

Experiences of Low-Income Families from a Parents as Teachers Program as their Children

Transition to Kindergarten: A phenomenological study

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Abstract

This phenomenological study examined the nature of parents' experiences while their children transitioned to kindergarten. Literature has shown that schools struggle with how to effectively create relationships with parents. Participants, 20 families, were low-income parents in the Parents as Teachers program in a medium-sized Midwestern community. Parents were interviewed four times, the first time before school began and the last time after parent-teacher conferences in the fall semester. Data was analyzed using Hycner's phenomenological guidelines and the study found that parents progressed through three phases. Parents began in The Emotional Phase as they questioned what this experience would bring for their child and their family. Parents progressed into The Adjustment Phase as families adjusted to new schedules and coping with their children's exhaustion. This was followed by a time of good feeling, The Honeymoon Phase. The implications are that the Emotional Phase is when parents might be the most open to new information about their children's education and how to support it. The Adjustment Phase is a time when educators should give families time to adjust to new routines and to limit additional expectations and homework. It might also be prudent to decrease the length of the school day to allow children to gradually adjust to the schedule. The Honeymoon Phase is the time to encourage parental involvement. Future research with varying populations would increase educators' understandings about different families' experiences as children transition to kindergarten.