Parental Involvement in Education

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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

by

Linda Louise Fletke

MASTER THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of the School of Education in partial
fulfillment of the Masters of Education

Grand Valley State University

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I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude:

To my husband, Owen, for his unending love and support throughout all of my studies.

To my children, Lance and Louise, for understanding when I had to study instead of being able to play with them.

To my family and friends for their encouragement and guidance.

To all my classmates, colleagues, and friends who helped conduct research for this document.

To Shelly Watkins, for her computer expertise and friendship.

---

I dreamed I stood in a studio and watched two sculptors there;
The clay they used was a young child’s mind and they fashioned it with care.

One was a teacher, the tools he used were books and music and art;
One was a parent with a guiding hand and a gentle loving heart.

Day after day, the teacher toiled with a touch that was deft and sure;
While the parent labored by his side and polished and smoothed it o’er.

And when at last their task was done, they were proud of what they had wrought;
For the things they molded into the child could neither be sold nor bought.

And each agreed he would have failed if he had worked alone;
For behind the parent stood the school, and behind the teacher, the home.

- Author Unknown,

ABSTRACT

Research has shown that parental involvement is essential to a child’s educational success. This thesis document addresses the important role that parents play in their child’s educational experience.

This paper includes a thorough review of the existing literature regarding parental involvement in education as well as original research conducted by the author. Three questionnaires - one for parents, one for teachers, and one for students - were created and then an average of 100 parents, teachers, and students responded to each respective survey. All of the data were then analyzed and recommendations were made.

There are numerous strategies for teachers and schools to use to encourage parental involvement and there are also strategies that parents can use at home to become more involved in their child’s education.
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CHAPTER ONE: THESIS PROPOSAL - PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

Problem Statement

It is a beautiful Fall Saturday morning, and I am one of hundreds of parents carting my child to their soccer game. This is the sixth soccer season for my second-grader -- that’s a little over 100 practices or games that I or my husband have attended. We have learned that it takes tremendous parental involvement to run a successful soccer program. In fact, the latest AYSO (American Youth Soccer Organization) newsletter reports that the Kentwood area has 1,130 children playing on 89 teams this season. Think of all those parents who make sure their children get to practices and games every week. Some of these same parents volunteer to coach the teams, referee the games, staff the administrative positions for AYSO, and provide the all important snack after practices and games. Without parental involvement there definitely would not be an AYSO soccer program.

Throughout the month of September, both The Grand Rapids Press and the Kentwood Advance have published stories regarding parental involvement. An article in the September 4, 1997 issue of The Grand Rapids Press entitled Playground donations delivered, stated that Hastings area parents, through their two years of fundraising efforts, delivered nearly $100,000 in gifts for new playground equipment and then over 100 volunteers helped construct the new equipment.

The September 23, 1997, Kentwood Advance ran an article about the 11th annual Teen Institute held at East Kentwood High School. Over 600 students participated in this day-long event. In addition, “more than 100 volunteers, including students’ parents and employees throughout the school district, pitched in to help the teens” (p. 2).
As a parent and an educator it is encouraging to see such an enormous amount of parental involvement taking place. However, I wonder if there is that same parental enthusiasm when it comes to their child's schooling. Obviously, a parent who has chosen to home school has made the commitment to be involved in their child's education. But what about the majority of parents who have chosen a school and teachers to be the primary educators of their children. Are these parents still playing a vital role in their child's education? Do they realize how important their involvement is to their child's success?

As an experienced educator and parent of an elementary school child, I have observed that parental involvement is typically extremely heavy in the elementary years, but by the time a child is in high school, parental involvement is practically non-existent. I want to know why this is so and what can be done about this shift in parental involvement. Are these same parents who volunteer to build playgrounds, work at a Teen Institute, and coach soccer, the same parents who volunteer in their child's classroom or school, help their child with their studies, and participate in their child's school related activities.

Importance and Rationale

But what exactly is parental involvement in education? I would like to use a sports analogy to try to explain this concept. When we think of a successful sports team, the coach is not the only person who comes to mind. The coach needs assistants, managers, trainers, administrators, fund-raisers, cheerleaders, spectators, and most importantly talented athletes in order to have a highly ranked sports program. If we think of your child's teacher as the coach and your child as the athlete, guess which positions belong to parents -- all the rest! A parent is their child's number one fan, loudest cheerleader, personal manager, physical and emotional trainer, and educational assistant. There are so many people who help a coach fulfill their job, and yet we tend to let classroom teachers
perform their jobs alone. Wouldn’t it be more beneficial if we treated teachers more like coaches and we, as parents, filled those necessary positions so our child could have a successful educational experience.

American educator James Coleman, in his famous research called *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (1966), determined “that family background had more impact than did school experience on many objectives that schools were trying to achieve” (Powell, 1994, p. 7).

In addition, in a recent article called *Parents + Schools = Success*, Joan Dykstra, president of the National Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) said, “More than three decades of research has confirmed that children with caring, concerned and involved parents feel better about themselves and are more successful at everything they do than children who lack that kind of adult participation” (*Taking Care*, p. 6).

The first question that I am asking parents in my parental involvement questionnaire is: *I believe parental involvement is essential for my child’s educational success.* Ninety percent of the parents I surveyed strongly agreed with this statement and ten percent answered that they somewhat agreed. Personally, I strongly agree. I know that the more I am involved with my children’s schooling the better they will do. Now, even though I agree that parental involvement is essential, sometimes it is a difficult task to accomplish. Herein lies the problem. We all have so many commitments and responsibilities and there are only so many hours in each day “that it might be tempting to just let the school deal with education. However, a child’s success depends on a cooperative partnership between parent and school” (*Taking Care*, p. 6). I believe that most parents know how important parental involvement is, they just do not know how to incorporate this additional time commitment into their hectic schedules. Through this study I plan to help these busy parents find a way to become involved and remain involved in their child’s education.
Background of Parental Involvement in School Systems

The American educational system has undergone many changes since its inception shortly after the American Revolution. Formal education began when leaders such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Rush believed that the "expansion of educational opportunity was necessary to guarantee that newly won freedoms would not be lost through a passive or ignorant citizenry"(Powell, 1994, p. 1). Unfortunately, Jefferson and Rush’s ideal educational system was never implemented and it wasn’t until early in the 19th century when educational reformers like Horace Mann and Henry Barnard achieved the goal of a universal, free public education for all. By 1918 all states had passed compulsory school attendance laws.

However, not everyone was content with the public education system. The greatest opposition came from American Roman Catholics, "who believed that the moral values taught in public schools were biased toward Protestant beliefs"(Powell, 1994, p. 1). This position was strengthened in the 1925 Supreme Court decision of Pierce v. Society of Sisters which declared that states could not mandate students to attend public schools. In President Ronald Reagan’s 1980 election one of his campaign promises was to "strengthen private schools as an alternative to public education"(Powell, 1994, p. 7). Here in West Michigan, 18,495 Kent County students were enrolled in non-public schools during the 1996-1997 school year. Enrollment figures this year are 9,828 students in the Grand Rapids Diocese Catholic Schools, and 3,192 attend the Grand Rapids Christian Schools.

The state of Michigan has taken school choice one step further and created Charter schools. These are publicly funded, tuition free, schools which are operated more like private academies instead of public schools. There are 105 charter schools in Michigan, enrolling around 20,000 students. In West Michigan, we have 21 Charter schools with approximately 4,000 students.
As you can see there are basically four main venues for education in West Michigan: the public schools, the private schools (which are predominately religious), the Charter schools, and home schooling. I would like to examine the role of parental involvement in each of these school settings:

- **Home School** - for obvious reasons this type of schooling requires the most amount of parental involvement. These parents have dedicated themselves to educating their children in a way that they feel is most comfortable and beneficial. Typically these parents are a part of a larger network of other home schooling parents. Through these networks they have access to resources and support for their endeavor.

- **Charter School** - the brochure that Excel Charter Academy gives to prospective families states, “In close partnership, parents and teachers provide students with an environment to seek their own personal excellence and to reach their highest potential.” Excel also has parents sign a contract to ensure parental involvement. Two of the pledges on this contract are “I agree to take an active role in my child’s life at Excel and I agree to support my child’s education by volunteering.” Cross Creek Charter Academy, a brand new school in Kentwood, published this statement in their parent guidebook, “A cornerstone of our program is the active involvement of parents in the education program.” The section goes on to explain what roles parents are expected to take. I would say that the level of commitment on the part of parents is just one step below home schooling.

- **Private School** - the largest commitment that private school parents make is financial. For example, according to the Superintendent of Grand Rapids Diocesan Schools, Jim O’Donnell, the average tuition for elementary school students is $1,800 and that increases to $3,330 for high school students. Most private schools expect a high level of parental involvement and some even offer tuition reduction if parents “work” at the school (secretarial, custodial, tutorial). Parents tend to have a stronger voice in
curriculum matters, have more responsibilities in the daily operations of the school, and keep in closer contact with the faculty and staff. Depending upon the school, the level of parental involvement could be as intense as Charter schools.

- **Public School** - this is where the level of parental involvement can run the gamut -- from extremely high to practically non-existent and that could be within the same school district. A friend of mine had her children in a Grand Rapids Public elementary school and she said she used to be the only parent to show up for meetings or volunteer to help. She has since switched her children to a Charter Academy. Conversely, the Kentwood elementary school where my son attends always has a plethora of parental volunteers. For example, there are 15 different people each week who help out in the lunchroom and I have 21 parents who volunteered to help on my committee. In fact, last year we logged 1,324 volunteer hours. We also had ninety-eight percent of our parents attend parent-teacher conferences. These statistics are all very encouraging and yet I know that more can be done to foster parental involvement in our schools.

**Statement of Purpose**

As I mentioned earlier, my experience has shown that parental involvement is typically very heavy at the elementary years and then almost non-existent in the high school years. The purpose of this study is to find out why this shift in parental involvement is occurring and then what can be done to combat this situation.

Why is there a decline?

I decided that the most useful way to gather information was through a questionnaire. I created three separate ones -- one for parents, one for teachers, and one for students --
that ask questions pertaining to parental involvement in education (See Appendix A, B, and C for complete documents).

