Spring 5-2010

Exploring a High School Community Relations and Parent Involvement Program

Robert Corey Sink
Lindenwood University

Exploring a High School Community Relations and Parent Involvement Program

by

Robert Corey Sink

May 2010

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

Declaration of Origninality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Robert Corey Sink

Signature: Robert Corey Sink Date: 5-11-2010

The Exploring a High School Community Relations and Parent Involvement Program

by

Robert Corey Sink

This Dissertation has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

Dr. Bill Emrick, Dissertation Chair	May 11 2010 Date
Dr. Roger Deppe, Committee Member	May 11 2010 Date
Dr. Mark Eggers, Committee Member	May 11, 2010 Date

Acknowledgement

The voyage through this dissertation process has been a life altering event, and the achievement of completion would not have been possible with the support of a few key individual influences. Without the support and encouragement of my chairperson, Dr. Bill Emrick, this would not have been even possible. Thank you, Dr. Emrick for your tireless work and personal sacrifice. I would like to thank my committee members. Thank you to Dr. Roger Deppe, Dr. Mark Eggers, Ms. Susan Rhoads, and Mrs. Patricia Closson, each of you has helped me immensely to complete this process. I appreciate every one of you. I would also like to thank the faculty and staff at Lindenwood University for all of their help and support, especially Dr. Susan Isenberg, Dr. Sherrie Wisdom, and Dr. Tim Delicath.

I would like to thank all of those who participated by adding to the research. Thank you to the teachers and staff at St. Charles High School, without your hard work completion would not have been possible. I would also like to thank the parents and students at St. Charles High School for helping me to achieve a conclusion.

Finally, I would like to thank my family. Without the understanding and support of wife Molly and our two boys, Asher and Ryder, concluding this process would have only been a dream. Molly and the boys are the driving force in my life, and I cannot find the words to express how much I love and appreciate them. I would also like to thank my in-laws, Gary and Janet Schaub, for their time and energy they sacrificed through this process. I would finally like to thank my mom and dad, Bob and Sharon, who never wavered in their support of me.

Abstract

There are few issues in education that get as much attention as the need for improvement of parental and community involvement in and support for local schools. School faculties want to know how to improve the way they work with families and community members to better meet the needs of their students and parents want to find how to best communicate with the schools to help their children succeed. Even though there is extensive research and agreement about the importance of this topic, many schools continue to labor with these partnerships. This exploratory correlational research study employed a pre-test/post-test and surveys to assess methods of improving one high school's relations with its students, parents and, community. The hypothesis was, Implementation of a community relations and parent involvement program will improve community relations, parent involvement, participation in parent/teacher conferences, and student achievement at the high school. The results was parent involvement improved as measured by participation in parent/teacher conferences, the independent variables (The Action Team for Partnership, parent call list, Parents in Education [PIE], parent newsletter, school website, staff websites, Responses Now System, and the community service organizations and agencies database) had a positive and statistically significant influence on the dependent variable, parent involvement as measured by increased participation in parent/teacher conferences. On the other hand student achievement did not improve as measured by grade point average; the independent variables listed in the previous sentence did not have a positive and statistically significant influence on the dependent variable, student achievement.

The most salient finding of the study pointed to the challenges of finding time for teachers and the high school staff to communicate and fully engage in a process of collaboration with parents and the greater community. The conclusions also suggested that improvements in communication between the school and home need to be attained; and that the high school stands to substantially benefit from a well-planned and continuous parent and community involvement partnership program.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter One: Introduction

Few topics in the field of educational research garner more universal unity of concern as the need for community and parental support and involvement in schools. School personnel want to know how to better work in an encouraging and constructive manner with parents and how to increase the participation of community residents in improving the academic and social success of students. Parents and family members need to know that their local schools provide the highest-quality education to their children. They want to find how to best help their children achieve in school. They want to know how to best communicate with the school and how to meaningfully support the efforts of the school. Students want to be successful, and they need the assistance, direction, and encouragement from both their teachers and parents. Despite wide-spread agreement about the significance of this issue, many schools continue to struggle with these partnerships and connections between parents and their community (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, & VanVoorhis, 2002).

Research confirms that partnerships between schools and families result in better school attendance, fewer dropouts, decreased delinquency, and improved student achievement (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Traditionally, activities designed by schools to involve families have provided opportunities for parents to visit schools, but not as a partner. Unfortunately, administrators and teachers commonly lack the skills to initiate and nurture family participation in schools (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, Foleno, & Foley, 2001). In fact, survey results released in 2000 by the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) indicate that no state includes parent involvement in competency requirements and training program standards for teachers and administrators. Additionally, no state

currently requires family involvement coursework for teaching license renewal (Diss & Buckley, 2005). Diss and Buckley stated

> When effective home-school partnerships are not established, student achievement suffers and teachers experience increased frustration and professional disappointment. . . . These outcomes are common, they could be greatly reduced if teachers were better prepared to involve families in children's schooling. (p. 3)

This research study was designed to help teachers and school officials develop the essential and indispensable skills necessary to reach out, involve, and partner with parents and community members. There are many reasons that exist for schools to cultivate family and community partnerships. Epstein et al. (2002) stated

> Partnerships can improve school programs and school climate. . . . However, the main reason to create such partnerships is to help all youngsters succeed in school and in later life. When parents, teachers, students, and others view one another as partners in education, a caring community forms around students and begins its work. (p. 7)

Background of the Study

Many families that the high school serves in this community do face situations that warrant more help to provide a supportive home educational learning environment. Currently, the high school lags behind state and county averages on state assessment exams and daily attendance rates. Many teachers believe it is time for school personnel to provide high school families with the support they so desperately need. Supported by the research of Cotton and Reed-Wikleund (1989), a report released by the Massachusetts

Department of Education (2000) confirmed in research studies a strong correlation linking parental involvement and increased student academic success. The report concluded

> When schools provide training for all their staff… in parent outreach and engagement, educators work together to employ new ways of involving families in supporting student success. . . . When teachers, guidance counselors, and others share best practices involving parents schools benefit. (p. 3)

Subsequently, Davis (2000) stated the following:

> The family makes critical contributions to a child's achievement from early childhood through high school. . . . Helping middle and high school students with homework and establishing appropriate boundaries for teenagers are foundations for success in school. (p. 3)

Investigative studies substantiate a strong link connecting parent involvement and student academic success (Clark, 1993, p. 85). Cotton and Reed-Wikelund (1989) affirmed, "Research overwhelmingly demonstrates that parent involvement in children's learning is positively related to achievement. Further . . . the more intensively parents are involved in their children's learning; the more beneficial are the achievement effects" (p. 2).

