

## Abstract

When preparing preservice teachers, education programs often seek to be sure that their teacher candidates know their specific content or subject area, and that their candidates understand the professional guidelines of being an educator. Unfortunately, most programs lack the attention needed when it comes to training teachers to work with parents and building a powerful learning community.

One of the main components of the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) stresses how important parent and family involvement are to students. Educators often stray away from parents, and it is not always intentionally. In most cases, the examples that they have observed prior to becoming an educator have only addressed parents if there is a need to communicate about behavior or a student having academic difficulties. On the other hand, parents often come from a place of wanting to help and be involved, but they don't know how they can contribute. Parents usually have their own beliefs and unique opinions about the school experience based off what happened with them as a student, and it shapes their views as a parent. There is an urgent need to bridge the gap between teachers and parents, and the necessary role that they play together in student success. The mending of this gap begins with the training of educators before they ever set foot in a classroom as a professional.

This session will be an interactive workshop that shares a report of research in progress and will present a proposed course (P.E.E.P.S.) for teacher education programs in higher education to address the lack of training for teachers with parent and community involvement. The participants in the workshop will delve into the content of the course, and provide feedback based on their educational setting and discuss the needs that they have within their own experiences with pre-service and current practicing teachers.

The goal in sharing the *Parent Engagement Empowerment Participation Seminar* (P.E.E.P.S) course is to provide teacher education programs with a missing piece that ultimately effects the school climate. Participants in this session will learn to communicate to preservice teachers effective uses of technology and traditional approaches to reach parents. They will learn to teach future educators how to equip and empower parents and community stakeholders in any setting, as well as gain new perspectives on the needs of their preservice teachers in making parents a vital role within classrooms. If preservice teachers are given the tools and resources (such as communication skills, cultural training, community/team building, seeking sponsorships/partnerships, etc.) that they need, then it will improve the quality of teacher education programs and produce more effective, efficient, and active learning environments.