After consultations with Shelly Watkins, an independent marketing researcher who gave me advice on the format, and Jerry Johnson, a professor in the school of Social Work at GVSU who gave me advice on politically correct wording, the questionnaires went through four revisions and one field testing session before the final product met its public. I did not have the resources (time and money) to do scientific random sampling for this study, however, I did try to include a wide variety of participants. I have respondents from suburban and city public schools, Catholic and Christian schools, and Charter schools. I also tried to get a mix of gender, race, and socio-economic backgrounds.

My goal is to have 100 valid respondents for each of the three questionnaires. This amount was not difficult to attain for the parents and students, but I did have a difficult time finding 100 teachers who were not all from similar school districts. I relied on the kindness of my former GVSU teacher classmates and former colleagues from the Lansing Public Schools to help me recruit participants. Once I have collected all of my surveys, I can begin tabulating the results. These results, in addition to the conclusions I will draw about them, will be fully reported in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of this study. First of all I would like to offer my hypothesis for the responses on the three different surveys.

What are my hypothesis?

Parents

I believe that most parents will strongly agree that parental involvement is essential for their child’s educational success. Parents will show their support for their children by attending parent-teacher conferences and extra-curricular activities, helping with
homework or finding a tutor if necessary. I do not believe that the majority of parents will have regular contact with their child’s teacher or volunteer in their child’s classroom and/or school. Some of the reasons that will hinder parental involvement will be that the parent’s work schedule conflicts with the school hours, the parents have a number of children at different grade levels or still at home and they cannot find enough time for each child, or the parent feels that they are not really wanted at school based on their child’s and/or teacher’s responses.

Teachers

I believe that teachers at all grade levels feel that it is important for parents to be involved in their child’s education. All teachers will encourage parents to contact them if there is a question, concern, or comment regarding their child. Elementary school teachers will encourage parents to volunteer in their classroom and will keep parents informed about their child’s progress and the happenings in the classroom. Middle and high school teachers will have less contact with parents (unless, of course, there are serious problems with the child) than elementary teachers. Elementary teachers typically have twenty minutes of conference time with each parent (each semester) and therefore can be quite thorough in their discussions. Parent-teacher conferences are not as effective in the upper grades because there is insufficient time to conduct these meetings.

Students

I believe that most students will want their parents to be involved in their education. Most students will want their parents to attend parent-teacher conferences, open houses, and extra-curricular activities. Elementary students will want their parents to occasionally visit and/or volunteer at their school, but most middle and high school students will be
mortified if their parents show up at school. Elementary students will want their parents to know their teachers and maintain regular contact with them, middle and high school students will probably think that regular contact with teachers is not necessary.

What can be done?

In addition to the questionnaires, I will be researching various parental involvement topics to help determine the most effective strategies to promote parental involvement in education. The strategies that I will be examining are as follows:

- Parent-Teacher Partnerships
- Home and School Communication
- Parent-Teacher Conference
- Homework and Remediation

Limitations of Study

I believe that the most significant limitation that I am facing is that I cannot force parental involvement. I will be able to provide options for parents to become involved and remain involved in their child’s education, but I cannot make them become involved if they do not want to. Actually parental involvement takes all three parties - parents, teacher, and students - to cooperate and work together.

Even though this study will not be clinically scientific, I will try to be as accurate as possible in my reporting. I do not have extensive knowledge about the backgrounds of my respondents, so I am not sure if my findings will be applicable in a variety of settings.

Another limitation that I will face is that I cannot possibly read all the research that has been written regarding parental involvement in education. In addition, I will be limited by
time and space with the number of effective strategies that I will be able to incorporate into this study.

**Final Product**

I plan on reporting the results of the questionnaires in an appendix at the end of the study (See Appendix A, B, and C for complete documents). I will take some of these findings and develop strategies to help solve the problems. I believe the outcome of my research would be a guide book that any school (K-12) could use to foster parental involvement. When I return to teaching, I plan to have the school district where I am employed publish this guide book.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

As I mentioned earlier, the purpose of this study is to find out why parental involvement tends to diminish by the high school years and determine what can be done about this situation. When I began the research process for the literature review, I keyed in “Parental Involvement in Education” into the database and found literally hundreds of sources. I probably read close to two hundred abstracts before I settled on what I thought was the most valuable and diversified twenty-five resources. The research and literature that I chose to review falls into one of the following categories: importance of parental involvement in education, strategies for improving parental involvement, and why do parents become involved in the first place.

In addition to books and newspaper articles, I have numerous journal articles, professional magazine articles, papers which were presented at conferences, educational textbooks, and National and State government publications.

The Importance of Parental Involvement

*The most influential teachers in a student’s life aren’t the ones at the head of the class.*

Bill Honig (1985)

*Last Chance for our Children*

Bill Honig’s book, *Last Chance For Our Children: How You Can Help Save Our School* (1985), examines how the state of education must change and that there are many components in the reform process. In chapter nine, *How Parents Can Help*, he stresses the importance of parental involvement in the pursuit of academic excellence. “The evidence all points in the same direction: the most important way in which parents can contribute to the education of their children is by what they do at home” (p. 163). Honig
cites research conducted by Herbert Walberg and others that says a wholesome, traditional family life is a more important factor than money or social class in determining a child's school success.

A healthy family life includes parents who read to their children (especially if they are young), supervise homework sessions, communicate with their children about school and everyday events, take their children to interesting places (like museums and zoos), establish a routine bedtime, and limit the number of hours their children watch television.

Honig says that parents need to be there for their children. “Together, we have a strong message to impart: that the adult world stands for something coherent and admirable. Only by working together, only through the care and commitment of both parents and teachers, is that message going to get through” (p. 178).

Parental Involvement at the National Level

The U.S. Department of Education, under the leadership of Secretary Richard Riley, agrees with Honig's work and created a document, Strong Families, Strong Schools: Building Community Partnerships for Learning (1994), that looks at how the American family can improve education, thus fulfilling the eighth educational goal established in Goals 2000. In 1989, the President and all the state governors met and developed the original National Educational Goals, calling them Goals 2000. Then the U.S. Congress added two additional goals. The eighth one reads: “Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children” (inside front cover).

The authors of this document cite over thirty years of research that shows that family involvement is critical to a child's academic success. A few of the studies they review are as follows:
• What families do to help their children learn is more important to their academic success than how well-off the family is (Walberg, 1984).

• A national study of eighth-grade students and their parents shows that parental involvement in students' academic lives is indeed a powerful influence on students' achievement across all academic areas (Keith & Keith, 1993).

• Three factors over which parents exercise authority - student absenteeism, variety of reading materials in the home, and excessive television watching - explain nearly 90 percent of the difference in eighth-grade mathematics test scores across 37 states and the District of Columbia on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). These controllable home factors account for almost all the difference in average student achievement across states (Barton & Coley, 1992).

This report also discusses some of the barriers to parental involvement such as:

**Time** - Both parents and teachers complain they do not have enough time to spend with their children. In fact the Families and Work Institute in 1994 said, “66 percent of employed parents with children under 18 say they do not have enough time for their children”(p. 3). Teachers would also like to make home visits or talk more with students' parents too and there is not enough time for everything.

**Uncertainty about what to do** - The National Commission on Children, 1991, stated that many parents today do not know how to help their children learn. With the rise of teenage pregnancy, there are many people who are not prepared to be parents. There are also parents who have had a bad experience with school themselves or they may feel intimidated by the school. “Yet many parents say they would be willing to spend more time on homework or other learning activities with their children if teachers gave them more guidance (Epstein 1987; Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms 1986)”(p. 3).
Cultural Barriers - In our diverse society, there may be parents who are experiencing a language barrier in the school. Teachers may have difficulty communicating with non-English speaking parents. “Even those family members who speak English but have little education often have difficulty in communicating with schools because their life experiences and perspectives are so different (Comer 1988; Moles 1993)”(p. 4).

Lack of a supportive environment - All parents need support from all sections of the community if they are going to be able to support their child’s education. Schools, religious and civic organizations, and employers need to form partnerships to foster parental involvement.

To support family involvement, the authors of this document offer some very easy steps that all families can do at home to improve the learning environment. Families can read together; use television wisely; establish a daily family routine; schedule daily homework times; monitor out-of-school activities; talk with children and teenagers; communicate positive behaviors, values, and character traits; express high expectations from children and offer praise and encouragement for achievement.

This report also offers five strategies that will help families make a difference in the schools:

- Ensure challenging coursework for middle and secondary school students.
- Keep in touch with the schools.
- Ask more from schools.
- Use community resources.
- Encourage employers to get involved.
Parental Involvement at the State Level

Continuing with the Goals 2000 theme, the State of Michigan created a booklet in 1990 called *School Effectiveness: Eight Variables That Make A Difference*. The eighth variable in this list is the importance of parental involvement. The State of Michigan offers very similar strategies for the promotion of parental involvement as the U.S. Department of Education. Some of their recommendations are that parents should set high expectations for their children and place a positive emphasis on schooling. Parents need to contact their child’s school through conferences, notes, and by volunteering. Parents can supplement their child’s education by providing at-home learning activities. These could include reading to their child, watching a television show and then discussing it afterwards, and supervising and/or assisting in homework assignments.

The Michigan board of Education also suggests some ways that schools might increase parental involvement. These are:

- establish special training workshops that will help parents develop skills needed to assist their child;
- establish a program to recruit and train volunteers to work with students and teachers; create a program, like Chicago’s Parents Plus program, “to bring poorly-educated, low-income parents into the school one day each week to learn how they can help at home with school work and to expand their homemaking and community-related skills” (p. 35).

Importance of Strong Families

William Bennett, former Secretary of Education, explains in his book, *Our Children & Our Country: Improving America’s Schools & Affirming The Common Culture* (1988), that nothing, government policies, federal programs, and billions of dollars, can replace the
benefits of the family when it comes to education. "The decline of the traditional American family constitutes perhaps the greatest long-term threat to our children's well-being" (p. 64). Bennett refers to research that states when you remove one parent from the home, the educational health of the child is likely to suffer.

"Children from single-parent homes are more likely to have lower grades, more likely to be discipline problems in the classroom, more likely to skip school, to be expelled, and to end up as dropouts" (p. 63). When Bennett wrote this book, one fifth of all American children lived in homes without fathers.