The fact is, when school teachers and parents act in partnership, children benefit. This is the reason the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 made parent involvement a high priority and critical concern. NCLB obligates schools and school districts to help every student meet levels of proficient performance in the areas of reading and math by the year 2014. It also expects schools and school districts to draw in parents and families in ways that will improve academic student achievement. Yet, many

schools and school districts still struggle with implementing home to school partnerships, and for those that do have programs, many struggle with measuring the success of the partnership programs on student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

As parent involvement moves outside long-established activities, such as helping children with their homework, and toward the desired goals for the shared responsibilities of school-wide improvement, both parents and teachers will need to learn and develop new skills and the abilities to use them. NCLB acknowledges the value of parents participating in the formal education of their children. This is evident in NCLB requirements set forth for schools, districts, and state education departments for parent involvement. According to a 2004 NCLB document retrieved from the U.S. Department of Education website,

> Under NCLB, all Title 1 schools, which receive special federal funding to raise the performance of disadvantaged students, must develop parent involvement polices and strategies, and spend at least 1 percent of their Title 1 funding on parent training and educational programs. The legislation also has resulted in additional parent involvement requirements for any school or district identified under its state education accountability system as being in need of improvement….Individual parents must be informed when and if, as a result, their child becomes eligible for school choice or supplement education services (SES). These schools and districts also are required to engage parents in the development of the school's or district improvement plan, and the plan itself must include strategies to promote effective parent involvement. (pp. 8-9)

Parents in America have dreams and high hopes for their children. They want their children's high school education to lead to college, a high paying job, and a better life. These same parents understand that competing in today's ever changing world demands more from their children's education, and that participation in their child's high school experience is of significant importance (Bryk, 1999).

While most parents realize the importance of taking part in the academic success of their high school age children, unfortunately far too many do not. According to Bridgeland, Dilulio, Streeter, and Mason (2008), who have surveyed thousands of parents of high school students all across the country on this very subject, most parents cite a lack of time as the most difficult hurdle standing in the way of their ability to engage in their children's school, whereas others point to both existing and perceived divides between the school and family. Due to this disconnection, they are not involved, they lack communication with the school, and they lack knowledge relative to what the school teaches and does. The research stated that parents who believed their child's school did a poor job reaching out to them perceived the schools as low performing. They therefore reported a clear correlation between the kind of outreach to parents a school performs and the level of involvement and satisfaction of those parents. They go on to state that whether it is a perceived or a real lack of effort on the part of schools correlates highly with lower levels of involvement and satisfaction.

To help high school students meet their goals, high school personnel and students' families must work together to provide students with guidance and to encourage them to take courses they will need to complete high school and attend college. Mediratta, Shah, and McAlister (2008) acknowledged

> When parents talk to their children about school, expect them to do well, help them plan for college, and make sure that out-of-school activities are constructive; their children do better in school. When schools engage families in ways that are linked to improving learning, and support parent involvement at home and school, students make greater gains. When schools build partnerships with families they are able to sustain connections that are aimed at improving student achievement. And when families and communities organize to hold poorly performing schools accountable, school districts make positive changes in policy, practice, and resources. (p. 2)

Rationale for the Study

High schools across the country continue to struggle with parent and community involvement. Teachers at the high school in this research study reported that parent involvement and student success are a top priority and challenge. The general purpose of this research was to add to the existing knowledge concerning school and community relations, parent involvement, and student achievement. In particular, the research examined school and community relations, parent involvement, and student achievement in a high school. With the data provided in this study, the high school could work to foster an environment of improved community relations and active parent involvement in an effort to increase student achievement.

Significance of the Study

The literature that exists on the subject of parental involvement in their child's education is immense and widespread. This writing is inclusive of research and stand-alone reports and studies, theory papers, expert testimonials and opinion, program

explanations, and guidelines and instructions for establishing those programs. Kathleen Cotton and Karen Reed-Wikelund (1989), whose meta-analysis concluded that the vast majority of these reports included research grounded in the impact of parental involvement, concluded that some involvement is often better than too much. Specifically, programs with extensive workshops and teaching components do not necessarily result in higher student achievement than do those programs with only marginal training. Conversely, parental involvement training programs are often characterized by significant levels of attrition seemingly because the time and effort required on the part of parents can be perceived unmanageable.

There are countless rationales for building school, family, and community relationships. Some say a reflection of how a school cares for its children is in how a school cares for its children's families. Bryk (1999) felt children need a strong family to lean on, for without strong families children will face an uphill climb to become productive and well educated citizens. Bryk also recognized families can fall short in their "pursuit of the American dream" without strong communities to support them. In Bryk's words, "strong communities offer education, a sense of pride, social networks, accessible services and supports, and economic opportunities" (p. 2).

The high school plays a crucial role in the transformation and strengthening of families and neighborhoods and at the same time improves each student's chances for success. Epstein et al. (2002) said

> If educators view children simply as students, they are likely to see the family as separate from the school. . . . The family is expected to do its job and leave the education of children to the schools. If educators view students as children, they

> are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school. (p. 7)

Provided the right opportunities and support, the high school can help build solid ties with families and communities partners, institute accountability and site-based decision making, and develop professional skills and leadership among community members and teachers. Other benefits may include improved student and family self-efficacy, with respect to learning and achievement, higher expectations, more successful ways to foster family connectedness, improved understanding of other viewpoints, and better student future planning. Perhaps, the key is not where the support comes from, but that students significantly gain confidence when adults encourage and support their academic success. "Students of all ages benefit academically, emotionally, and physically when an adult is actively involved in the day-to-day events of their lives, including school activities" (Ferguson, 2008, p. 2).

This investigation may help community partners to envision a school that extends and reaches out past building doors, and develops an understanding of the changes needed to make it a reality. This research study was also designed for a wide audience of practitioners and individuals who make policy, including parents, local community heads, grant makers, school district central office personnel, school principals, educational instructional leaders, government officials, and business partners who are involved in education. It can be used in part or as a whole—to provoke thought and motivate to change conversations, to center planning, or to open up issues—depending on the circumstances and needs of each community.

Parent engagement alone will not produce high student achievement. While not investigated in this study, the high school must also invest in high stakes testing and have high expectations for each child. Professional development, effective leadership, aligned curriculum, research-based instructional strategies, and frequent assessment and feedback play a major role in student achievement as well. Along with parent and community involvement these strategies can help to produce student achievement.

Research Question

The research question was, Will implementation of a high school community relations and parent involvement program improve community relations, parent involvement, participation in parent/teacher conferences, and student achievement at the high school?

Hypothesis

Implementation of a community relations and parent involvement program will improve community relations, parent involvement, participation in parent/teacher conferences, and student achievement at the high school.

Null Hypothesis

Implementation of a community relations and parent involvement program will not improve community relations, parent involvement, participation in parent/teacher conferences, and student achievement at the high school.

Independent Variables

The independent variables are presumed to have an effect on the dependent variables of community relations, parent involvement, and student achievement. The research study's independent variables included the Action Team for Partnership, parent

call list, Partners in Education (PIE), parent newsletter, school website, staff websites, Response Now System, and community service organizations and agencies database resource.

