

Facilitating Learning Through Parent-Teacher Partnership Activities

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Abstract The study explored the effectiveness of combined interventions in facilitating the students' lacklustre academic performance in Science. Twenty Grade 6 students at risk during the first semester of the school year 2015-2016 at F. Guerrero Elementary school were the participants of the study. Remedial classes in Science and a series of home visitations were done to assist the participants and their engagement in class–assigned activities. Pre-test and post-test were administered to gauge the contribution of the combined interventions to the improvement of the academic performance of the participants. Results revealed that providing remedial classes to students at risk is still one of the most effective means of facilitating learning, complementing this with follow up efforts through home visitations confirmed the importance of parental involvement in students' education. The narrative analysis of the conversations between the teacher and the parents showed the need for teachers to continuously reach out to parents to promote a more open communication between the school and the home. The study has indeed reinforced existing literature on the relevance of home visits even in this age of advanced technology.

Keywords: Academic performance, home visitation, intervention, parental involvement, remedial classes.

Introduction

The condition of education in the Philippines has always been dynamic. Educational institutions periodically implement new programs and innovative strategies, as well as enforce trainings and retraining to achieve the ultimate goal: quality education. Expectedly, but sadly, a thinly-veiled cycle of blame plays among the Philippine educational system, school personnel, and parents. The blame exists primarily because of the poor academic performance of some students, plaguing especially the public schools as evidenced by below par performance in the 2015 Philippine National Achievement Test with Science as perennially getting the lowest rank among elementary schools nationwide.

This action research promotes parent-teacher partnership to facilitate learning in Science and helps break the vicious cycle. A sound relationship between teachers and parents of students who fail or have the potential to fail during the school year could do the trick. Home visitations can give teachers, parents, and students the opportunity to connect. Open communication among the teachers, parents, and the students means opportunity to discuss concerns and/or problems encountered at school, and how home factors affect students' academic performance. The conduct of home visits is a way to bridge the gap between school and home for students, families, and teachers. A growing amount of research points to the importance of parents supporting their child's learning at home. According to Edweek (2004), home visit is one way to deepen the partnership between teacher and parent and increase the students' chance to succeed.

Home visitations could help increase positive attitude of students towards school as well as reduce discipline-related problems. They can bridge the gap between teachers, parents and students, consequently, building and maintaining trust between parents and teachers. This partnership may lead

to greater parental involvement, which is not a new idea at all, but is of great importance and potential. Unfortunately, it is not maximized in schools. For example, Dervarics (2011) cited that the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) observed that students with involved parents, no matter what their income or background is, are more likely to: 1) earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs; 2) be promoted, pass their classes and earn credits; 3) attend school regularly; 4) have better social skills, show improved behavior and adapt well to school; and 5) graduate and go on to post-secondary education. Nonetheless, when drilling down to determine what types of involvement work best, SEDL observed one common factor: *“Programs and interventions that engage families in supporting their children’s learning at home are linked to higher student achievement.”* (Dervarics, 2011).

This action research aimed to gain understanding of the environment and the status in life of students with seemingly poor academic performance and attitudes which could explain why the students manifest certain inappropriate behavior in school. Hence, home visitation was thought to be the right intervention. Remedial classes, as the complementary intervention to home visitation, aims to help the students at risk gain the knowledge in science topics they find difficult. In return, their efforts to improve their performance give their parents the motivation to continually participate in the student-teacher learning process.

With appropriately implemented parent-teacher activities such as home visitation and science remedial classes, it is hoped that there would be lower dropout rates and equally important is having a harmonious relationship with parents, which could result to a more rewarding school experience for these stakeholders.

On Parental Involvement

Epstein (1995) defines parent involvement as families and communities who take an active role in creating a caring educational environment. A critical mass of research evidence over the last two decades indicate that gain in student achievement are possible when parents support students' learning in the home (The NEA Foundation Issue Brief, 2012).

Creating a partnership between schools and parents can have a significant impact on student achievement. One of the best ways to structure this kind of partnership is by involving parents in their children's doing their homework. Targeted parent involvement intended to solve a particular problem such as poor attendance or behavior can also be beneficial. But the research is clear *'parents want to be involved, and parent involvement can make a difference.'* Structuring the partnership between schools and parents is one of the best things school boards can do" (Dervarics, 2011).

Involvement allows parents to monitor school and classroom activities, and to coordinate their efforts with the teachers to encourage acceptable classroom behavior and ensure that the children complete schoolwork. Teachers of students with highly involved parents tend to give greater attention to those students, and they are more likely to identify at earlier stages problems that might inhibit student learning, (Parental Involvement in School, n.d.).