In fact, in a recent USA Today article, the National Center for Education Statistics stated, "Children are more likely to get mostly A's and less likely to repeat a grade or be expelled if fathers are highly involved in their school" (Section A,1). The article, "Kids do better in school when dad is involved," by Tamara Henny, defines involvement as "participation in school meetings, a teacher conference, a class meeting, or volunteering" (Section A,1).

The study, based on interviews with parents and guardians of 17,000 students in 1996 also found:

• in highly involved two-parent households, 51 percent of the students got mostly A’s.
• more single fathers are involved than fathers from two-parent families.
• 31 percent of children with highly involved fathers got mostly A’s even when the father is a non-custodial parent.

The message is clear, parents, especially fathers, make a difference in their child’s education.
Strategies for Parental Involvement

Active and informed parental involvement invariably improves the quality of education at the local level.

Lawrence J. Greene (1991)

1001 Ways to Improve Your Child's Schoolwork

What Parents Can Do

A number of parental involvement strategies are offered to parents in an article called Parents + Schools = Student Success (1997). This article stresses the importance of parental involvement at every stage of a child's educational experience - from finger-painting to filling out college applications. Being involved is an investment in their child's future. When a parent shows a positive attitude toward school, the child will usually have positive feelings too.

Even the busiest parents can stay involved with their child's education. Here are some simple guidelines that this article offers to parents:

- Help with homework. Homework can be the connection between you and your child's school day. You will have a chance to see what your child is learning and to find out about teacher expectations.
- Talk with your child. Ask specific questions like "What was your favorite part of the story?" instead of just asking "How was your day?" Keep the lines of communication open.
- Call the teacher. Plan a phone conference with your child's teacher just to find out how your child is doing and what you can do to help.
• Read the notices. Don’t just toss all those papers that come home from school - make it a priority to read them. They will help you find out what is happening in your child’s classroom and school. If there are not any notices coming home, find out why.

• Make the PTA (PTO, PTC) connection. Become a member of the parent teacher organization in your child’s school. This group will be able to provide numerous opportunities for you to become involved.

• Participate in your own way. Attend extra-curricular activities, send cookies for the bake sale, help with a project for the science fair. Any little bit of participation helps a great deal.

Dawn Snodgrass agrees that parents play a vital role in their child’s education. Her paper, The Parent Connection (1991), “addresses the role of parents as contributing members of their children’s educational teams”(p. 83). Snodgrass refers to Walberg’s and other’s research that says parental involvement is more important in determining a child’s school success than the level of a parents’ education, their occupations, or family socio-economic status.

Snodgrass points out that parental involvement is typically heavy in the elementary years; parents usually attend parent-teacher conferences, open houses, and PTA meetings. However, she says that as a child progresses through the school system, parental involvement tends to decline. “Educators report that parents begin to ‘neglect their responsibility to encourage and aid their children in academic success’ during the intermediate and secondary school grades (Bevevino 1988) (p. 85).”

Snodgrass suggests that the best way to stay involved in an older child’s education is through the monitoring of homework. When teachers, parents, and students work together to determine the usefulness of homework, the students will experience higher levels of achievement.
A study conducted by Donna Brian, *Parental Involvement in High Schools* (1994), found that parental involvement programs were just as desirable at the high school level as they were at the elementary level.

Brian used Epstein's typology of parent involvement (the typology is described later in this paper) to compare over 100 interview respondents regarding the appropriate level of parental involvement in high schools. The teens that she interviewed unanimously said that parents should be involved in their education.

Brian suggests that more parents need to be educated in the benefits of parental involvement; parental involvement programs need to offer a variety of ways that parents can participate; the schools needs should be considered when developing and implementing a parental involvement program; and parental involvement is a vital component of school improvement and reform efforts.

What Schools Can Do

*The evidence is so overwhelming about the benefits of parent involvement for students that for educators to not even attempt it is engaging in professional malpractice.*

Larry Decker (1997)

*NEA Today*

Thomas Lickona, in his book *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility* (1991), writes that "A child’s first job in school is to learn, and the most basic backup schools need from parents is support for that learning"(p. 412). He explains a number of ways that schools can enlist parental support.

- Parents need to be a part of the discipline process. Parent-teacher partnerships can establish discipline guidelines that both home and school can reinforce.
• Schools can send a letter to parents outlining the ways they can help their child at home (establishing good study habits and limiting television viewing).
• The schools can provide workshops for parents to help them learn how they can supplement their child's education.
• The school and parents network with each other. "When the school helps parents network in this way, it helps to rebuild the kind of cohesive communities that used to be the norm - where parents felt they had permission to let other parents know if their children were up to no good" (p. 413).

Parental involvement is a major component in the at-risk child's school success. Authors Judy Brown Lehr and Hazel Wiggins Harris, found in their booklet, At-Risk, Low-Achieving Students in the Classroom (1988), that the best way to reach the parents of at-risk students was through a home visit. During these visits the teachers speak positively about the child, explain classroom expectations, suggest ways that the parent could help their child at home, and invite the parents to visit and/or help in the classroom, or to come to a meeting.

A survey by Becker and Epstein (1982) of 3,698 teachers found that fewer than one quarter of those surveyed had made a home visit in the past year. "Getting parents involved as partners in the educational process is a valuable technique, but it is being used by very few educators" (p. 34).

Jonathon Kozol is a huge proponent of teachers making home visits. In his book On Being A Teacher: RRR + Values (1981), he writes that teachers need to seek support from parents, both from the school and the surrounding neighborhood; teachers and parents need to be allies. He believes these initial meetings should be informal and relaxed. Kozol thinks that the best way to establish these contacts is through drop-in visits to homes after school - maybe even staying for supper.
Home visits are also one of the five strategies offered in an NEA article regarding parental involvement. Karen Gutloff, the author of Make It Happen! Five Strategies For Reaching the Hard-to-Reach Parent (1997), mentions that first of all the hard-to-reach parent does not fall into any one race or class. These may be parents who do not have a telephone, who do not speak English, who are trying to raise their child alone, or they may be the professional parents who work such long hours that there is just not enough time for school involvement.

The strategies Gutloff recommends are:

- Meet parents on their turf. Make home visits, go to the nearby recreation center, or park. Give parents personal invitations to visit the school or attend a meeting.
- Make schools parent friendly. The school building needs to be non-threatening for parents. Posters and signs welcoming the parents to the school will help. Maybe the school could provide a parent resource room - a place for parents to gather for meetings, or to work on volunteer projects.
- Bridge the language gap. Make sure that all of your school families can communicate with the school. That may mean publishing newsletters in a variety of languages or hiring a translator to help with conferences and meetings.
- Involve parents in decision making. James Comer developed a parent-school partnership model in 1968 and now, some 30 years later, schools are finally realizing the important role that parents play in the life of the school. “The approach encourages schools to create governance management teams composed of parents, teachers, support staff, and mental health officials. Together, team members develop a comprehensive plan for the school that sets goals for academic and social standards” (p. 5).
- Help parents help their children. The NEA’s Warlene Gary said, “The number one thing we hear from parents is they want to know how to help their kids do homework
and become better learners” (p. 5). There are literally thousands of ways schools can help parents learn how to help their children.

In fact, Lawrence J. Greene wrote a book called 1001 Ways To Improve Your Child’s Schoolwork: An A to Z Guide To Common Problems and Practical Solutions (1991). Greene believes that most parents are welcome to become involved in the life of the school through organizations like the PTA, or through helping out in the lunchroom or playground, or even chaperoning a field trip. However, the welcome mat is usually withdrawn when parents want to become involved in areas such as determining educational objectives, academic priorities, and teachers’ qualifications. Greene argues that teachers and administrators need to realize that “when parents understand the issues, provide support at home, and have realistic expectations, their own jobs become easier” (p. 36).

Teachers and parents need to work together for the benefit of the child. Greene offers this advice for parents:

- by becoming involved in your child’s education, monitoring his progress, clearly communicating your concerns, asking penetrating questions, requesting penetrating answers, and acknowledging teachers and administrators for their accomplishments and contributions, you serve notice that your child is not the only one being held accountable for his performance. The educational establishment is also accountable (p. 36).

Parent-Teacher Partnerships

An excellent way to foster this shared sense of accountability is to create partnerships between the parents and schools. In William Kilpatrick’s book, Why Johnny Can’t Tell Right From Wrong: Moral Illiteracy and the Case for Character Education (1992), he
mentions parent and teacher partnerships. “Up until recent decades, schools were considered to be acting in loco parentis - in the place of the parent”(p. 255). The culture of the school and the culture of the home reinforced each other; both had similar goals and values. This type of cohesion can happen today if parents and schools are willing to work together in a partnership.

Lynn Stoddard’s book Redesigning Education: A guide for Developing Human Greatness (1992) also deals with the partnership topic. “Parents, teachers, and students working together in a full partnership and aiming for common goals can accomplish much more as a unified group than as individuals working alone”(p. 37).

Stoddard uses the phrase E.T. Partnerships, which stands for Equal and Together, to label these groups. Because teachers, parents, and students have all been operating in their separate realms for so long it will be difficult to have them all cooperate in planning education. However, the benefits of partnerships far outweigh the difficulties the group may face in the formation process.

Stoddard says that a partnership is not truly formed until all three parties determine what the goals of education should be and how they are going to accomplish these goals. An E.T. Partnership between teachers, parents, and students will only work if all three groups take responsibility for accomplishing the goals.

David Pratt continues the partnership theme in his textbook, Curriculum Planning: A Handbook for Professionals (1994). Pratt has a chapter in this book entitled “Twelve Principles of Effective Instruction” and the twelfth principle happens to be parental involvement. Pratt says that parents are a readily available and virtually untapped resource. “Parents have at least nominal supervision of their children for 87 percent of the child’s life up to the age of 18, as compared with the school’s 13 percent (Wallace & Walberg, 1991)” (p. 213). Pratt suggests that there are two main ways that schools can develop partnerships with parents.
The first thing schools can do is to teach parents how to help their children with learning at home. Some suggestions are reading and talking to their children, working with teachers on collaborative homework projects, incorporating learning into normal family routines such as grocery shopping, and providing a quiet, well-lit place for studying.