Action Team for Partnership. The study high school formed of an Action Team for Partnership with the responsibility of assessing practices, developing, coordinating, and implementing opportunities and activities, evaluation of the methods prescribed, and continuing to oversee the progression of the process.

Parent call list. Teachers at the study high school agreed to personally contact at least two sets of parents or guardians weekly, and to contact the parents or guardians of any student who missed their class for any reason on the third absence. Teachers recorded the contact, the reason for the contact, and the result of the contact on a centrally-located parent call list database that was accessible to the entire building.

Partners in Education (PIE). The Partners in Education (PIE) program has been created to expand the learning opportunities of K-12 students by formally linking area businesses, individuals, and community organizations to the classroom. Partners in Education involves the entire community in the educational process. PIE facilitators work with teachers to determine what resources can best enhance their curriculum and the education of children. They then research and schedule community volunteers to impact K-12 curriculum.

Parent newsletter. The study high school's newsletter, Pirate Patter, acts as a supplement to the school website and was designed to increase parent communication and provide parents with the latest school updates. The Pirate Patter includes a principal's

forum, department updates, academic, counseling, athletic information, and student and teacher spotlights.

School website. The study high school's website, developed and maintained by student web masters, was improved and redesigned to provide the most up-to-date information for students, parents, community members, and alumni. The school website provides parents instant access to on-line attendance, grades, classroom assignments, and student resources such as: daily announcements, staff contact information and websites, podcasts, school news, library services, athletic information, and calendar of events.

Staff websites. Each teacher at the study high school has created and maintains a personalized website, which can be accessed from the school website, for students and parents. Students and parents can access teacher information, course syllabi, daily assessments, classroom podcasts, and teacher logs.

Response Now System. The study high school enacted the Response Now System that would simultaneously call every parent that has a student within the building to relay an instantaneous message from the high school or school district.

Community service organizations and agencies database resource. The study high school developed a database resource of all available local and state community services partner organizations and agencies accessible by school guidance counselors, administration, staff, students, and families.

Dependent Variables

Dependent variables are variables in a research study which are potentially affected by the independent variables. This research study's dependent variables include community relations, parent involvement, and student achievement.

Community relations. The level to which the community is involved and/or engaged in the high school.

Parent involvement. The level to which the parents are involved and/or engaged in the high school as measured by participation in parent/teacher conferences.

Student achievement. The grade point average on a 4.0 scale for students in the high school calculated at the end of the third quarter of the 2007-2008 school year, the end of first quarter and end of third quarter in the 2008-2009 school year.

Limitations

Certain aspects of a research study may influence the results and limit the control of the researcher. This research study's limitations include survey response rate, respondents' understanding of the questions to the surveys, and participants leaving the study.

Survey response rate. The response rate to parent and teacher surveys is a limitation that is beyond the control of the researcher. The researcher sent out nearly nine hundred parent surveys with one hundred and ten surveys returned, resulting in a return rate of less than twenty percent. A low return rate of parent surveys could put the accuracy of the data results in jeopardy.

Respondent's understanding of the questions to the surveys. Responses to the survey questions are out of the control of the researcher. If participants took the survey when they were unable to understand all the questions, or if participants viewed questions differently from their intended meaning, or hurriedly responded without the proper time, or effort required taking the survey, data results could be adversely affected.

Participants leaving the study. Participants who leave the study prior to the conclusion of the study are out of the control of researcher. Parents or students moving in or out of the high school during the period of time the investigation took place could affect data results.

Delimitations

Due to the fact that this study was contained within a particular high school in a particular community, it represents a low degree of population generalizability. While the researcher could be reasonably confident that the results were indicative of the particular high school within the study, the group was too small to draw comparisons or generalities to high schools or communities outside this particular high school used in the study.

Definitions

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). "This is the term No Child Left Behind legislation uses to explain that a child's school has met state reading and math goals. A school district's report card will indentify whether or not a child's school has made AYP" (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 6).

Missouri A+ Schools. In an effort to enhance educational opportunities for high school students, the Missouri State Legislature established the Outstanding Schools Act (OSA) of 1993 which includes the provisions of the A+ School Program. High school graduates who meet specific A+ criteria are eligible to receive reimbursement for tuition and general fees (subject to legislative appropriation) to attend any public community college, vocational, or technical school in the state (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MODESE]).

Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP). The Missouri School Improvement Program has the responsibility of reviewing and accrediting the 524 school districts in Missouri within a five-year review cycle. The process of accrediting school districts is mandated by state law, and the specific responsibilities of this section are outlined both by state board rule and in Senate Bill 380. School district reviews are conducted each year for approximately twenty percent (20%) of the 524 districts, and reports covering the areas of resources, process and performance are developed. These reports are reviewed by a school improvement committee within the MSIP and a summary of each report and the committee's recommendations regarding accreditation for each district are presented to the State Board of Education for its approval. Each district also submits a School Improvement Plan which addresses the concerns identified in the review report and may request a re-review in order to improve its accreditation rating (MODESE, 2009).

No Child Left Behind (*NCLB).*

> In 2001, President George W. Bush made a commitment to ensure that all children receive a high quality education so that no child is left behind. And just one year after the President first took office, the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) passed overwhelmingly. NCLB was added to the reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act and has led to higher standards and greater accountability throughout the Nation's school systems. (U. S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 3)

Show-Me Standards.

> In 1993, the Outstanding Schools Act was passed in Missouri. This law called for the development of a new assessment system for Missouri's public schools. The Show-Me Standards are part of that legislation. There are 40 "content" and 33 "process" standards. They are guides for what students should know and be able to do. In the medical field, doctors have standards for what they should know and be able to do. You expect an auto mechanic to meet certain standards for repairing or servicing your car. The Show-Me Standards are similar in that they are the educational standards in Missouri. (MODESE, 2009)

Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS). The TIPS involves the use of interactive homework assignments designed by teachers that students are required to complete with the help of their family members. The purpose of the program is to overcome barriers to parent involvement by scheduling the homework assignments at regular times, orienting students and parents about how the process works, and inviting family members to write questions for the teacher while working on the homework (Epstein, 2005).

Assumptions

It is an assumption of this study that when parents and the community are more involved and engaged in the daily school life of high school students, students will experience greater learning and more academic success.

Summary

The researcher studied school relationships with its community and parent involvement in the high school, and the employment of strategies by the school to improve relationships and involvement, since these are believed to be key factors towards

increasing student academic achievement. School teachers are interested in wanting to know how to better work with parents and the community to help their students learn. Parents are interested in how their children's schools are providing the best possible education for them, and they want to know how they can work with the schools to help their children be the most successful. Students need both the support and guidance of their teachers and parents. Even though research shows school-home-community partnership result in great student achievement, many schools continue to struggle with these connections. The study was designed to help teachers and schools develop the necessary abilities to reach out, involve, and partner with parents and community members.

The purpose of this study was to add to the current knowledge pertaining to school and community relations, parent involvement, and student achievement. The research particularly looks at school and community relations, parent involvement, and student achievement in a high school, and how with the data the high school could improve parent and community involvement efforts to increase student achievement.