On Home Visitations

Home visitations lead to a productive, much needed partnership between parents and teachers that guarantee students' success at school resulting to greater understanding and cooperation between the home and the collaborating school. Parents and teachers build trust and partnership

that help enable both parties to make the necessary changes for students to perform better in school. Epstein (1995) defines several types of parental involvement, which could be reduced to: visiting, knowing, and collaborating with the home and community. These are all influential in supporting the education of children.

On School Interventions

Interventions are activities that could be used to help students improve unsatisfactory school performance or decrease negative behavior towards others. Intervention may target academic or behavioral concerns. Academic intervention addresses problems in areas like reading, math, science, and social studies. Conduct of remedial classes, one-on-one tutorial, or home visitation are examples of academic intervention activities which are likely to boost the performance of low performing students who are either failing or in danger of failing at any time during the school year.

Remediation is the act or process of solving, improving or correcting a problem or situation. According to the National Guidelines for Educating EMS Instructors (2002), remediation is a “deliberate educational activity designed to correct deficits identified during formal and informal evaluations.” A sound remediation process helps the teacher and student by identifying issues; improving clinical skills, and maintaining competency. Remediation can provide an educator a systematic plan to assist students in developing learning strategies and skills for success, (Parental Involvement in School, n.d.).

In this particular action research, home visitation is the primary intervention done supplemented by several remedial classes in science. In having these two interventions, the cognitive as well as the socio-emotional development of

the participants were explored making the approach more holistic and relevant to the needs of time.

Framework of the Study

Based on the concepts reviewed, the research framework presented in Figure 1 illustrates how combined interventions of home visitation and remedial classes could bring about improved performance among the *students who are at risk of receiving failing grade in Science* during the school year under study.

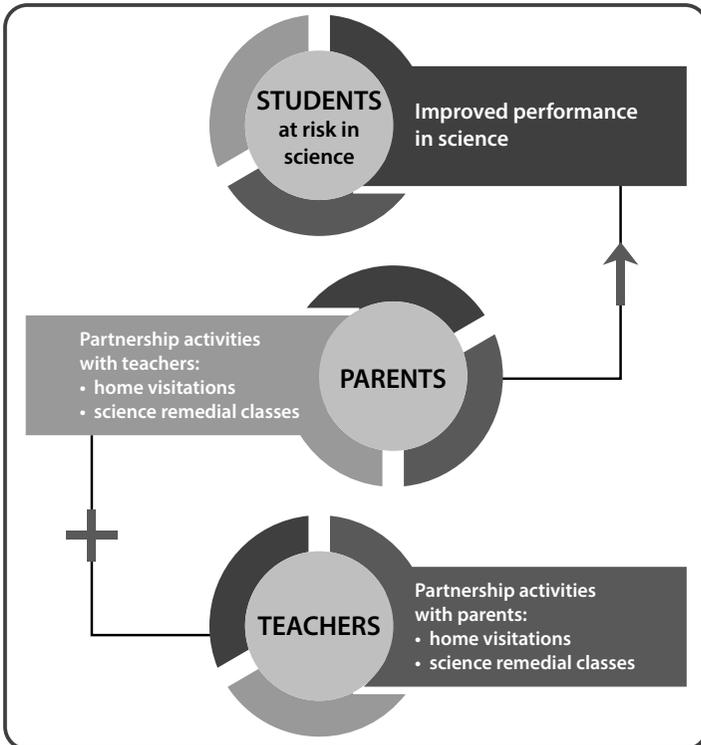


Figure 1. Framework of the Study.

Purposes of the Research

This action research aimed to determine the **effectiveness** of parent-teacher partnership activities such as home visitation and remedial class in facilitating the learning of *students at risk* in Grade 6 Science during the school year 2015-2016 at F. Guererro Elementary School. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How effective is home visitation in facilitating parental involvement in the education of students at risk?
2. Is there a significant improvement in the performance of low performing pupils before and after the conduct of remedial classes and simultaneous home visits?

Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to gather and interpret the data collected through the implementation of parent-teacher partnership activities as planned in the study.

Participants

The participants of the study included 20 *students at risk* and their parents. These pupils are low-performing because they attained the lowest grades in science in the previous year.

Instruments

For the purpose of gathering the baseline performance of the students at risk, the researchers used a teacher-made 50-item Science test that primarily focused on lessons, tasks which the students found hard to comply and cope with. To get information about the involvement of the parents the

academic development of their children, the researcher used an interview guide.

Data Collection

Pre-Intervention

Before the implementation of the intervention activities, parents' consent forms were distributed to and collected from the 20 students at risk. After confirmation that the students were allowed to go through the activities, a 50-item science pre-test was administered to the students.