The second way schools can promote partnerships with parents is by recruiting them as volunteers to work in the school. Barry Vail, a school principal, presented a paper called *Preparing Parent Volunteers for Classroom Work* (1980) to the annual meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education. David Pratt used Vail’s outline in this chapter. The following is Vail’s outline (as presented in Pratt’s work) for procedures for developing a parent volunteer program in a school:

1. Determine the needs and expectations of teachers and parents; ask teachers the days, times, and areas in which they could use parent help.
2. Send out a request for parent volunteers with an application form, an explanation of the volunteer role, and an invitation to orientation sessions.
3. Conduct orientation sessions for volunteers and teachers. Make them relaxed and informal. Include a tour of school facilities that volunteers might want to use, such as storage and work areas. Have a senior district official come to transmit the support of the school board, and assure parents of the same liability insurance as all employees. In teacher sessions, discuss how to deal with breakdown in volunteer-teacher relationship.
4. Match parent volunteers and teachers and arrange meetings between them.
5. Help maintain the relationship by providing feedback, praise, and constructive criticism.
6. Appoint a program coordinator, such as the principal or her/his delegate; as the program develops, an experienced parent volunteer should assume this role.
7. Practice good public relations. If you ensure the program is meeting parents’ needs, they will recruit other parents.
8. Give recognition to volunteers - for example, a special tea prepared by students, and/or a certificate of appreciation.

9. Provide for further training for more specialized volunteer functions, such as work with the gifted, remedial, problem children, and early childhood programs.

10. Conduct a formal evaluation of the volunteer program at the end of each year.

(pp. 215-216)

Home and School Communication

Robin Grusko and Judy Kramer, in their book *Becoming a Teacher: A Practical and Political School Survival Guide* (1993), offer suggestions to beginning teachers on how to handle parent contacts. They ask the question, "How do you know when to contact a parent about their child?" Besides report cards and progress reports or other forms of written notification, teachers should contact a parent if they see something new or unusual in the student’s performance, or changes in their attitudes and behavior that interfere with their performance. When a teacher makes contact with a parent, they should use the following guidelines:

- Do not assume that the parent knows anything about your class.
- Be specific about what is expected of students in your class, and how the student has performed.
- Be understanding, not arrogant.
- Listen carefully to figure out what kind of parent you are dealing with - receptive, anxious, hostile, defensive.
- Complete all written forms, mid-term reports and conference reports, using specific and concrete examples.
Try to handle behavior problems on your own, however, "some teachers find that a surprise phone call in which parents are informed about poor grades combined with poor behavior can get the kid called onto the carpet with the result of improved performance" (p. 104).

Vernon and Louise Jones included a chapter called "Working with Parents" in their textbook, *Comprehensive Classroom Management: Creating Positive Learning Environments For All Students* (1995). This chapter is quite thorough and detailed. It discusses the importance of keeping parents informed about their child's activities at school. The authors offered a number of suggestions for contacting parents early in the school year.

The authors recommend that teachers send an introductory letter to all of their students' parents, introducing themselves and providing any pertinent information that the parents might need.

If the school offers a Back-to-School Night or an Open House, the teachers should assemble a folder for each family that contains:

1. A description of the curriculum for the grade level
2. An introductory letter about yourself that includes professional background and a philosophy of education
3. A class schedule
4. A handout describing the emotional and social characteristics of a child at the grade level
5. A list of special projects that may require some parental assistance
6. A statement of your classroom-management procedures
7. Book ideas for book reports
8. A parent resource form eliciting information about what parents can offer to the class (p. 136).
If there are parents who do not attend this initial meeting then a folder should be sent home.

The authors suggest that it is the teacher’s responsibility to contact parents on an ongoing basis. It is important to let a parent know about a problem when it first arises rather than waiting until report cards. Parents also enjoy receiving positive comments about their children! Jones and Jones provide a number of strategies for teachers to keep in contact with parents.

One method is to send "informational letters about upcoming areas of study, field trips, long-term projects their child will be asked to complete, or newsletters about class happenings" (p. 139).

Students could make personalized stationery and then the teachers can use this stationery to send positive comments home.

Phone calls are another method for contacting parents. "Teachers who call each child’s parent(s) at least once before scheduling the initial conference and at least once a term thereafter find that parent-teacher contacts are more relaxed and enjoyable" (p. 140).

A teacher can also attend extra-curricular activities that their students are participating in and possibly have contact with parents that way.

A final way to have parental contact is by asking parents to volunteer in your classroom. If a parent understands and is familiar with what goes on at school they are more likely to support the teacher.
Parent-Teacher Conferences

*Parent conferences can play a vital role in eliciting parents’ support for us and can help us work with students who are experiencing difficulties.*

Vernon and Louise Jones (1995)

*Comprehensive Classroom Management*

For most teachers, especially at the elementary school level, parent-teacher conferences are a required form of parent contact. The teachers must be available and ready to have a conference even if the parents choose not to attend. Jones and Jones suggest that there are actually three parties who need preparation for a conference - the students, the parents, and of course the teachers.

“Because the primary goal of periodic teacher-parent conferences is to clarify and communicate students’ accomplishments, it is logical that students should be involved in this process”(p. 141). The authors recommend that students complete a self-evaluation - sort of a report card on themselves. It is important for the teacher and student to conference about the self-evaluations prior to the parent conference so any problems or discrepancies can be discussed.

The first step in preparing the parents for a conference is by using the early parental contact strategies already mentioned. A positive parental relationship should already be established prior to the conference. The second step is to send parents a reminder notice of the conference time and possibly an agenda.

The teachers have the most responsibility in a conference. They must prepare the students, parents, and themselves. Teachers should have clearly organized important information regarding each child to show the parents. This information is usually placed in a portfolio. “Well-organized data are a necessary component of any parent conference
and are especially important when a conference focuses on dealing with inappropriate student behavior or poor student achievement" (p. 145).

Dr. Haim Ginott, in his book *Teacher and Child: A Book for Parents and Teachers* (1972), makes some recommendations about parent-teacher conferences. He says that the optimal setting for a conference is "a quiet corner, protection from interruptions, and a teacher who listens" (p. 278). Teachers should not talk about themselves, they should never assume the parent’s role (even when asked “What would you do?”), and they should never preach to parents. They should avoid giving direct advice even when asked to do so. An experienced teacher that Ginott had interviewed said, “My advice to parents is always tentative. I never urge or cajole. I suggest and ask for their reactions. I try to put into words their expectations and doubts” (p. 280).

We have looked at parent-teacher conferences from a teacher’s perspective now let’s examine what Karyn Feiden has to say about parent-teacher conferences from the parent’s perspective. Feiden wrote *Raising Responsible Kids: Preschool Through Teen Years* (1991), which includes two sections that deal directly with parental involvement in education. These sections are called “Parent-Teacher Conferences” and “The Working Parents’ Dilemma.”

In the first section, Feiden writes that some parents may be apprehensive about meeting with their child’s teacher, but these parents should trust that the teacher really has the best interest of the child in mind and these meetings should be beneficial.

In order for parents to get the most out of conferences with the teacher, they should think ahead about the topics for discussion. Feiden suggests that parents prepare a list of questions they would like to ask the teacher and to be careful not to overreact to negative comments made about their child. “Parents should try to remember that the teacher sees their child in a very different environment. His professional insights are worthy of consideration and respect and are most often helpful” (p. 147).
Feiden also recommends that parents have informal contact with the teacher before the conferences - this could be at an open house or simply by stopping by the classroom for a brief visit.

Whether the child is encouraged to attend the conference or not, the parents should always discuss the conference with the child afterward. Parents need to use concrete examples in their descriptions, "Mrs. Smith says you are having problems with subject-verb agreement. How can I help you with this?"

Feiden encourages parents to build a strong relationship with the teacher and also support the school in a variety of ways such as the PTA meetings, school board meetings, chaperoning field trips, networking with other parents in the school, and volunteering in the school. "Children generally get the best possible education and learn the most about being a good student and a good citizen in school systems where parental input is actively encouraged and respected" (p. 148).

However, what happens when the parents' work schedule prevents them from attending parent-teacher conferences, open houses, or volunteering during the school day. Can these parents still be involved in their child's schooling? Most definitely! Parents can try to meet the teachers on their free time - possibly before school begins in the morning. Parents could also use written notes to correspond with teachers - these take very little time to write and they do not require the coordination of schedules. Finally, one of the best ways to keep in contact with their child's school is through homework.
How Parents Can Help With Homework

*There is always a role for parents regarding homework, no matter what grade the student is in.*

Joan Buckley (1997)

*American Federation of Teachers*

Joanne Barbara Koch and Linda Nancy Freeman, M.D., wrote a book called *Good Parents for Hard Times: Raising Responsible Kids in the Age of Drug Use and Early Sexual Activity* (1992). The authors suggest that as parents we are our child's ultimate role model. "Children look first to parents to be the mirror and the lamp - to mirror their concerns and shed light on what they should do" (p. 29). The authors suggest that if we want our children to become responsible and independent we need to remain highly involved in their life. It is high levels of involvement, not permissiveness or overprotectiveness, that lead to independence.

The authors use the following example to illustrate this point. At the end of a long day the parent comes home from work and asks the child if she has done her homework. The child says no and is told to go to her room to complete the schoolwork. Two hours later the homework is still not completed and the parent is angry. It would have been better for the parent to have taken an active role in supervising the homework session. The parent should not do the homework for the child, but he should monitor it and offer words of encouragement.

Dr. Haim Ginott (1972) offers the following suggestions for parental involvement with homework. He says that the best help is indirect - a well-lit, quiet place to study, no interruptions by errands, conversation, or criticism. Parents should remain in the background, they can give comfort and support rather than active assistance. The parents
may show the child “the road but expect the child to reach his destination on his own” (p. 236).

Lee Canter and Lee Hausner have written a how-to-help your child with homework book for parents called *Homework Without Tears: A Parent’s Guide For Motivating Children To Do Homework And To Succeed In School* (1987). The authors write that research has shown that homework is a powerful tool for ensuring a child’s success in school. They believe the following things about homework:

1. Homework is a parents daily opportunity to have a positive impact on their child’s education and future.
2. Homework effects achievement in school.
3. Homework teaches your child responsibility.
4. Homework is the key link between home and school.

The authors say that “the best schools are ones that have the support of the families they serve. When you support homework, you strengthen the school’s programs and their effectiveness” (p. 7).