When teachers and parents work together, children benefit. Therefore, NCLB expects schools and school districts to involve parents and families in ways that will support and improve student academic success. Despite NCLB mandates, many schools continue to struggle with programs designed to involve parents. In fact, the reason for this research study was that teachers at the high school continue to state that parent involvement was a main concern and challenge, and that the high school continues to fall short of state and county averages on state assessment exams and daily attendance. Many families served by the study high school need help to support a home learning

environment and many high school personnel believe it is time for the school to provide that support.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter contains a review of the current literature relating to the previous efforts of those individuals involved with parent and community partnerships in schools. This literature review is important to this research study because it details what earlier researchers, investigators, authors, and experts in the field have already discovered. The following literature review is disaggregated into five keys areas of analysis: Benefits of Parental Involvement, Linking Schools with Communities, Importance of Staff Morale in Parent Involvement and Community Relations, Parent and Teacher Conferences, and Working with Low-income and Diverse Families.

Benefits of Parental Involvement

Individuals within and outside the field of education sometimes question the valuable family involvement. Does having family involvement make a difference in the field of education? According to research, the answer is yes. Ferguson (2008) remarked

> Sometimes, results come in more traditional measures-student achievement, attendance, or behavior. . . . There are less traditional benefits, such as improved student or family self-efficacy about education, higher expectations for students or others involved in efforts, more effective ways to support family engagement, greater understanding of the viewpoints of others, or student planning for the future. (p. 2)

Hundreds of research studies, reports, journal articles, books, and doctoral dissertations exist on the topic of involvement of parents' in the education of their children. Theses texts include research articles, professional testimonies, theory and hypothesis dissertations, and descriptive programs. Many of these studies are educational

and beneficial, and because school and family connection has become a "hot topic" recently, there is substantial up to date information. Studies show that family activities impact student outcomes more than do socio-economic status and parental education attainment. Dr. Joyce Epstein, professor at John Hopkins University and her colleagues said, “Partnerships can improve school programs and school climate, provide family services and support, increase parents’ skills and leadership, connect families with others in the school and in the community, and help teachers with their work” (Epstein et al., 2002, p. 7). Weiss, Kreider, Lopez, and Chatman (2005) added, high-levels of organization between school and home have proved to be very effective in increases student learning. According to Davis (2000), Regardless of educational background of the parents, or whether a family is monetarily well off or struggling, a parental contribution to the daily school lives of children increases student achievement. The benefits, according to Davis, for the students when families are actively involved in school include “higher grades and test scores, better attendance and more homework completed, fewer placements in special education, more positive attitudes and behavior, higher graduation rates, and greater enrollment in post-secondary education” (p. 44). School and family partnerships can bring together a significant collection of strategies and resources that enhance a more caring school wide community that can support children and their families to maintain success at school and well beyond (Adelman & Taylor, 2008).

If parental involvement is to be effective, it should consist of more than attending school events or volunteerism. “The strongest support for learning occurs at home through positive parenting styles, nightly reading, homework policies, and high

expectations" (Davis, 2000, p. 1). Olsen and Fuller (2008) indicated that the truest judge of student success is not family income or social demographics. The most accurate predictor is the family's ability to provide a home atmosphere that supports learning, high expectations, and involvement in the educational process. Cotton and Reed-Wikelund (1989) suggested, "Programs which involve parents in reading with their children, supporting their work on homework assignments, or tutoring them using materials and instructions provided by teachers, show particularly impressive results" (p. 5). According to eighty-five studies reviewed by Henderson and Berla (1994), effectively planned parent involvement activities that are put into practice will result in considerable advantages for children, parents, educators, and the school. Adelman and Taylor (2008) echoed the views of Henderson and Berla when they stated, "Comprehensive partnerships represent a promising direction for generating essential interventions to address barriers to learning, enhancing healthy development, and strengthening families and neighborhoods" (Adeleman & Tylor, p. 3). Henderson and Berla (1994) determined that the benefits include

> Children tend to be more successful despite ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or parents' education; children generally achieve better grades, test scores, and attendance; children consistently complete their homework; children have better self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-discipline, and show higher aspirations and motivation toward school; children's positive disposition toward school often results in improved behavior in school and less suspension for disciplinary reasons; more children from diverse backgrounds fare better if cohesion exists

> between home and school; and middle and high school students experience better school transition and are less likely to leave school prior to graduation. (p. 18)

According to Henderson and Berla (1994) benefits for the parents include

> Parents increase their interaction with their children and are more responsive to their children's social, emotional, and intellectual developmental needs; parents are more confident in their parenting skills; as parents gain more knowledge of child development, there is more use of affection and positive reinforcement; parents have a better understanding of the teacher's job and school curriculum; when parents are aware of what their children are learning, they are more likely to help when they are requested by teachers; parent's perceptions of the school are improved and there are stronger ties and commitment to the school; and parents are more aware of, and become more active in their children's education. (p. 19)

Henderson and Berla (1994) identified the following benefits for educators

> When schools have a high percentage of involved parents in and out of schools, faculty and staff are more likely to experience better job satisfaction; teachers and principals often earn greater respect from the parents; consistent parent involvement leads to improved relations among the school community; school personnel gain a better awareness of cultures and diversity, and develop a deeper respect for parents; and teachers and principals report an increase in job satisfaction. (p. 20)

Finally, Henderson and Berla established benefits for the school which take into account "schools that actively involve parents and the community tend to establish better

reputations in the community, and school programs that encourage and involve parents usually produce better results than schools that do not involve parents (p. 21).

Strong family school partnerships should begin in preschool and continue throughout high school. As children mature, the types of family involvement must evolve. As student move to middle school and eventually to high school, the forms of communication between the school and home must be modified to meet the new and unique challenges presented by the different grade levels (Davis, 2000).

Researchers found that more actively engaged modes of parental involvement engender more significant outcomes than more passive modes. Cotton and Reed-Wikelund (1989) suggested the following “considerably greater achievement benefits are noted when parent involvement is active--when parents work with their children at home, certainly, but also when they attend and actively support school activities” (p. 4).

Research offers a point of reference and strategies for parents who want more involvement in their children's education. “Research studies which have compared parent involvement programs that include orientation/training components with those that do not, indicate that providing orientation and training enhances the effectiveness of parent involvement” (Cotton & Reed-Wikelund, 1989, p. 4). Research from Becher (1984) and Coleman and Hoffer (1987) indicated that parents by and large desire and need direction. Cotton and Reed-Wikelund (1989) said

> The research on the effectiveness of parent involvement with older students often focuses on different forms of participation e.g., parents monitoring homework, helping students make postsecondary plans and selecting courses which support these plans, parent-school agreements on rewards for achievement and behavioral

> improvements as well as some of the "standby" functions, such as regular home-school communication about students' progress and parent attendance at school-sponsored activities. (p. 6)

Although, not as thoroughly studied as the relationship between parent involvement and student achievement, existing research that addresses the relationship between parent involvement and the attitudes and social behavior of students appears to be strong and positive. Cotton and Reed-Wikelund surmised, “In general, active parent involvement is more beneficial than passive involvement, but passive forms of involvement are better than no involvement at all” (p. 7). A clear answer has not emerged from research as for which particular types of involvement in learning have the most effective benefits. Whereas, according to Cotton and Reed-Wikelund, “Direct parent involvement in instruction seems to be the single most powerful approach for fostering achievement benefits” (p. 8).

