualize yourself as a “guest host” on school/childcare landscapes,
- recognize the depth and breadth of parent engagement in out of school places,
- envision ways to connect parents with the school, connect parents with parents, and connect yourself with homes and the community,
- learn ways to utilize the unique knowledge, culture, rhythm and context of each family in your curriculum-making and decision-making,
- explore practices which center the work of school community councils on student learning and other educational outcomes,
- realize the reciprocal benefits of parent engagement for students, parents, communities, and staff in schools,
- consider the place of schooling in the education of children.

Course Texts

(Texts are currently available for purchase in the University of Saskatchewan Bookstore, Marquis Hall. They are also available in the Education Library Reserve for 24 hour loan periods.)

Allen, J. (2007). *Creating welcoming schools: A practical guide to home-school partnerships with diverse families*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Henderson, A.T., Mapp, K.L., Johnson, V.R. & Davies, D. (2007). *Beyond the bake sale: The essential guide to family-school partnerships*. New York: The New Press.

Course Novels

Please purchase, from a venue of your choosing, one of the following novels. (They are also available in the Education Library Reserve for 3 day loan periods.) You will participate in a book club with colleagues who make the same novel selection. So that I can work to balance the size of the book clubs, please let me know your preferred novel choice as soon as possible. I am hoping there will be 5-6 members in each book club.

Alexie, S. (2007). *The absolutely true diary of a part-time Indian*. NY: Little, Brown & Company.

Kapur, M. (2006). *Home*. India: Random House.

Toews, M. (2008). *The flying Troutmans*. Toronto: Vintage Canada.

Proposed Class Schedule

Class 1: What is “parent engagement”? (Monday, July 19th)

- communication, involvement, engagement, leadership
- beliefs and assumptions about parents
- attributes of engagement

Required Readings:

Chapter 1 *Beyond the Bake Sale*: Introduction

Chapter 2 *Beyond the Bake Sale*: What is a family-school partnership supposed to look like?

Foreword and Introduction *Creating Welcoming Schools*: pp. ix-x, 1-10.

Pushor, D., Ruitenber, C., with co-researchers from Princess Alexandra Community School. (2005, November). *Parent engagement and leadership*. Research report, project #134, Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation for Research into Teaching, Saskatoon, SK, 79 pp.

http://www.mcdowellfoundation.ca/main_mcdowell/projects/research_rep/134_parent_engagement.pdf. Please read pp. 1-34.

Optional Reading:

On Reserve: Lopez, G.R. & Stoelting. (2010). Disarticulating parent involvement in Latino-impacted schools in the Midwest. In M. Miller Marsh & T. Turner-Vorbeck (Eds), *(Mis)understanding families: Learning from real families in our schools*. New York: Teachers College Press, pp. 19-36.

Class 2: Educators as “guest hosts” (Tuesday, July 20th)

- principles of parent/community engagement
- what does it mean to be a guest in a school community?
- what does it mean to be a host in a school community?
- Carole Courtney, SWITCH coordinator, 3 – 4 pm
 - An introduction to SWITCH
 - Health disparities in Saskatoon

Required Readings:

Chapter 1 *Creating Welcoming Schools*: Exploring memories of school.

Chapter 3 *Beyond the Bake Sale*: Ready, Set, Go!

Library Resources Page: Pushor, D. (2007, Fall). Welcoming parents: Educators as guest hosts on school landscapes. *Education Canada*, 47, (4), 6-11.

Saskatchewan Learning. (2004). *Building communities of hope: Effective practices for meeting the diverse learning needs of children and youth. Community schools policy and conceptual framework*. Regina, SK: Author. <http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/building-communities-of-hope>
Please read Section III *Policy, Vision, Goals, Principles, and Effective Practices*, pp. 8-12.

Please peruse the Student Wellness Initiative Toward Community Health (SWITCH) website:
www.switch.usask.ca

Lemstra, M. & Neudorf, C. (2007). *Health disparity in Saskatoon: Analysis to intervention*. Saskatoon Health Region, Saskatoon, SK.
<http://www.uphn.ca/doc/public/HealthDisaparitiesinSaskatoonExecutiveSummary.pdf>

Class 3: Living as a guest (Wednesday, July 21st)

- Meet at King Edward School at 1 pm
721 Avenue K South
- participation in a core community walk led by Lori Pulai
- reflecting on what was learned and the implications of the learning
- exploring the Reggio Emilia project, Reggio Tutta: A guide to the city by the children
- generating other ways to be a guest in a school community

Required Readings:

Chapter 2 *Creating Welcoming Schools*: Writing cultural memoirs.