Marguerite C. Radencich and Jeanne Shay Schumm, in their book *How to Help Your Child With Homework* (1988), embellish the “why do homework list” that Canter and Hausner suggest with the following reasons:

- Homework encourages children to practice skills they haven’t yet fully learned.
- Homework gives children opportunities to review skills they might otherwise forget.
- Homework enriches and broadens a child’s knowledge.
- Homework allows for tasks which are too time-consuming to be finished during school hours.

The authors go on to provide numerous strategies for parents to create optimal homework conditions in the home and suggest ways to actually help with the homework
process. I found the “Twenty Tips for Homework Helpers”, found on pages 13-16 to be very helpful. The tips are as follows:

1. Maintain two-way communication with your child.
2. Don’t give your child a choice unless you mean it.
3. Set goals with, not for, your child. Then focus one at a time.
4. Expect progress.
5. Make your child aware of his or her improvement. Reward achievement.
6. Praise generously, yet honestly.
7. Direct praise to the task at hand.
8. Try not to show disappointment if your child doesn’t do as well as you’d like.
10. Use timers and competition judiciously.
11. Be prepared to teach.
12. Use concrete materials rather than abstract ones, especially (but not exclusively) when working with a young child.
13. Help your child build associations between what he or she already knows and what is being learned.
15. Provide variety. Take breaks.
16. Encourage creativity.
17. Encourage independence.
18. Take every opportunity to build your child’s self-esteem.
19. Check with the teacher BEFORE correcting your child’s homework.
20. Show a positive attitude toward school.

Sue Goldstein and Frances Campbell, in their article Parents: A Ready Resource (1991), provide suggestions on how the teacher can specifically help the parents supervise
homework. These authors created what they refer to as the eight tenents of parental involvement for a mathematics program but these tenents could be adapted and transferable to any subject area. The authors wanted to get parents more involved with their programs so they devised the following guidelines:

1. Set up a simple system and introduce it to each parent individually.
2. Be certain that the parents are asked to work with a child at the child’s ability level.
3. Clarify how the particular skills are sequenced.
4. Give parents clear, individual instruction.
5. Supply all the materials the parents will need.
6. Furnish activities that are entertaining and take only a short time to complete.
7. Ask for feedback and give praise.
8. Use parental involvement judiciously. “Few parents could work enthusiastically with their children on schoolwork every night for a sustained period” (p. 27).

Why Do Parents Become Involved

Kathleen V. Hoover-Dempsey and Howard M. Sandler, in their report, Parental Involvement in Children’s Education: Why Does It Make a Difference? (1995), make the following opening statement: “The literature on parental involvement in child and adolescent education conveys the clear assumption that parents’ involvement benefits children’s learning (e.g., Chavkin, 1993; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Epstein, 1989, 1994; Hess & Holloway, 1984; Hobbs, Dokecki, Hoover-Dempsey, Moroney, Shayne, & Weeks, 1984; U.S. Department of Education, 1994)”(p. 310). With this knowledge in mind, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler proceed to answer the questions: Why do parents become involved in their children’s education? and How does parental involvement have a positive effect on children’s educational outcomes?
Reasons for Parental Involvement

The authors believe that there are a number of reasons why parents choose to become involved in their child’s education:

- parents believe that personal involvement in their child’s education is a component of their parental roles.
- parents have a sense of “personal efficacy for helping their children succeed in school” (p. 313).
- parents perceive opportunities, invitations, or demands from their children or their children’s school to become involved.

Parents who do become involved select various levels of involvement. For example, they might help with homework, make phone calls to teachers, or volunteer at school.

The most widely recognized typology of parental involvement was developed by Epstein (1992, 1994) which establishes six levels of parental involvement in school related activities. These are:

- efforts to assist parents with child-rearing skills (I), communicating with families (II), providing school volunteer opportunities (III), involving parents in home-based learning (IV), involving parents in school decision making (V), and involving parents in school-community collaborations (VI) (p. 317).

Demands of the work place, infant or elder care, and other child’s activities could also be factors in determining how much a parent becomes involved.
Positive Parental Influence

The next section of this study focused on the variables that influence how parental involvement will have a positive influence on children's educational outcomes. The three areas that the authors identify for parental influence are modeling, reinforcement, and direct instruction.

When a parent chooses to become involved in their child's school-related activities, he is modeling that these activities are important and worthy of adult time and interest. Children usually hold their parents in high regard and will try to emulate their behaviors. Modeling theory predicts that children will emulate selected behaviors of adults held in such regard. Thus when parents spend time with or for their children in relation to school activities, children have opportunities and encouragement to model parents' school-focused attitudes and behaviors (p. 320).

When parents are involved in their children's schooling, they tend to give praise, attention, and rewards for specific positive school outcomes. Reinforcement theory says that as long as these reinforcements do not conflict with intrinsic motivation, are highly valued by the child, and are applied to areas that are of major school importance, then the child "will engage in more rewarded behaviors and will thus be more likely to do well in school" (p. 320).

The authors explain that the third influence, direct instruction, can take two forms. Parents who engage primarily in direct, closed-ended instruction (involving orders, commands, requests for correct answers or 'the right way' of working or answering a problem) will tend to promote factual learning and knowledge, but will not tend to influence the child toward higher levels of cognitive complexity. Parents who engage in direct, open-ended instruction primarily (involving questions and requests to plan,
anticipate, and explain) will tend to promote higher levels of cognitive complexity and ability as well as factual knowledge in their children (p. 321).

The authors recommend a combination of both instructions for optimal educational success. All three areas, modeling, reinforcement, and direct instruction will not necessarily yield positive educational outcomes on their own, however, when they are used together they can greatly increase the likelihood of positive educational outcomes for the child.

While all of the research and literature was interesting and applicable to my thesis, I have chosen a few documents that I believe will be most helpful in substantiating the original research I am conducting for Chapter 3. The Strong Families, Strong Schools publication has some interesting information regarding barriers to parental involvement. Because there is so much overlapping and duplicated information in the sections What Can Parents Do and What Can Schools Do, these two areas will be condensed and revised into general guidelines for parental involvement. The Parent-Teacher Partnership literature will be important - especially the section on how to recruit volunteers in your school.

I like what Vernon and Louise Jones have to offer regarding parent contacts and parent-teacher conferences. I will probably incorporate most of their strategies into my guidebook. From the Homework section of the literature review, I will be using How To Help Your Child With Homework as my primary source.
CHAPTER THREE: DESCRIPTION AND METHODOLOGIES

Original Research

WOOD AM and FM radio in Grand Rapids, MI runs a daily segment called Focus on the Family with Dr. James Dobson. On the November 6, 1997 segment, Dr. Dobson, a renowned psychologist, said that the best way to improve your child's grades was by spending time with them. He talked about an extensive study that had just been completed that said paying kids for good grades does not significantly improve their report cards. However, when parents are involved in their children’s education their grades improved dramatically. Based on the research I have conducted regarding parental involvement, these findings come as no surprise to me.

The research that I conducted was in the form of three questionnaires (See Appendix A, B, and C for complete documents) regarding parental involvement in education. In the Literature Review section of this paper, I discussed Lynn Stoddard’s book Redesigning Education: A Guide For Developing Human Greatness (1992). Stoddard believes that parents, teachers, and students all need to work together (he called them Equal and Together Partnerships) to accomplish a common goal. The idea of creating partnerships is one of the reasons I decided to create three separate questionnaires - one for parents, one for teachers, and one for students. With this strategy I could see how each of these groups felt about parental involvement.

I tried to use similar questions on all three questionnaires. For example, the first question on each survey is as follows:

- Parents - I believe parental involvement is essential for my child’s educational success.
- Teachers - I believe it is important for parents to be involved in their child’s education.
- Students - I think it is important that my parents are involved in my schooling.
I will now describe how I created the three questionnaires, why I chose to include particular questions, and how I conducted the research.

**Parent Questionnaire**

The first questionnaire I created was for the parents. In the first draft of the parent questionnaire I had the parent’s Biographical Information in the beginning followed by twenty-two multiple choice questions. There was no delineation between whether the question applied to their elementary, middle, or high school child. I thought that this distinction might be important especially in question 12 where I list situations that may hinder parental involvement. I conducted a field survey of this form of the questionnaire on September 9, 1997, at the Challenger Elementary School PTC meeting. I had ten parents complete the surveys and then I asked them for feedback. Between the comments I received from the parents and my consultations with Shelly Watkins and Jerry Johnson, the questionnaire went through two more drafts until the final one was completed. The final questionnaire (See Appendix A for complete document) has twelve questions, eleven of which asks whether the situation applies to the elementary school, middle school, or high school child in their family. The biographical section was placed at the end of the survey so the parents would not feel biased toward answering the questions. I found that some parents chose not to answer all of the biographical questions, especially the one about income.

Through my research, I wanted to discover the extent to which parents were involved in their child’s education. The published literature regarding parental involvement in education all pointed to the fact that the more parents were involved the more successful their children were. I needed to see if the parents I was interviewing were involved on a continuous basis. I wrote questions that dealt with the parents physically going to school and meeting with the teacher, or volunteering their time. These were questions pertaining
to attendance at parent-teacher conferences, parent meetings, open houses, extra-curricular activities, and visiting and/or volunteering in their child's classroom and/or school. The other grouping of questions dealt with the parents involvement at home. I asked the parents if they help their child with homework, know their child's friends, and would find a tutor for their child if he/she needed one.

I remembered the process my husband and I went through when we were looking for a good school district. I wanted to see if other parents had used similar criteria for choosing a school so I created question number eleven. This question is a listing of factors that parents considered when choosing their child's school. A few of these factors are: neighborhood school, quality instructors, religious beliefs, and curriculum offered. Question number twelve offered some possible situations that might hinder a parent from becoming involved in their child's education. Again I tried to think of all the possible obstacles a parent might face. Some of the hindrances that I chose to include were that the parent's employment hours conflicted with school, the parents have young children at home or a number of children at different grade levels, and the child does not want the parent in his/her classroom and/or school.

My goal was to have 100 valid respondents for each of the three questionnaires. I found parental respondents at the PTC meeting at Challenger Elementary School, a neighbors garage sale, a neighborhood card party, John Knox Presbyterian Church, a Weight Watchers meeting, an AYSO soccer game, the community food pantry located at John Knox Church, and Cross Creek and Excel Charter Academies in Kentwood.