Over the past eight years, research at the National Network of Partnerships Schools (NNPS) at John Hopkins University, based on working in concert with over 1000 schools, 100 districts, and 17 state education departments, has delved into and added to the research relating to how to develop and improve parent/school partnership programs. Specifically, NNPS research focused on how community involvement benefitted and played a part in student academic achievement and success. Several NNPS studies involved the impact parent involvement had on student success. “Through high school, family involvement contributed to positive results for students, including higher achievement, better attendance, more course credits earned, more responsible preparation for class, and other indicators of success in school” (Epstein, 2005, p. 3). One of the most

interesting and significant discoveries found in the studies suggested that, during the course of high school, it is never too late to begin a parent and community involvement program, as the gains accumulate all the way through the twelfth grade.

Parental Connections at the Secondary Level and What the School Can Do

High schools face exclusive challenges in growing and sustaining broad school, family, and community partnership programs. "The goal of positive and productive family and community involvement is on every school improvement list, but few secondary schools have implemented comprehensive programs of partnerships" (Epstein et al., 2002, p. 220). It is a daunting test to engage parents and families in high schools. Children in high school and their parents talk about school less not more, and those same parents and high school teachers have much less conversation and communication than do middle school and elementary school parents and teachers, yet research has shown that parent engagement in school improves a child's academic outcomes.

High school teachers tend to have many more students than do elementary teachers making communication more difficult and time consuming. Many parents do not know how to either relate or talk to high school teachers. The curriculum becomes more difficult, making it problematic for families to help their children with their studies, monitor their homework and academic progress, or even to ask teachers for information and help. In fact, a study conducted by Catsambis (1998) confirmed that many parenting practices have little effect on test scores by the 12th grade. The strongest impact found in the study had to do with improving learning opportunities that occur at home. When parents had high expectations, discussed college, and helped their children prepare for

college, their children were more likely to register for and take challenging academic programs and courses, earn credit, and score higher on tests.

Epstein et al. (2002) verified that working toward strong family/school partnerships is important, "The goal is an important one to reach because families and communities contribute to children's learning, development, and school success" (p. 220). Unfortunately, research has shown that the area of parental involvement at the secondary level was rarely examined closely. In fact, most of the research conducted in the area examines only elementary grades. It is much easier to construct a model of what useful parental involvement looks like during the elementary years.

When people are asked to describe parental involvement, most would describe volunteering at school, helping with homework, and perhaps frequent conversations with teachers. For many reasons, this becomes a much more compounded condition at the secondary level. But for various reasons-such as the greater traveling distance to the secondary school; the complexity of the secondary subject matter; the challenge of dealing with many teachers; and most of all, the ever-changing nature of the parent-child relationship-this picture of elementary school parental involvement is not valid for secondary schools (Leon, 2003). The reality is that parental contacts with the secondary school principals, teachers, and other administrators are too often restricted to stressful conversations or confrontations about students' problems and behavior (Epstein, 2001).

The lack of research on secondary parental involvement should serve as evidence as to the difficult nature of parental involvement at the secondary level, but because there is a lack of research does not mean parental involvement at the secondary level is not just as important as the elementary level. According to Leon (2003), parental participation in

the school life of a child is vital during the high school years. Many of the mid-sets formed by teens will probably determine much of their future success in life. Further Leon said, “Because school environments are often where the temptation to experiment sexually and misuse drugs may appear, it is easy to understand the need for parents or guardians to play a significant role in a student’s life” (p. 33).

Supported by Catsombis (1998), Simon (2004) found additional evidence for teachers contacting parents. Simon concluded that when staff members contacted parents about involvement opportunities within the high schools parents were more likely to attend workshops, volunteer, work with their teens on assignments, and talk with them about school. Simon also found strong relationships between parent partnership practices and student success. When parents attended events and workshops at the school and talked to their teens about going to college, their students had better grades and completed more courses.

Leon (2003) found that, in contrast to perceptions of many parents, teens want and welcome their parents’ help and find spending time with families important as they move through the tests and trials of secondary school life. Though there is a great need, parents are all too often at a loss as to how to help. Leon interviewed 51 families to test the theory that the model of parental involvement in secondary schools was one of communication from the school to the parents. When schools communicated early about academic and behavior problems to parents about their own children, these children showed the most progress (Gustafson, 1998). Though some parents did report they were active in certain parent groups, the number involved was so low that school personnel could not expect much involvement at all. Many parents were unaware of the parent

groups associated with the school; some parents said they were discouraged from participation in school groups because their presence at school embarrassed their child. Some parents also mentioned that because they trusted their older children more, they felt less need to be involved. Therefore, the parents admitted a lack of involvement in secondary group activities and expressed little prospect of increasing their involvement.

The interviews showed that most parents received news about the school in primarily two ways, school newsletters and parent teacher conferences. According to Leon, most parents read the newsletters and found the information beneficial, especially when focused on teaching and learning strategies. Parents also appreciated news and information about school problems they may have first heard about through non-school sources. Parents also appreciated parent-teacher conferences. They felt as though they provided opportune time for parents to be in the schools, would not be intrusive, and that their attendance would not embarrass their children. Parents also wanted to know what kind of people surround their child and their attitudes toward their child (Gotts & Purnell, 1987). By scheduling full-day or evening conferences, schools take the lead and make a strong statement about their commitment to inviting the parents to become partners in education (Leon, 2003).

According to Epstein et al. (2002), “It is particularly important for middle and high school educators to understand that partnerships are not extra, separate, or different from the real work of a school’s program and student success” (p. 229). They expressed the importance of high school families being provided good and relevant information about teachers, curriculum, instruction, and assessment methods in order for parents to be able to talk about school issues with their children. They continued by saying that high

schools must also notify all parents about courses and other important services and programs the school offers to help guide the academic choices teens make. They further said that high schools need to help families understand how their children are making progress in every subject area, how to set and meet learning goals, and how to help students problem solve when faced with the possibility of failing courses or grade-levels. They also stated it was valuable for high schools to create individual student educational plans and conferences with all students and parents. Epstein et al. continued by stating

> With clear information about school academic programs, more families will be able to guide students' decisions about courses, homework completion, studying for tests, and taking steps toward college or work. . . . If teachers, students, and parents or other family members communicate clearly and frequently through high school about students' academic programs, progress, and needs, more students will succeed at high levels. (p. 230)

Constantino (2007), discussed a three year study conducted by his organization, Family Friendly Schools, which works with schools and school districts to plan, measure, and improve upon parent involvement activities that lead to improved student achievement. The study sent out almost 150,000 surveys to families across the United States. The survey measures four domains of family engagement practice: "the welcoming environment of the school, a healthy two-way communication between home and school, the degree of parent involvement in specific academic realms, and the school's support for home learning" (Constantino, p. 57).