Chapter 4 *Creating Welcoming Schools*: Developing photography and other avenues to learning with families.

Class 4: SWITCH/Book Club (Wednesday, July 21st)

- half the class will work an evening shift at SWITCH and debrief (This group will be located at the SWITCH Clinic from 5-9 pm)
 - What do we learn about parents/families/communities when we go off the school landscape?
 - How might we use what we learn?
 - How will this redefine our work in relation with parents, families and children?
- half the class will begin their book club(s) (Room 2001 or a location of the book club's choice, 7-9 p.m.)
 - Notions of schooling, the role of teachers, the role of parents, parent engagement, home/school relations will be examined in the context of a particular work of fiction.
 - Please have read approximately half of your novel by this date.

Class 5: Home Visits (Thursday, July 22nd)

- Guest Presenter Lauren Sawatsky, Community School Coordinator
- purposes and possible approaches
- relationship-building and reciprocity

- procedural and safety considerations
- dis/positioning and teacher identity

Required Readings:

Chapter 3 *Creating Welcoming Schools*: Learning with and from families.

Library Resources Page: Pushor, D. & Murphy, B. (2004, Fall). Parent marginalization, marginalized parents: Creating a place for parents on the school landscape. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 50, (3), 221-235.

Class 6: Living as a host (Friday, July 23rd)

- welcoming and hospitality
- trust and relationships
- practices of possibility

Required Readings:

Chapter 4 *Beyond the Bake Sale*: Developing relationships.

Pushor, D., Ruitenberg, C., with co-researchers from Princess Alexandra Community School. (2005, November). *Parent engagement and leadership*. Research report, project #134, Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation for Research into Teaching, Saskatoon, SK, 79 pp.

http://www.mcdowellfoundation.ca/main_mcdowell/projects/research_rep/134_parent_engagement.pdf. Please read pp. 35-69.

Class 7: Connecting parents with parents (Monday, July 26th)

- making space in schools for parents
- creating webs of support and relationship
- considering the strength of numbers

Required Reading:

Brown, J. (2010, Winter). Parents building communities in schools. *Voices in Urban Education*, 26, 45-53. <http://www.annenberginstitute.org/VUE/wp-content/pdf/VUE26.pdf>

Class 8: SWITCH/Book Club (Monday, July 26th – Evening)

- reversed roles to Class 4

Class 9: Rethinking Practice (Tuesday, July 27th)

- “ask them” what they want/need/hope for
- plan together
- re-imagine such taken-for-granted school events such as Meet the Teacher Night, K Orientation, Parent Nights, Family Fridays considering the concept of authentic engagement

Required Readings:

Chapter 5 *Creating Welcoming Schools*: Engaging in genuine dialogue.

Chapter 6 *Creating Welcoming Schools*: Inviting dialogue at the conference table.

Chapter 7 *Creating Welcoming Schools*: Creating dialogue throughout the year.

Pushor, D. (2010). Are school doing enough to learn about families? In M. Miller Marsh & T. Turner-Vorbeck (Eds), *(Mis)understanding families: Learning from real families in our schools*. New York: Teachers College Press, pp. 4-16.

Class 10: School Community Councils (Wednesday, July 28th)

Co-Facilitator Donnalee Weinmaster, Superintendent, Saskatoon Public Schools

- legislation, intentions, mandate
- parent engagement in the analysis of student achievement results
- parent engagement in the development of continuous improvement plans
- processes and considerations

Required Readings:

Chapter 8 *Beyond the Bake Sale*: Sharing power.

School Community Councils: *A Handbook for School Community Councils and Principals*. Please read Section 1.2 Purpose and Vision, pp. 3-6.

<http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=281,144,107,81,1,Documents&MediaID=1953&Filename=PrincipalsHandbook.pdf>

Class 11: Book Club Exchanges/

Parent Engagement in Teaching and Learning (Thursday, July 29th)

- learning from the research
- using parent knowledge
- maintaining parents' positioning as parents
- honoring parents' engagement in out of school places
- side by side planning

Required Readings:

Chapter 5 *Beyond the Bake Sale*: Linking to learning.

Chapter 6 *Beyond the Bake Sale*: Addressing differences.

Chapter 8 *Creating Welcoming Schools*: Engaging families.

Chapter 9 *Creating Welcoming Schools*: Engaging families in classroom projects.

Chapter 10 *Creating Welcoming Schools*: Collaborating for a more just society.