**Teacher Questionnaire**

The teacher questionnaire (See Appendix B for complete document) went through three drafts and one field testing before I distributed 120 copies. The changes to each draft were very minor. For example, I moved the biographical section to the end of the
survey so the teachers would not be biased toward answering the questions. I also stacked and ranked the choices for easier answering and tabulating. In the biographical section I decided it was not important to know how many years the teachers had been working or what grade levels they had previously taught, so I discarded these two questions. However, I did want to know what grade level(s) they were currently teaching and whether it was in a public or private school.

I had ten teachers from Challenger Elementary School in Kentwood, MI do my field testing. I asked them to tell me how long it took to complete the survey, if they would add, change or delete anything, and then to offer suggestions or comments. All ten of these teachers took the time to write comments and offer their suggestions for encouraging parental involvement. I will include these comments in the recommendations section of this document.

After the field testing was completed, I composed the final draft of the questionnaire and then tried to determine the best way to distribute and collect them. I contacted several former GVSU teacher classmates and former colleagues in Lansing, MI to help me recruit participants. I also found respondents from East Kentwood High School, Challenger Elementary School, Endeavor Elementary School, Cross Creek Charter Academy and Excel Charter Academy all in Kentwood. The president of St. John Vianney's Home and School Association helped me recruit teachers from that school.

Of the 120 questionnaires distributed, I received 97. Most of the teachers took the time to write comments on their surveys regarding parental involvement practices in their classroom and school. I plan on reporting these comments in full in the recommendations section of this paper.

In the Literature Review section of this document I had a quote from Larry Decker that reads: "The evidence is so overwhelming about the benefits of parent involvement for students that for educators to not even attempt it is engaging in professional malpractice." I wrote the teacher questionnaire with this idea in mind. I wanted to see how much of an
effort teachers put into parental contact and then, in turn, how the parents responded to them. I asked the teachers questions like: do you encourage parents to visit and volunteer in your classroom; do you encourage parents to contact you with questions, comments, or concerns; do you contact parents with both positive and negative issues regarding their child; and do you keep parents informed about the curriculum being taught in your class. I also wanted to know if the teachers thought it would be helpful to have parents volunteer in their classroom or come to be an expert or guest speaker.

**Student Questionnaire**

The student survey (See Appendix C for complete document) was the last one I created. I used the same format as the teacher survey, with ten questions regarding the student’s attitudes toward parental involvement in their education followed by a biographical section. As I mentioned earlier, I tried to ask similar questions of the students as I had of the parents and teachers. For example, I asked the students whether they thought it was important for their parents to attend parent-teacher conferences, open houses, parent meetings, and extra-curricular activities. I also asked them whether their parents should volunteer in their classroom and/or school, maintain regular contact with their teachers, and know their friends.

In the biographical section I thought it would be important to know the grade the respondents were in and whether they attended a public or a private school. I also asked the students about their siblings, because I thought that information might have a bearing on their responses.

I did not choose to field test this questionnaire because I felt fairly confident in the question choice and format. I had three of my high school neighbors take some surveys to their schools and have their classmates fill them out. I did the same with two middle school neighbors. A former colleague in Lansing, MI had her entire seventh grade class
complete the questionnaire, and a former GVSU classmate of mine had her entire tenth grade class fill out the survey. I also went to some of the Sunday School classes at John Knox Church to find respondents. I distributed 120 surveys and I received 107.
Parent Results

Prior to conducting my research, I believed that most parents would agree with the statement: parental involvement is essential for their child's educational success. I thought parents would attend parent-teacher conferences, extra-curricular activities, find a tutor for their child if necessary, and help with homework when needed. I anticipated that most parents would not have regular contact with their child’s teacher or volunteer in their child’s classroom and/or school.

I found that 90% of the parents strongly agreed and 10% somewhat agreed that parental involvement is essential for their child’s educational success. The parents support this belief through 91% of them always attending parent-teacher conferences, 58% having regular contact with their child’s teacher, and 60% always helping their child with homework. Seventy-four percent of the parents surveyed strongly agreed that they know their child’s friends, and 86% would find a tutor for their child if they needed one. These are all very encouraging figures. I also found that 44% of parents always attend parent meetings at their school and 49% do so occasionally. Half of the parents surveyed always attend their child’s extra-curricular activities and 49% attend occasionally.

I discovered the biggest discrepancies in how elementary, middle, and high school parents answered the questions regarding visiting and volunteering in their child’s classroom and/or school. As I suspected the heaviest parental involvement was at the elementary level. Fifty-four percent of parents visit their child’s classroom and/or school on a monthly basis, 35% on a weekly basis, and 8% on a daily basis. The middle school parents visit on a monthly basis 39% of the time, 20% on a weekly basis, and only 1% on a daily basis. There are 40% of the parents who never visit the classroom and/or school.
At the high school level 46% of the parents never visit their child’s classroom and/or school, 39% do so monthly, and only 15% visit weekly.

Fifty-three percent of parents of high school students volunteer once a month in their child’s classroom and/or school, the other 47% never volunteer at all. Forty-six percent of middle school parents volunteer monthly, 12% volunteer weekly, and 42% do not ever volunteer. However, 44% of elementary school parents volunteer on a monthly basis, 35% on a weekly basis, and 1% on a daily basis.

Parents ranked quality instructors, neighborhood school, reputation of school, and curriculum offered as their top four factors in choosing their child’s school. The number one situation that hinders parental involvement at all grade levels is that the parents’ employment hours conflict with school. Elementary and middle school parents stated that having a number of children at different grade levels and/or schools was the second biggest hindrance. The high school parents had a tie for second place: they said that because they traveled extensively for work they could not be involved; and their child does not want them at school.

I requested demographic information about my respondents because I thought it might be interesting to see if there was any correlation between background and level of parental involvement. However, I discovered that the group of parents I interviewed were rather homogeneous in their demographics so I did not find any dramatic differences. The most determining factor was if a parent was employed full-time outside the home they were less likely to be able to volunteer or visit during school hours. Although, most of these full-time working parents still made it to conferences and extra-curricular activities.

The demographics broke down as follows: there were 67% female and 33% male respondents; 90% White, 5% Black, 3% American Indian, and 2% Hispanic; 58% aged 31-40, and 29% aged 41-50, the rest were younger or older; 89% of the respondents were married; 43% held a college degree, 17% held a graduate degree, and 25% had some college; 48% of the parents had a household income over $81,000 per year, and
19% brought in between $61,000 - $80,000; 38% worked full time outside the home, and 43% of those surveyed worked at home or did volunteer work; 44% of the families had two children, 35% had three children, 10% had four children, 9% had only one child, and 2% had five children; 40% of the parents had elementary school children, 17% had middle school children, 14% with preschool children, 13% with high school children, 7% who had infants and toddlers, and 7% who had college-aged or older children.

Appendix A of this document contains the parent questionnaire, and graphs and tables of this data.

**Teacher Results**

When I formed my hypothesis for this research, I thought that teachers at all grade levels would feel that it was important for parents to be involved in their child’s education. I believed that all teachers would encourage parents to contact them if there was a question, concern, or comment regarding their child. Elementary school teachers would want parents to volunteer and visit, while middle and high school teachers probably would not want parents at school.

To back-up my hypothesis all 97 of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed that parents must be involved in their children’s education. There were 93 of the 97 teachers who encouraged parents to visit their classrooms, and all the teachers encouraged parents to contact them if they had a question, comment, or concern. Eighty percent of the teachers said they have contact with parents at least once a year with 94% of the teachers saying they contact parents with both positive and negative issues regarding their child. Ninety-eight percent of the respondents said they keep parents informed about the curriculum being taught in their classrooms. Regarding parent-teacher conferences, 92% of the teachers felt that conferences were an effective and efficient way to have parental
contact, however, only 71% of the teachers found parent-teacher conferences well attended.

The response to question number eight really surprised me. In this question I asked teachers if it would be helpful to have parents volunteer in their classrooms. Eighty-five percent agreed (42% strongly and 43% somewhat) that they would like parent volunteers in their classrooms. When I divided the teachers into elementary level and secondary level, I found that 70% of the secondary school teachers had either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that it would be helpful to have parents volunteer in their classroom.

Finally, 79% of the teachers invite parents to their classrooms as experts or guest speakers.

To summarize the biographical information: I had 72 female respondents and 25 male respondents; 69 taught in public schools, 18 in private schools, and 10 in Charter schools; and there were 36 elementary school teachers, and 61 middle and high school teachers.

Appendix B of this document contains the teacher questionnaire, and graphs and tables of this data.

Student Results

Prior to conducting my research, I believed that most students would want their parents to be involved in their education. Students would think it was important for their parents to attend conferences, open houses, and extra-curricular activities. I believed that the elementary school students would want their parents to visit and volunteer at school but the middle and high school students would not.

I found that 92% of the students agreed (51% strongly and 41% somewhat) that it was important to have their parents involved in their schooling. Eighty-five percent of the students thought it was important for their parents to go to parent-teacher conferences, 81% believe that their parents should attend parent meetings, attendance at open houses
was important to 75% of the students, and 85% of the students want their parents to come to their extra-curricular activities.

As I expected, question number six *I think it is important for my parents to occasionally visit my classroom and/or school* and question number seven *I think it is important for my parents to volunteer in my classroom and/or school* received quite different responses from the elementary and secondary students. In question six, 100% of the elementary school students agreed that their parents should visit their classroom and/or school, while 63% of the middle school students disagreed (38% strongly and 25% somewhat) and 65% of the high school students also disagreed (32% strongly and 33% somewhat). Question number seven again had 100% of the elementary school students believing it was important that their parents volunteer at school. Fifty-four percent of the middle school students agreed that their parents should volunteer and only 41% of the high school students felt it was important for their parents to volunteer.

Eighty-one percent of all the students surveyed felt it was important for their parents to know their teachers and all of the elementary school students wanted their parents to have regular contact with their teachers. However, 49% of the middle school students and 55% of the high school students felt it was not necessary for their parents to have regular contact with their teachers.

On the final question, 93% of all students believed that it was important for their parents to know their friends.