Intervention

The 20 identified students 'at risk' were required to attend remedial classes in Science at 1 to 2 in the afternoon every Wednesday from June to August of 2015. The lead teacher-researcher used different strategies and visual aids in the conduct of every session. The lessons during the remedial classes were prepared ahead of time and the content was more on the reinforcement of the subject matter taught during regular classes.

Visits to the residence of these 20 students were conducted by the lead researcher to interview the parents and to encourage them to provide more assistance in the studies of their children. Visitations were done once a month to the parents of these students from June to August of 2015. A total of 3 visits per student or 60 visits to all parents were conducted.

Post-Intervention

After the implementation of the intervention activities, the administration of the Science post-test was undertaken.

Results and Discussion

The results of this action research could answer the growing need to improve the academic performance of students in Science Grade 6, especially those who are identified as “students at risk” for the school year 2015-2016 at the Fernando Ma. Guerrero Elementary School.

Home Visitation as a Means of Enhancing Parental Involvement

Table 1 shows the themes generated during the **first interview** conducted. There were 66 responses related to how the parents deal with their children in terms of their home works and school activities.

Table 1. Generated themes and theme definitions on the data gathered during the first interview

Generated Themes	Theme Definition	Frequency
Attributes of the child	These are the descriptions given by the parents of their children (low performing in school). Also includes how the children behaves at home and in relation to their studies.	47
Parent-child partnership in dealing with the studies of the child	This pertains to the kind of assistance the parents are willing to give to the child in doing their assignments, in attending to school activities, and expressing concern to improve the children’s performance in school.	66

The following are the most significant responses from the parents to support the data in Table 1.

“Ah! Pagka dumarating siya tinitanung ko talaga siya, “O, ano assignment mo?” at titingnan ko naman yung mga notebook niya. (Parent 1)

“Ah! Upon arriving, I really ask him, “O, what is your assignment?” then I check his notebook. (Parent 1)

“Tapos ‘pag hindi niya kaya papatulong siya, “Ma, hindi ko ito alam” o kaya si ate niya kaya, nagpapatulong siya sa ate niya.” (Parent 1)

“If he can’t handle his homework, he asks for help, “Ma, I don’t know this” or his ate, he will ask for help from his ate.” (Parent 1)

During the first visit, the parents were also asked how they describe their children and the following were the most relevant responses during the interview:

“Isang mabait, masunuring bata, minsan lang nagbabago ang isip. Pag ayaw nyang gawin ang trabaho, di sya gumagawa.” (Parent 16)

“She is a good, obedient child, very seldom changes (her) mind. If she doesn’t want to do work, she doesn’t do it.” (Parent 16)

“Maaasahan naman siya sa mga gawaing bahay, masunuring bata, tahimik.” (Parent 17)

“She is dependable, though, when it comes to household chores; obedient child, quiet.” (Parent 17)

“Ano po siya... slow po siya sa lahat ng bagay, kasi apektado po sa pagka-broken family, kaya ganun.” (Parent 10)

“She’s what... slow in all aspects, because she’s affected by being in a broken family.” (Parent 10)

It can be surmised from the actual responses that during the first visit, the current research supports the writings of Dervarics (2011) which emphasized the structuring of

partnership between schools and parents is of the best things school board can do.

Table 2 shows the themes and their definition on the data gathered during the **second visit** or the first follow-up interview conducted by the lead researcher. There were 46 counts of responses related to the improvement in behavior and study habits of the children after the first home visitation and one-month attendance to the remedial classes.

Table 2. Generated themes and theme definition on the data gathered during the second interview

Generated Themes	Theme Definition	Frequency
Improvement in behavior and study habits of the child	These are observed improvements manifested by the children after the first home visitation and one month attendance in the remedial classes.	46
Specific actions by the parents to foster improvement on the child	This theme describes how the parents get involved in the studies of the child to improve his performance in school and also improvement in behavior	24

The following are the significant responses of the parents that support the data in Table 2.

“Para po siyang excited na papasok siya sa hapon. Para po ako ay mag-aaral uli, aantayin ako ni Ma’am Brito. Doon po sa aming review class.”
(Parent 2)

“He seems excited in going to school in the afternoon going back to school by saying: I will study again, Ma’am Brito will wait for me in our review class.” (Parent 2)

“Meron na po siyang pagkukusa. Gumagawa na po siya; talagang masigasig siyang gumagawa ng kanyang mga assignment dahil alam niya na pag gumawa siya, magiging maganda ang resulta. Naging masigla po siya.” (Parent 6)

“She has developed initiative. She has been working on things now, working really diligently on her assignments because she knows that if she works for it, there will be a good result. She has become lively/active.” (Parent 6)

During the second visit, the parents were also asked what actions they have done to assist their children to perform better in school and to behave more appropriately. The following were examples of their responses during the interview:

“Lagi ko po siyang binibigyan ng appreciation. Sabi ko dadagdagan ko ang kanyang baon.” (Parent 6)

“I always give her (tokens of) appreciation. I told her I would increase her baon.” (Parent 6)

“Mabuti. Natutuwa po ako dahil nagkaroon po ng remedial class, dahil kung wala po iyan baka po yung anak ko ay first grading ay wala na kaming pag-asang papasa siya.” (Parent 15)

“Good. I’m glad that there is a remedial class, because without this my son’s passing the first grading might be hopeless.” (Parent 15)

The second visit done to the parents of the 20 students appear to have shown more positive feedback information from the parents. It was apparent that the students became more interested in attending the remedial classes if this topic

was brought up during the home visit of the teacher.