Supported by the research of Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, and Fendrich (1999) and Pool (1998), the results showed that as students moved from elementary grades to high

schools all levels of parent involvement decreased, while school supported home learning showed the greatest loss. Constantino (2007) drew the conclusion that the most important element when high schools tried to engage parents and families to bring about improved student learning was the principal's belief in and embrace of the idea. According to Constantino and supported by the work with school leadership of Cotton (2003); Reeves (2006 & 2007); Kohm and Nance (2007); Pollock (2007); Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005); Schomoker (2006); Whitaker (2003); and DuFour, Eaker, and DuFour (2005), teachers look to the principal and school leadership teams for direction. It is important that the high school leadership team is united in the wish for promoting true parent involvement and engagement. Adelman and Taylor (2008) stated, "Building such partnerships requires an enlightened vision, creative leadership, and new and multifaceted roles for professionals" (p. 3).

MacDowell (1989) confirmed that the high school leadership must have a passion to engage all parents and families. Constantino suggested not just some parents and families, but all parents and families, even those who are often put off or are unhappy with the school. Any leader who does not believe in the power of family engagement will have little success leading staff members and communities toward the goal.

Constantino (2007) put forward that, left "unchecked," there are documented challenges that will lead to obstacles between parents and high schools. Backed by the investigation of Rasmussen (1998), the first such barrier facing high schools is finding ways to help parents feel more welcome. High schools have larger attendance areas and lose the neighborhood school feeling associated with many elementary schools. The size

of the high schools can be intimidating to many parents, especially for parents who have at any time felt turned away by the high school, or who speak little or no English.

According to Constantino (2007), a solution is to make the high school feel more inviting by bringing down walls that make the building seem so large and the campus so family unfriendly. Constantino recommended using signs in multiple languages that point to offices, gymnasiums, auditoriums, and the cafeteria. He suggested schools take their lead from malls and shopping centers by posting directions that identify "you are here" locations clearly and by placing welcome signs in strategic places. He recommended schools consider using maps that included pictures of key personnel so that parents could put a face to a name when they came to the school for meetings and appointments. He also suggested schools designate "family parking" spaces closest to the building instead of "visitor parking." He urged schools to make information about the school and its programs, practices, standards, and other pertinent information available in offices and other waiting areas, and recruit a greeter who could welcome and direct parents and families to their destinations. He followed by suggesting schools ensure that the school website has contact information, including an e-mail address, on its home page, so that families could send questions or concerns they had to the school (Constantino, 2007).

Rice (2001) stated that the second challenge most high schools face was ineffectual two-way communication between teachers and parents. Rice indicated that this was due to the size and complexity of today's high schools. The solution Constantino (2007) recommended was to make contacting the high school easy by developing a system for two-way communication and conversation between the parents and school staff. Constantino advised beginning by practicing good customer service behaviors when

answering the phones or e-mails. He suggesting setting a standard that every phone call would be returned within 24 hours. Constantino further suggested all phone numbers and e-mails for all staff members should be published, and advised informing parents of teachers' schedules and highlighting the times that individual teachers were available. He advocated clearly publishing telephone numbers, fax numbers, e-mail addresses, and all other forms communication on the school web-site, and the use of customer comment cards to gather feedback about the school's ability to communicate. Constantino urged all translations and translated documents be of high quality. He believed learning should be the focus of school-to-home communication, and suggested schools consider moving the principal's message off the first page of the school newsletter and replacing it with a permanent column about standards or learning. He felt shorter newsletters that were published more often and that focus on academic achievement brought meaning and relevance to learning, and the school's website should be used to promote tips and information regarding specific learning objectives for all students.

The third hurdle facing high schools is getting parents to show up. As children grow up and get older, their parents become less predisposed to sign up or volunteer for school committees, parent-teacher groups, or other teams intended to gather parent participation (Burke, 2001). According to Constantino (2007) and others, the answer is to reach out to parents. It is all about forming positive relationships with parents, and maintaining those positive relationships throughout the entire high school experience which significantly increases how successful parent involvement improves student achievement and leads to completion of post-secondary education. It is the positive outreach and the forming of strong relationships by the high school with parents that

effectively predicts the level of involvement parents will have in their children's high school education (Robbins & Alvy, 2004).

The fourth and final dilemma Constantino pointed to that causes parent involvement to break down in high schools is the nature of and complexity of high school instruction, assessment, curriculum, and standards Marzano (2004); Marzano and Pickering (2005); Tomlinson and Strickland (2005); and Drake and Burns (2004). This research found that as students move throughout high school it gets more and more difficult for many parents to understand much less help their children with school work (Leon, 2003). General questions replace more detailed questions about the school day by parents as their children get older and move beyond elementary and middle school years. The key to this problem for Constantino, with supporting evidence by Epstein (2001) and Van Voorhis (2001), was to expand and further build up the home-to-school communication with elements of academic focal points. California State University at Long Bench Education Professor William Jeynes' (2005) meta-analysis research of 52 studies substantiated that parental involvement was connected with higher student success and academic mastery. The research focused on the degree to which specific facets of parental involvement are advantageous to children. Jeynes proposed to answer the following questions:

> How does the academic achievement of secondary students whose parents are actively involved in their education compare to that of their counterparts whose parents are not involved? What is the particular influence of specific aspects of parental involvement? Which aspects of parental involvement have the greatest

> impact on academic achievement? Do the positive effects of parental involvement hold true for racial minority children? (p. 6)

Jeynes' (2005) discovery was significant. Supported by the work of Reeves (2006); Guskey (2000); Marzano, Pickering, and Pollack (2001); and Dean (2006) with grading practices, parental involvement has more of a dramatic effect on grades than on state assessments and standardized tests, and those students whose parents were determined to be highly involved in their children's schooling did substantially better in school than their equals whose parents were less involved. Sustained by the research of Ballantine (1999), Christian, Morrison, and Bryant (1998), and Hara (1998); Jeynes also found after examination that parental style and expectations seem to have the most bearing on student achievement. Jeynes stated, "One of the patterns that emerged from the findings was that subtle aspects of parental involvement, such as parental style and expectations, had a greater impact on student educational outcomes" (p. 6). While both parent involvement programs and family communication showed increased levels of student achievement outcomes, what Jeynes determined was that the largest significant effects materialized due to parental expectations and parenting style, and that the studies held consistent and true for minority students as well.