The student demographics are as follows: 37% male and 63% female respondents; 74% attend a public school and 26% attend a private school; there were 4 elementary school students, 25 middle school students, and 78 high school students surveyed; 7% were the only child in the family, 36% had one sibling, 37% had two siblings, 10% had three siblings, and 12% had four or more siblings; of those students who had siblings, 33% were in elementary school or younger, 24% were in middle school, 22% in high school, and 21% were older.
Appendix C of this document contains the student questionnaire, and graphs and tables of this data.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND DISSEMINATION PLAN

Conclusions

As is evidenced throughout this entire document, parental involvement is essential for a child's educational success. Parental involvement takes all three parties - parents, teachers, and students - to cooperate and work together. There definitely needs to be a partnership between home and school.

At the end of the parent questionnaire, I asked parents to share any questions, comments, or concerns they may have regarding parental involvement in education. I had quite a few parents take the time to respond. I would like to share how some of these parents feel. A mother of two children wrote, "I believe parental involvement is the most important factor in a student's school success." A father of two charter school children wrote, "It is essential for parents to be involved, especially in the upper grades. That way parents are aware of the 'bad' crowd and they can get a feel for their child's surroundings and peer pressure. What was peer pressure to us is nothing compared to our kid's pressures." A mother of two middle and high school children said, "I have been involved at each level of schooling that my sons have been in - when you're involved you learn so much more about what is going on in their lives - as they get older the teacher's need a different kind of support." Finally, a mother of two high school children wrote, "I feel it is very important for parents to be involved with their children. Children need a sense of security and stability in the home. Parents must know what life situations their children are facing. Communication is essential."

In the Literature Review section of this document, there is a list of barriers to parental involvement in education. These were lack of time, uncertainty about what to do, cultural barriers, and lack of a supportive environment. In the parent questionnaires a full-time
working mother of two said, "I would love to be more involved in school. If I weren't working, I would be at school often." Four parents of high school children wrote that they did not know what was going on at school, they felt uninformed. Seven parents responded that they did not know the needs of the school and therefore did not know how to help. As educators, we need to be aware that most parents want to be involved in their child's education but they need our guidance in becoming involved.

Also in the Literature Review section of this paper, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler provided some reasons why parents choose to become involved in their child's education. These authors said that a parent will become involved if they feel it is their parental duty, if they have a sense of "personal efficacy for helping their children succeed in school" (p. 313), and if their children or their children's teacher invites them to become involved.

Through my research, I found that the students want their parents to attend parent-teacher conferences, parent meetings, open houses, and extra-curricular activities. The students feel that it is important for their parents to know their teachers and their friends. The elementary students believe it is important for their parents to visit and volunteer at their school. However, the secondary students really did not want their parents to visit and/or volunteer in the classroom and/or school. Through my research, I found that if the parents are involved in their child's educational experience, in areas such as supervision of homework, attendance at parent-teacher conferences and extra-curricular activities, and knowing their child's teacher and friends, then it is not so critical that the parents are not visiting or volunteering in the classroom and/or school on a regular basis.

The teachers I surveyed encourage parents to visit the classroom, and to contact them with a question, comment, or concern. The teachers try to contact all of their students' parents at least once a year with positive and/or negative issues, and keep the parents informed about the curriculum being taught in their classroom.

As I noted in the Data Analysis section, 85% of all teachers said it would be helpful to have parents volunteer in their classrooms. However, I found that 32% of the parents I
surveyed never volunteer in their child’s classroom and/or school, and 20% never even visit the school. Part of this discrepancy is that the students (especially at the secondary level) do not want their parents to come to school.

I believe there needs to be more communication between the home and school regarding the needs of each - what does the school need the parents to do at home and what do the parents need the school to do for them. The parents I surveyed are involved in other areas of their child’s education. Over 90% of the parents attend parent-teacher conferences, they attend almost all of the extra-curricular activities at or related to school for their child, they help their child with homework, and they know their child’s friends.

Although the parents, teachers, and students I surveyed all seem to be in agreement regarding the importance of parental involvement, I would like to offer some recommendations for strengthening the Parent/Teacher/Student Partnership.

**Recommendations**

In the Literature Review section I have a quote that reads, “The most important way in which parents can contribute to the education of their children is by what they do at home” (Honig, p. 163). Parents need to read to their children, supervise homework sessions, limit television viewing, take their children to interesting places, and communicate with their children about school as well as everyday events. In addition, Dawn Snodgrass wrote that the best way to stay involved in an older child’s education is through the monitoring of homework. When teachers, parents, and students work together to determine the usefulness of homework, the students will experience higher levels of achievement.

I had quite a few parents share their ideas with me regarding parental involvement and I would like to mention them now. One parent wanted to know why it seems that the higher the grade level, the less the teachers want parents to help in their classrooms. A
mother of two children said, "We all have precious little time, so we need to use it wisely. If teachers could foresee their needs and list them on a sign up sheet for parental help that would be helpful. I would feel better used as well as seeing what my child is doing at school." Another parent commented that teachers need training in how to utilize volunteers effectively. Some staff seem threatened by parents. A mother of three children stated, "Teachers should provide explicit directions, instructions, and expectations as to what parents should be doing at home to further or enhance their child's education."

At the end of the teacher questionnaire I asked teachers to describe all that they or their school does to encourage and promote parental involvement. I was overwhelmed with the responses. So many educators wrote suggestions and I would like to share some of these here. The first list is a compilation of ways parents can help their child and their child's teacher:

- Be a field trip chaperone
- Help with community service projects
- Sponsor student events like dances and lock-ins
- Perform odd jobs like making copies and stuffing envelopes
- Help in the cafeteria
- Supervise on the playground
- Be an athletic booster
- Become a parent representative on a committee
- Attend festivals, auctions, or carnivals
- Become a room parent
- Plan a class party, school picnic or cookout
- Perform clerical work at home-cutting out things, typing, stapling
- Help in the computer lab or publishing center
- Be a mystery reader
- Tutor a child
The teachers also offered suggestions on how schools can get parents involved. Here are some of the recommendations:

- Invite parents to a Back To School Night or Open House
- Have a parent visitation day
- Encourage parents to join the school’s PTA, PTC, PTO, or Home and School group
- Have an open line of communication to parents
- For parent-teacher conferences, have the teachers contact all of the parents by phone or letter prior to conferences, also provide some incentive to students to get their parents to come to conferences,
- Provide child-care for parents during parent-teacher conferences and meetings
- Publish a school-wide newsletter and a classroom newsletter, send these home as often as possible (usually once a week)
- Publish a school-wide calendar of events
- Create a school improvement team that includes parents
- Keep parents informed about their child’s academic success through progress reports and report cards
- Assign homework that requires parental supervision and participation
- Create a daily assignment notebook, agenda book, or Friday Folder, that teachers and parents can respond in, these are sent home once a week and are reviewed and signed by the parents
- Teachers need to make sure they show appreciation to parents for their support - this can be in the form of a note or maybe an appreciation tea
If a school decides to implement some of these fine recommendations, in conjunction with the other wonderful ideas that can be found in the Literature Review section of this document, then they will have an excellent parental involvement program.

I have a recommendation for further research on the topic of parental involvement. The respondents to my parental questionnaire were rather skewed toward the white, middle-class, educated, female, and it might be interesting to find a more diversified audience to conduct this research. I did not have access to parents living in poverty, except for the few mothers I was able to interview at the food pantry. I also did not have the rural community included in this survey.

**Dissemination of Plan**

Now that I have researched, compiled, and analyzed all of this information regarding parental involvement in education, I must share my knowledge with an audience. As I mentioned previously, I would like to take the outcome of my research and put it into a guide book that any school (K-12) could use to foster parental involvement. When I return to teaching, I plan to have the school district where I am employed publish this guide book.

I have already been asked by the Challenger PTC to speak at their January, 1998 meeting. So many of the parents who are members of the PTC filled out questionnaires for me and they are curious to learn the results. In addition, the principal of Challenger Elementary School, Char Firlik, has also asked me to speak to the faculty. Many of the teachers took part in the survey and they too are eager to learn the outcome of my research. It is my duty as an educator and a parent to make sure this important information regarding parental involvement in education reaches an audience. I will fulfill my duty.
References


References


The following is a list of “opinion” statements regarding parental involvement in school. Please circle your choice for each statement below for your elementary, middle and/or high school child(ren).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I believe parental involvement is essential for my child’s educational success.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I attend parent/teacher conferences.</td>
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<td>3. I attend the parent meetings at school.</td>
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<td>4. I visit my child’s classroom and/or school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I volunteer in my child’s classroom and/or school.</td>
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<td>6. I attend extra-curricular activities at or related to school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. I know my child’s friends.</td>
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<tr>
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60
Appendix A

Parental Involvement Questionnaire

Parents

8. I have regular contact with my child’s teacher(s).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<td>Elementary</td>
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9. I would find a tutor for my child if he/she needed extra help.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>High</td>
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10. I help my child with homework.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. What were the factors you considered when choosing your child(ren)’s schools. Please check all that apply.

___ 1. Neighborhood school
___ 2. Quality instructors
___ 3. Curriculum offered
___ 4. Religious beliefs
___ 5. Reputation of school
___ 6. Size of classes/school
___ 7. Student body background
___ 8. Recommended by friends
___ 9. Recommended by Realtor
___ 10. Other: Please specify

---

12. Here are some situations that might hinder parental involvement. Please circle all that may apply to you. E is for your elementary child(ren), M is for your middle school child(ren), and H is for your high school child(ren).

E M H 1. My employment hours conflict with school.
E M H 2. I travel extensively for work.
E M H 3. I have young children at home.
E M H 4. I have a number of children at different grade levels and/or schools.
E M H 5. My child should be independent.
E M H 6. I do not feel welcome in my child’s classroom and/or school.
Appendix A  Parental Involvement Questionnaire

Parents

7. My child does not want me in his/her classroom and/or school.
8. I feel the teacher does not want me in the classroom.
9. I do not understand my child’s homework and so I cannot help.
10. I feel I have volunteered enough - I am burned out.
11. I do not know what is going on at school, I feel uninformed.
12. I do not know the needs of the school.
13. Other: Please specify.

Biographical Information
The following questions are solely for classification purposes and will remain strictly confidential. Please circle the correct number choice.

