

Reading between the lines: exploring the assumptions and implications of parental involvement.

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Parental involvement in the United States has been portrayed as the newly discovered way of improving school effectiveness and academic performance. However the cultural assumptions behind ubiquitous calls for parental involvement have been largely unexplored. Apart from the fact that the catch phrase “parental involvement” has been poorly defined in the literature, it is often described as an aspired ideal whose demands on the parents and the implications on the nature of home-school relations have been un-scrutinized. This paper seeks to explore and problematize the assumptions behind the discourse and practice of “parental involvement” or “home-school partnership” which often tend to presuppose and accommodate a middle-class audience who has the resources to “participate” (De Carvalho, 2001). As school takes over the home sphere and brushes aside home-based cultural knowledge, minority and immigrant families run the risk of becoming marginalized while being held “responsible” for becoming “involved” (ibid.).