All children benefit when parents, families, and members of the community are involved with schools. According to Mary Ann Burke (2001), when adults participate in school, it sends the message that school is important to children and that the work they do there is worthy of the interest of the adults. Burke stated

> Many people, however, do not feel welcome at school. They may want to volunteer, but do not know how to begin. They may believe that children and

> teachers do not want them there, or they may not know how to fit one more activity into an already tight schedule. (p. 2)

Upheld by the research of Caspe and Lopez (2006), these circumstances presented ideal avenues for school communities to reach out and provide support and opportunities for parents, family members and others.

Burke (2001) believed that having an extensive widespread method to partnership between schools, families, and communities would allow schools to build on their strengths. “A comprehensive approach fosters positive attitudes about the school and about families and community members because it respects the varying capacities of the school population as a whole” (Burke, p. 2). Research from the field, (Cooper, 2005; Anderson & Minke, 2007), showed that powerful parent and community involvement did not just occur and was not restricted to just certain types of schools. According to the Parent Institute (2008), people come into the school community with an array of conflicting expectations, pressures, and prior experiences with schools. Some may have had long-lasting underlying core issues of mistrust or other struggles that could have affected the rapport between home, community, and school. School buildings that determine the success of parental outreach through volunteerism and parent attendance at school events alone are missing worthwhile openings to unite with families who are disconnected from the school (Davis, 2000). According to Maynard Howely,

> Many schools have gone to the expense and effort of planning a series of events for parents and community members and have only two or three people attend. When this happens, school staffs become disillusioned and begin to wonder if school partnerships are even worth the effort. (1999, p. 3)

Albert Holliday said that a school public relations or communication program has two components.

> First is the traditional political aspect--laying the foundation of understanding for staffing, facility, and curricular needs. . . . Second is the relational aspect--the ways educators, parents, and others in the community work together to enhance opportunities for students to achieve. (Holliday, 1997, p. 7)

Building knowledge leading to financial support, in the first aspect, is essential for basic operation. Developing interrelationships in the school community leading to a consensus on goals and methods is required for optimal operation of our schools.

Recent research suggested that high school educators develop a comprehensive partnership program, with parent and community involvement activities linked to improved school outcomes and student achievement. In a study conducted by Simon (2001), in which responses to surveys from 1,000 high school principals and 11,000 parents of high school seniors were analyzed, it was revealed that specific family and community involvement activities actually increased student achievement in both English and math course credits finished. The researcher in this study, however, conceptualized partnerships broadly using Epstein's (1995) framework of six types of family and community involvement, which recognizes a wide range of partnership activities including parenting: "communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community" (Simon, 2001, p. 10).

Another promising practice involved engaging families in out-of-school time (OST) programs. Out-of-school time programs can improve school initiatives, academic outcomes, and reinforce the relationships between the family and the school. According

to Heather Weiss (2005), founder and director of the Harvard Family Research Project, parents convey the benefits of OST when they describe the program as "a family." Research on OST suggested implementing programs that engage families. Parents find workshops and events that highlight strategies to be the most useful. "OST programs . . . promote academic achievement and adjustment; provide opportunities such as arts, music, and other pursuits not available in school; and expose young people to more hands-on, project-based learning" (Weiss, 2005, p. 14). Still little information exists on how to get at risk students "in the door," and keep them active and engaged.

Key research suggests schools that link parent and community involvement to learning will have a greater impact on student success than other more common types of involvement. "The form of involvement should be focused on improving achievement and be designed to engage families and students in developing specific knowledge and skills" (Henderson & Mapp, 2002, p. 38). Examples of these types of parent involvement programs would include programs designed to improve literacy and math skills. Findings suggest these programs accomplish what they set out to do. When other areas of improvement were investigated, the interesting finding was that only the areas the program was designed to target and improve showed any sufficient academic and parent involvement gains (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Programs and workshops designed to inform parents about what their children are learning and how to help their children at home show gains in achievement. A study conducted by Shaver and Walls (1998) supported the efforts found when schools update parents on their children's progress, train parents to respond to issues that support children through crisis and discipline strategies, and provide guidance on how to use

reading and math instructional packets. The results showed sufficient gains in math application and total reading and comprehension scores of children with high-parent involvement. The results suggested students make greater and more constant gains when teachers engage in parent outreach. “Outreach is defined as meeting with parents face to face, sending materials on ways to help their child at home, and telephoning both routinely and when their child is having problems” (Henderson & Mapp, 2002, p. 39). Henderson and Mapp proposed that engaging parents will help a school’s improvement plans work better. Reaching out to parents paired with improving teaching and standard-based practices will add to the effectiveness of a comprehensive school improvement plan and raise student achievement.

Another interesting parent involvement strategy schools can use that has shown to improve academic performance is Teacher Involving Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS). Supported by the work of Epstein (1997) and (2006) and her colleagues, studies on TIPS, which focused on science and writing in school districts in both Maryland and Virginia, found that involving parents in homework activities increased writing test scores and was linked to higher language arts grades. “The TIPS process enables teachers to design homework that requires children to talk to someone at home about their assignment. Parents monitor, interact, and support their children, but they are not asked to teach subjects or direct the assignments” (Henderson & Mapp, 2002, p. 109).

Bridgeland, Dilulio, Streeter, and Mason (2008), who have surveyed thousands of parents across America, also promoted the use of TIPS. According to their research, there was supporting evidence stating that the more parents help and work with their children on their homework assignments the more successful overall the child will be in school.

They recommended teacher created homework assignments and activities that involve the family in every course and subject taught. A study by Bridgeland et al. (2008) found, after controlling for a variety of demographic variables, that when parents participated in more activities at their children's schools during preschool and kindergarten, their children showed increased reading performance, passed eighth grade at higher rates, and had lower rates of special education. Other research shows that academic achievement is highly correlated with parents discussing school with their children at home, and active parent-school involvement helps children develop the skills needed for success in all school subject areas (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988; Eccles & Harold, 1996).

Dr. Joyce Epstein, founder of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University in 2005 identified 8 "essential elements" found to be effective for school, family, and community partnership programs. These include "leadership, teamwork, action plans, implementation of plans, funding, collegial support, evaluation, and networking" (Epstein, 2005, p. 1). The schools in the NNPS study that formed action teams and developed committees with written plans had the most success over time (Amato, 1996; Jehl & Kirst, 1992; Longoria, 1998). With steps such as these in place, according to Epstein, schools were able to connect with more "hard-to-reach" families and actually improved the extent of their program partnerships.

Other NNPS studies (Mawhinnny, 1994; McPartland & Nettles, 1991; Merz & Furman, 1997) investigated data related to effective communication and found when educators talk clearly and successfully with parents on "targeted" subject matters like student attendance, average daily attendance rates increased and absenteeism decreased over the period of one school year to the next. Several other NNPS studies investigated

effective communication and student behavior (Mickelson, 1999; Newman, 1991). The studies discovered that when school officials and parents had actual positive conversations about student behaviors, disciplinary problems were fewer from one year to the next. Other NNPS studies noted math proficiency increased when teachers implemented and required that parents and their child interact on math homework (Balfanz, 2000; Catsambis, 1998). Other NNPS studies on homework explored and found significant student achievement gains on grade cards and with homework completion when teachers developed homework activities that were subject content-specific and involved the family (Hoover-Dempsey, Battiato, Walker, Reed, DeJong, & Jones, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). "The studies of homework and targeted outcomes reinforce the importance of well-designed, subject-specific or goal-linked activities for family and community involvement for strongest impact on student achievement and success in school" (Epstein, 2005, pp. 3-4).