Gender
Male 1
Female 2

Racial/Ethnic Group
American Indian or Alaskan Native 1
Asian or Pacific Islander 2
Black, not of Hispanic origin 3
Hispanic 4
White, not of Hispanic origin 5

Age Group
20-30 1
31-40 2
41-50 3
51-60 4
61+ 5

Marital Status
Married 1
Divorced 2
Single 3
Widowed 4

Level of Schooling
Some High School 1
High School Diploma 2
Some College 3
College Degree 4
Graduate Degree 5

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Appendix A  

Parental Involvement Questionnaire  

Parents  

**Approximate Total Household Income**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<td>$21,000-$40,000</td>
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<td>$41,000-$60,000</td>
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<td>$61,000-$80,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>$81,000-$100,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over $100,000</td>
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**Employment**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Type</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work outside of home full-time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work outside of home part-time</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work at home</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer work</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Number of children**  

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>More</td>
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**Children's school level**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infant/Toddler</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>High</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older</td>
<td>7</td>
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**Type of School children attend**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please feel free to share any other comments, concerns, questions, or suggestions you may have regarding parental involvement in your child(ren)'s education.  

__________________________________________________________________________  

__________________________________________________________________________  

__________________________________________________________________________  

__________________________________________________________________________  

__________________________________________________________________________  

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your input is greatly appreciated.
I believe my involvement is essential for my child's educational success.

I know my child's friends.

I have regular contact with my child's teacher(s).

I would find a tutor for my child if he/she needed extra help.
Parental Involvement Questionnaire--Parent Response (2 Of 3)

1. I attend parent/teacher conferences.
2. I attend the parent meetings at school.
3. I attend extra-curricular activities at or related to school.
4. I help my child with homework.

[Bar chart showing responses for each activity]
I visit my child's classroom and/or school.

I volunteer in my child's classroom and/or school.
Appendix A

Ranking Of The Most Important Factors When Choosing Children’s School

1. Quality instructors
2. Neighborhood school
3. Reputation of school
4. Curriculum offered
5. Size of classes/school
6. Recommended by friends
7. Religious beliefs
8. Student body background
9. Recommended by Realtor

Top Four Situations That May Hinder Parental Involvement

Elementary School Level

1. My employment hours conflict with school.
2. I have a number of children at different grade levels and/or schools.
3. I have young children at home.
4. I travel extensively for work.

Middle School Level

1. My employment hours conflict with school.
2. I have a number of children at different grade levels and/or schools.
3. I travel extensively for work.
3. I do not know the needs of the school.
4. My child does not want me in his/her classroom and/or school.
4. I feel the teacher does not want me in the classroom.

High School Level

1. My employment hours conflict with school.
2. I travel extensively for work.
2. My child does not want me in his/her classroom and/or school.
3. I feel the teacher does not want me in the classroom.
4. I have a number of children at different grade levels and/or schools.
4. I do not understand my child’s homework and so I cannot help.
Appendix A

Parent Demographics

**Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>67%</td>
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</table>

**Racial/Ethnic Group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial/Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, not of Hispanic origin</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, not of Hispanic origin</td>
<td>90%</td>
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**Age Group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>5%</td>
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**Marital Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single, never married</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Level of Schooling Completed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Schooling Completed</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some High School</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Degree</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td>17%</td>
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**Approximate Total Household Income**

<table>
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<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under $20,000</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$21,000-$40,000</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$41,000-$60,000</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$61,000-$80,000</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$81,000-$100,000</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over $100,000</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
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Appendix A

Parent Demographics

Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Full-time</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Part-time</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work at home</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Work</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2%</td>
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Children's Level of School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of School</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infant/Toddler</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older</td>
<td>3%</td>
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Children's Type of School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B
Parental Involvement Questionnaire
Teachers

The following is a list of "opinion" statements regarding parental involvement in school. Please circle your number choice for each statement below.

1. I believe it is important for parents to be involved in their child's education.
   
   Strongly Agree 4
   Somewhat Agree 3
   Somewhat Disagree 2
   Strongly Disagree 1

2. I encourage parents to visit my classroom.
   
   Strongly Agree 4
   Somewhat Agree 3
   Somewhat Disagree 2
   Strongly Disagree 1

3. I encourage parents to contact me if they have questions, comments and/or concerns.
   
   Strongly Agree 4
   Somewhat Agree 3
   Somewhat Disagree 2
   Strongly Disagree 1

4. I have contact with all of my student's parents at least once during the school year.
   
   Strongly Agree 4
   Somewhat Agree 3
   Somewhat Disagree 2
   Strongly Disagree 1

5. I feel parent/teacher conferences are an effective and efficient way to have parental contact.
   
   Strongly Agree 4
   Somewhat Agree 3
   Somewhat Disagree 2
   Strongly Disagree 1

6. I find parent/teacher conferences are well attended.
   
   Strongly Agree 4
   Somewhat Agree 3
   Somewhat Disagree 2
   Strongly Disagree 1
Appendix B  
Parental Involvement Questionnaire  
Teachers

7. I contact parents with both positive and negative issues regarding their child.

| Strongly Agree | 4 |
| Somewhat Agree | 3 |
| Somewhat Disagree | 2 |
| Strongly Disagree | 1 |

8. It would be helpful to have parents volunteer in my classroom.

| Strongly Agree | 4 |
| Somewhat Agree | 3 |
| Somewhat Disagree | 2 |
| Strongly Disagree | 1 |

9. I inform parents about the curriculum or subject matter being taught in my classroom.

| Strongly Agree | 4 |
| Somewhat Agree | 3 |
| Somewhat Disagree | 2 |
| Strongly Disagree | 1 |

10. I invite parents to my classroom as experts and/or guest speakers.

| Strongly Agree | 4 |
| Somewhat Agree | 3 |
| Somewhat Disagree | 2 |
| Strongly Disagree | 1 |

### Biographical Information

| Gender: | Male | 1 |
| Male | 1 |
| Female | 2 |

| Type of School where you are teaching: | Public | 1 |
| Public | 1 |
| Private | 2 |
| Charter | 3 |
| Other | 4 |

| Current Grade Level(s): | K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 College |
| K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 College |

Please describe all that you or your school does to encourage and promote parental involvement. For example, do you have specific volunteer programs or does your school require parental involvement.

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your input is greatly appreciated.
I believe it is important for parents to be involved in their child's education.

I encourage parents to visit my classroom.

I encourage parents to contact me with questions, comments or concerns.

I have contact with all of my students' parents at least once during the year.

I feel conferences are an effective way to have parental contact.

I find parent/teacher conferences are well attended.

I contact parents with both positive and negative issues regarding their child.

It would be helpful to have parents volunteer in my classroom.

I inform parents about the subject matter being taught in my classroom.

I invite parents to my classroom as experts and/or guest speakers.
Appendix B

Teacher Demographics

Gender

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>26%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>74%</td>
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Type of School Where They Are Currently Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>71%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Grade Levels They Are Currently Teaching

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<td>3rd</td>
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<td>7th</td>
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<td>12th</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C  Parental Involvement Questionnaire
Students

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your input is greatly appreciated. The following is a list of “opinion” statements regarding parental involvement in school. The word “parents” in the statements can mean both parents, a single parent, step-parents, or legal guardian. Please circle your number choice for each statement below.

1. I think it is important that my parents are involved in my schooling.  
   - Strongly Agree 4
   - Somewhat Agree 3
   - Somewhat Disagree 2
   - Strongly Disagree 1

2. I think it is important for my parents to attend parent/teacher conferences.  
   - Strongly Agree 4
   - Somewhat Agree 3
   - Somewhat Disagree 2
   - Strongly Disagree 1

3. I think it is important for my parents to attend the parent meetings at school.  
   - Strongly Agree 4
   - Somewhat Agree 3
   - Somewhat Disagree 2
   - Strongly Disagree 1

4. I think it is important for my parents to attend Open Houses at my school.  
   - Strongly Agree 4
   - Somewhat Agree 3
   - Somewhat Disagree 2
   - Strongly Disagree 1

5. I think it is important for my parents to attend extra-curricular activities at my school (concerts, carnivals, sports).  
   - Strongly Agree 4
   - Somewhat Agree 3
   - Somewhat Disagree 2
   - Strongly Disagree 1

6. I think it is important for my parents to occasionally visit my classroom and/or school.  
   - Strongly Agree 4
   - Somewhat Agree 3
   - Somewhat Disagree 2
   - Strongly Disagree 1
Appendix C Parental Involvement Questionnaire
Students

7. I think it is important for my parents to volunteer in my classroom and/or school.
   - Strongly Agree 4
   - Somewhat Agree 3
   - Somewhat Disagree 2
   - Strongly Disagree 1

8. I think it is important for my parents to know my teachers.
   - Strongly Agree 4
   - Somewhat Agree 3
   - Somewhat Disagree 2
   - Strongly Disagree 1

9. I think it is important for my parents to have regular contact with my teachers.
   - Strongly Agree 4
   - Somewhat Agree 3
   - Somewhat Disagree 2
   - Strongly Disagree 1

10. I think it is important for my parents to know my friends.
    - Strongly Agree 4
    - Somewhat Agree 3
    - Somewhat Disagree 2
    - Strongly Disagree 1

Biographical Information
Gender:
- Male 1
- Female 2

Type of School attending:
- Public 1
- Private 2
- Charter 3
- Other 4

Grade Level:
- K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Number of Siblings:
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 more

If you have siblings, what are their ages and/or grades:
- 0-2 years 1
- Preschool 2
- Elementary 3
- Middle 4
- High 5
- Older 6
Parent Involvement Questionnaire--Student Response

I think it is important that my parents are involved in my schooling.

I think it is important for my parents to attend conferences.

I think it is important for my parents to attend school parent meetings.

I think it is important for my parents to attend Open Houses.

I think it is important for my parents to attend extra-curricular activities.

I think it is important for my parents to occasionally visit classroom/school.

I think it is important for my parents to volunteer in my classroom/school.

I think it is important for my parents to know my teachers.

I think it is important for my parents to have regular contact with my teachers.

I think it is important for my parents to know my friends.
Appendix C  

Student Demographics

**Gender**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>63%</td>
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**Type of School Attending**

<p>| | |</p>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>26%</td>
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**Current Grade Level**

<table>
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<td>11th</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>18</td>
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</table>

- 4 elementary school
- 25 middle school
- 78 high school

**Number of Siblings in Family**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>none</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Student Demographics

Ages of Siblings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 2 years</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This document looks at the importance of parental involvement in education. Through existing research and original research, the author shows that it is essential for parents to be involved in their child's education if they want their child to have a successful academic experience.