

## Parental Involvement: 'The Key to a Child's Failure or Success'

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The lack of parental involvement is one of the most severe social issues that our country faces, as well as the most important factor for the success of future generations, according to Jane D. Hull, our nation's first female Republican governor and an expert in education. "At the end of the day, the most overwhelming key to a child's success is the involvement of parents," she said in a 2010 speech.

People need to understand how significant this involvement is to our children and how our nation can be impacted.

Parental involvement is extremely crucial to a child's life; parents' involvement, or lack thereof, both in the school and at home, will automatically influence the future of our children. It is up to the parents to have the will to be present, both physically and mentally, and available to their children. Born in Brazil in extreme poverty and with a dysfunctional family, I knew exactly what it was like not having parents – not because they were dead, but because of the fact that they were not present in my life at all. All I remember of my mother before she died when I was 6 years old was constant physical abuse and bruises on my body. She did not allow my siblings and me to go to school, and forced us to stay at home cleaning the entire house without even eating until our home was spotless. As for my biological father, he would tell me that all I needed in life was: 1) a lot of girls and 2) having fun getting lots of girls. My biological mother did not care if I went to school or not; my dad always called me "burro," which means "stupid or

dumb.” When I went to school, I struggled in all my classes, was in the principal’s office multiple times, but never had my parents show up once.

Education and life goals were far from my mind as I felt as if they did not matter because my parents did not care; additionally, I had too many problems to deal with at home. Overall, my world was upside down and I had nothing to look forward to. According to Doris Brandt, a contributor to the 2011 article, “Problems With Parental Involvement”:

Parents... ‘avoid’ working with their children on assignments and projects. These deficiencies lead to poor communication and little support, resulting in a decreased student performance, lower self-esteem among students, and increased disciplinary problems.

I always struggled academically. Having my father telling me that I was “dumb” and not helping me to become better evoked me to give up in school and life. I had no communication with my father, and he had no communication with me. If a parent finds no time to communicate with one’s child because he is at work for most of the day, how is the idea of “communication” viewed by the child? Even though I was failing my courses, I did not communicate with my teachers. Further, these are traits that go beyond the education level; they expand to how a child will act in the outside world as an adult.

It has become obvious that education is one of the key paths towards success; an individual is most likely to struggle financially and socially in life if one does not have at least a bachelor’s degree, if not more. According to the 2011 article, “Teachers and Teaching: Top School Problems,” the most important issue that teachers face is children and indirectly with parents and their lack of involvement in their child’s life: “Teachers [see] lack of parental involvement as a serious problem... Parental involvement can reduce apathy, student

unpreparedness, drinking problems – and increase respect for teachers.” Furthermore, when a parent is involved in a child’s life, the child tends to do better not only academically, but also socially. The child knows how to control his or her own behavior, and learns how to develop a sense of respect towards his peers and teachers. I believe that parents are more than just the people who brought one into the world; they are mentors, friends, disciplinary tools, character builders, communicators, and social acceptance models.

At age 12, after my biological father had tried to set fire to the house in an attempt to kill my siblings and me, and eliminate his life-problems too, he ran from the police and abandoned all of his children. Fortunately, my oldest brother took all of us to the house of the “American missionary family,” who decided to adopt all five of us, adding up to a total of 10 children for them. My new dad, Loren Sprowl, became my hero as he spent much of his time building my confidence by teaching me invaluable principles and people skills; his deep love let no barriers stop his hope for our lives. A foundation of strength and confidence was built through his love and trust being invested in me. Slowly, I began to understand what my new dad was teaching; friendships became easier to develop and life had new meaning to me. I still had quite a ways to go, but I was on the road to success. The greatest challenge was yet awaiting me as I immigrated to the United States of America. I arrived speaking no English and thus decided to repeat my freshman year in high school. My dad taught me to love every subject I studied and treat each experience as a treasure, and he refused to let me take the “easy” courses. My dad’s effort and dedication were infinite as he refused to allow my past to determine my future.

According to the Indiana Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC), “The more parents are involved in the education of their children, the better students do – regardless of the

parents' educational background, economic status, or native language.” Further, “Education Week” newsletter stated on the topic of parental involvement that “students with involved parents are more likely to earn higher grades, have better behavioral and social skills, and graduate and go on to post-secondary school.” It is clear that it does not matter the financial status or background of the parents in order to have some kind of positive involvement in a child’s life.

As a result of my dad’s involvement in my life, those who knew me then would not recognize me now. My former “self,” the wounded and introverted “burro,” was blessed to be the valedictorian of his high school class, now speaks English, Portuguese, and Spanish fluently, and was awarded West Point’s highest honor as the Outstanding Leader of Character during the academy’s summer camp. As a graduating senior from George Washington Community High School in Indianapolis, Indiana, my brothers and I created the Sprowl Family Scholarship, providing \$1,000-\$2,000 every year to help a graduating senior go onto a post-secondary school. Further, while at the United States Military Academy Preparatory School, I received a nomination from U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar and Congressman Andre Carson and my official appointment to The United States Military Academy at West Point to receive one of the top educations in the world and serve our nation as an Army officer.

Obviously, my new dad changed my life. While my new mom has not been as involved in my academic life, she has showed her caring and love in the most basic things in life: preparing delicious meals along with everything else that great moms do for their children.

Overall, according to the article, “Family Life and Gender Roles: How Do We Become Who We Are?” from “The McGraw Hill-Reader,” “Families [parental involvement] nourish us

during childhood, and the values our families [or values from our parents] seek to maintain usually affect [us] in powerful ways.” Parents have a huge role in a child’s life. Many times, they are the determining factor in a child’s success or failure: academically, socially, and financially. Furthermore, an extreme abundance of parents in our 21st Century are divorcing and spending less valuable time with their children. Parents have become too busy with their jobs, marriage issues, financial needs, and social life. Many have to work two or more jobs to sustain the family’s basic needs and to provide their children with the most they can to be well-educated and achieve the most in life, while others face multiple problems with husbands or wives, not even to mention the problems outside of home with jobs, government rules, and other basic life issues. Consequently, they lack involvement in the child’s life. Most of the reasons why children do not care about school, are not motivated to learn, start drinking and smoking, become parents at an early age, cause accidents, are placed in jail, and even die early are because of the lack of parental involvement “disease.” However, a child’s life can completely turn around from failure to success if a parent decides to become involved with his or her child, like my new dad has.

Finally, the lack of parental involvement has become, and will continue to be, a severe issue in our society, unless parents start to make a real “change.”

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