Table 3 shows the themes and their definition on the data gathered during the third visit or the second follow-up interview conducted by the lead researcher. There were 45 responses related to further improvement manifested in behavior and study habits of the children after the first and second home visitations and two months attendance to the remedial classes. It is evident in Table 3 that progress is significant after two months of the intervention. This progress is reflected by the following actual responses from the parents:

“She rests, then she will do her assignment and it’s afterwards that she does the household chores. She’s developed initiative, not anymore getting told what to do.” (Parent 6)

“He studies diligently before bedtime, flipping through notebook. I don’t know if he memorizes (lessons).” (Parent 10)

During the third visit, the parents were also asked what actions in particular they have done to the improvement of the children at home and in school.

Ayun po, sinasabi ko lang sa kanya na ituloy niya lang yan para at least maging aktib siya sa school. Kasi napansin ko nakabuo na siya ng 1 week, dati hindi. Nakakatuwa po yun. Opo. Last week nakabuo po ng 1 week, Ma’am. Opo, sa totoo, natutuwa ako kasi siya pa yung nanggigising sa akin tuwing umaga.” (Parent 5)

“I tell him to continue with it so at least he is active at school. I noticed that he has completed one week (without being absent), unlike before. That makes me happy. Yes, he has completed one week,

Ma'am. Yes, I'm happy because he even wakes me up in the morning (for school)." (Parent 5)

Naglaan ako ng oras para bigyan siya ng study time, nag cooperate naman ang anak ko." (P,9)

"I spare my time to give him study time, my son is cooperating." (Parent 9)

Table 3. Generated themes and theme definition on the data gathered during the third interview

Generated Themes	Theme Definition	Frequency
Further Improvement in behavior and study habits of the child	These are observed improvements manifested by the child after the first and second home visitation and two months attendance to the remedial classes.	45
Specific actions by the parents to foster improvement on the child	This theme describes how the parents get involved in the studies of the children to improve their performance in school and in behavior	25

Effectiveness of the Conduct of the Combined Interventions in Improving Performance of the "Students at Risk" in Science Grade 6

Table 4 shows that the mean increased by 12.75 when the results of the pre-test and post-test were compared. This increase illustrates the marked improvement in the test performance of the students after the conduct of remedial classes as supplemented by home visits.

Table 4. Mean scores and t-test results on the Pre-test and Post Test

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>t- value</i>	<i>Level of Significance</i>
Pre-test	15.65	4.158		
Post-test	28.40	6.202	7.152	.05*

*significant at .05

To test if the difference in the means is significant, the t-test for dependent means was computed. Table 4 reflects the t value of 7.152 which is significant at .05 level. This implies that the conduct of remedial classes combined with home visitation can foster improvement in the students' school performance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

After the series of home visitations as conducted in the study, it is worthy to note that this simple act can get the attention of the parents thus, strengthening the connections between the parents and the teacher. The motivation given by the teacher simultaneous with the support given by the parents can make the students even more successful in their task of acquiring the expected knowledge, skills and attitude in school. On the other hand, the initiated conversation between parents and the teacher has opened the two-way communication line which also boosts the morale of the parents, making them feel valued and important in the education of their children.

The implementation of remedial classes even just for one hour per week for one subject matter proved the importance of '*walking an extra mile*' among teachers. Such effort would make a difference in the lives of the pupils especially those who are considered "at risk" or who are low performing.

The combined interventions as implemented in this action research should be made part of the school practices in the basic education sector. The school administrators must provide ample support to the teachers so that they would be more encouraged to have these practices continuously implemented. Replication of the study in other grade levels with “students at risk” is further recommended.

Personal Statement

Working on this action research reinforced my belief that children could, and do considerably learn, not only from teachers in school, but also from their respective parents, as well as the other people in the home and community. As a teacher, and most importantly, as a classroom adviser, I plan to promote to other educators, and maximize in my own class, the potential of the home/ family and community in improving the performance of pupils, especially those who have difficulty getting good grades in school through organized, constant correspondence and follow through (Ninia F. Brito, Lead Researcher)

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