On Reserve: Pushor, D. (2010, April). "Parent engagement in mathematics is just not possible." Or is it? *Vinculum: Journal of the Saskatchewan Mathematics Teachers' Society*, 2(1), 20-32

Class 12: Rethinking Practice – Moving to Action (Friday, July 30th)

- class time to work, individually and collaboratively, on your “rethinking practice” assignment
 - determine what practice you wish to interrogate
 - attend to the beliefs and assumptions which underlie it, the positioning of parents within it, who plans it, establishes the agenda, facilitates it, and what the outcome(s) of the event are
 - together with colleagues, begin to reconsider and re-imagine/re-plan the event in a way that opens spaces for parents to be authentically engaged and positioned with educators in side by side ways

Class 13: Parent Engagement in Teaching and Learning/Potluck Lunch with Parent/Teacher Conversation Groups (Saturday, July 31st 10 am – 1 pm)

- exchanging synthesized notions related to parents and parent engagement which arose in your book club conversations
- a reciprocal exchange of stories, thoughts, feelings and ideas with parents, in relation over lunch.

Course Assignments

To receive a final mark, you must attend and participate in classes, and complete the course requirements as outlined in this syllabus. Descriptors provided by the College of Graduate Studies and Research will be used to assess the nature of your work (<http://www.usask.ca/calendar/gradstudies/additional/grading/>).

Book Club Reflections (30%)

(Midpoint written reflection 10%; Final group oral reflection and presentation 20%)

The purpose of the book club is to encourage you to extend theoretical/conceptual ideas around parents and schools through the use of fiction. How can the characters, actions, ideas enable you to re-imagine or re-conceptualize how parents and teachers engage with one another and within schools/childcare centers? How do the messages and the underlying theme(s) of the novel offer something to the topic of parent engagement? By using fiction in an academic setting, possibilities are created for you to see the familiarity and taken-for-grantedness of the landscape of schools/childcare centers in new and different ways.

Class time will be allotted for book clubs to get together to discuss their latest reading in the novel, and relate it to ideas discussed in class regarding the engagement of parents in education. The book club will generate two assignments:

a) Midpoint Reflection 10%

This is an individually written reflection. You are asked to reflect on and connect the novel’s content with concepts and/or theories discussed in the course. This could be written in prose (maximum 5 pages) or in another creative format.

b) Final Book Club Reflection and Presentation 20%

In the final class, book clubs will present a collective reflection on the novel which links it to practices, issues, or compelling questions regarding the engagement of parents in childcare, schooling, and education. In this oral presentation, book clubs will provide an overview of the novel, but focus primarily on linking the course content, characters, etc. of the novel to parents, childcare, schooling, and education. This assignment is designed with a high degree of flexibility, and book clubs are encouraged to be creative and innovative with how the novel is presented and related to the course. The purpose of the presentation is to generate rich discussions about how popular literature can spark ideas and inform our thinking in our academic and professional lives.

Rethinking Practice (30%)

You will examine a typical practice in your current school or childcare context in which parents and teachers/childcare providers interact. Such practices could include:

- Meet the Teacher Night
- Pre-Kindergarten/Kindergarten orientation
- Family Fridays
- Open house, parent meeting, curriculum night
- Parent/Teacher conferences.

In light of course readings, discussions, and activities, you will interrogate this practice, attending to the beliefs and assumptions which underlie it, the positioning of parents within it, who plans it, establishes the agenda, facilitates it, and what the outcome(s) of the event are. You will then reconsider and re-imagine/re-plan the event in a way that opens spaces for parents to be authentically engaged and positioned with educators in side by side ways. You will submit a paper which outlines the practice as it currently exists, describes the new practice as you have redesigned it, explains why you made the choices you did and what new outcomes you believe will be realized through your redesign.

Reading Responses (40%)

1. *Beliefs and assumptions about parents*
2. *Being a guest host on a school landscape*
3. *Parent engagement in out of school places*
4. *Parent engagement in teaching and learning*

For each of the above four course topics, you will:

- detail what you believed, felt, knew and understood about the topic before you began the readings/course
- write a five page synthesis, making direct connections to course readings, discussions, experiences, that makes explicit your growth in understanding about this topic
 - how have your beliefs been shaped/influenced/challenged/affirmed?
 - what greater knowledge/understanding/skill do you now have to translate these beliefs into practice in family and school contexts?
 - what have your most significant learnings been and why?

This is intended to be an honest account of your personal and professional growth and your shifts in thinking and identity. The purpose of the responses is to give you the opportunity to examine the philosophical, theoretical and pedagogical concepts presented in the readings in relation to your contextual, practical and personal understandings of parents, families and schools.