Bridgeland et al. (2008) who interviewed and surveyed thousands of parents of high school students all across the country, determined there was a strong correlation between how well the school reaches out to its parents and the quality of the school. The parents of children who attend high performing high schools said their schools did a good job of outreach. According to these and others, (Campbell, Gillborn, & Lall, 2004), the three areas parents wanted to be informed of, or have a part in, and which mark high quality schools are graduation requirements, course selection, and updates about whether their child is on track for college. They advised arranging a meeting between parents and the school counselor when the child first enters high school to talk about the significance of college, and to promote the importance of parents being involved with their child's

education throughout high school. Data from their surveys supported this advice. In none of these areas did more than 50% of parents of students in low-performing schools feel the school did a good job. In contrast to parents of students in low-performing schools, Bridgeland et al. (2008) found the responses of parents of students in high-performing schools only drop below 50% once, in the case of arranging a meeting with a counselor at the beginning of high school in order to discuss the importance of college. They said high schools could and should reach out to parents and families to make certain students benefit from their parents' involvement. Their studies indicated high schools did not need to convince parents that their child's education made a difference, nor did they need to spend time informing parents of the magnitude of their responsibility.

According to Brigdeland et al. (2008), what high schools needed was to find new, useful, and universal ways to create and to support parental involvement and to build new kinds of opportunities for parents to act on the understandings and interests they already had. They found the high school could not wait until there were disciplinary issues before reaching out and connecting with parents. The first call a parent received, according to them, should not be informing them their child was in trouble. They said schools were not responsible for making parents better parents or teaching them what was best for their children, but they could be a great help to parents by improving the ways they made it possible for parents to be involved in the life of the school and the course of their children's education.

There was not just one single approach that would fully upgrade all aspects of parental involvement at a given school. They found that parents believed any number of intercessions could be helpful and improve involvement. Supported by Epstein and

Clark-Salinas (2004), they suggested starting first with more practical ways of involving parents in the academic training of their children. Sustained by the research of Diss and Buckley (2005), while it was still important to offer parents opportunities to volunteer in concession stands at games and for parent organizations, the main goal of parental involvement was to strengthen their child's academic success in school.

When schools offer chances for involvement they need to consider the kinds of lives their parents lead. Today schools are faced with more and more two working parent households or single parent households. Bridgelend et al. (2008) recommended high schools educate parents and families as to the types of involvement opportunities the school offers, as well as the graduation requirements and the college admissions process.

Be it a teacher advisor, counselor, or school administrator; the high school should have a single contact person appointed so parents will always know who to contact when they have concerns or questions for the school. Bridgeland et al. (2008) encouraged high schools to start a national dialogue between parents across the country as a strategy for parents to best help improve student academic performance and success in school.

The following is a list of strategies, suggestions, and findings found in the research from National Parent Teacher Association's (NPTA) (2008) National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs and is supported by the research of Henderson and Mapp (2002), which schools could use to increase student achievement by improving parent, family, and community involvement in the school: encouraging positive parenting skills, enhancing communication with families, increasing volunteerism and attendance at school events, improving learning at home, and improving community collaboration.

Encouraging positive parenting skills. Strategies included: surveying parents, consulting with parents and others in the community, establishing a home visit program, making referral information readily available, offering school space, providing child development information, capitalizing on parent attendance at neighborhood and community fairs and events, and offering a sharing night for parents.

Enhancing communication with families. Strategies included: developing a partnership plan, emphasizing the importance of strong family involvement, using Title 1 or other funds to compensate teachers for time spent making home visits, soliciting financial support to improve communications opportunities with families, sharing school expectations, making sure that all teachers have an e-mail address, developing a format for newsletters, as a faculty have numerous ways of gathering opinions from teachers, students, and parents, communicate often about the achievement data, and update signage around the school.

Increasing volunteerism and attendance at school events. Strategies included: surveying potential volunteers, hiring or appointing a volunteer coordinator, offering a variety of times to volunteer, offering training to volunteers, inviting parents to eat lunch with their children and even ride the school bus, encouraging occasions for volunteers to be seen as positive examples, publicizing volunteer opportunities throughout the year, and including students in meetings with parents.

Improving learning at home. Strategies include: making parent support at home a considerable focus throughout the school, encouraging parents and offer suggestions, having "family reading, math, and science nights" at the school, asking parents for input on homework assignments, developing learning games for use in the family car, sending

home a simple handwritten letter, having a library with games students can check out, helping families celebrate success, and establishing a homework hotline.

Improving community collaboration. Strategies include: convening at least three meetings a year, inviting business to school events, publicly acknowledging partnerships, mentioning generosity frequently and prominently, getting feedback and ideas to improve family connections, asking meeting participants to assess growth and identify challenges, and writing thank you notes.

Linking Schools with Communities

Ecology and sociology theorists view the neighborhood and surrounding community as very important for a child's development. Weiss, Kreider, Lopez, & Chatman (2005) believed children's development was affected by children's immediate contexts (microsystems such as home, school, and community) and the relationship among those contexts (the mesosystems). Adelman and Taylor (2008) referred to school and community partnerships as collaborations. In Adelman and Taylor's view these collaborations formally mix together resources of a school with those resources in a community or given neighborhood. The idea is to maintain and grow these collaborations or partnerships over time. Adelman and Taylor stated

> Community are not limited to agencies and organizations; they encompass people, businesses, community based organizations, postsecondary institutions, religious and civic groups, programs at parks and libraries, and any other facilities that can be used for recreation, learning, enrichment, and support. (p. 3)

Researchers such as Comer and Haynes (1991) have long had an interest in the relationship a neighborhood plays in the development of a child. In general,

neighborhood and community effects on children are not very well understood (Comer and Haynes). For example, one study found little evidence to indicate that neighborhood circumstances improve adolescent outcomes as a result of family management practices, which refers to how parents react as a result of activities outside the home, either by monitoring these activities or linking youth to resources, such as neighborhood programs (Weiss, Kreider, Lopez, & Chatman, 2005). Parents adjust their parenting styles and practices due to how close knit the parents perceive the neighborhood and community to be. Neighborhoods with a greater sense of community encourage more intensive parental monitoring, which in turn is associated with better youth outcomes (Weiss et al., 2005, p. 50).

Many low-income families develop "community bridging strategies" which they use to put in place a neighborhood network of friends, locations, resources, and strategies to help mainstream opportunities and parenting actions. A study of Boston neighborhoods showed that when parents had strong neighborhood ties that extended beyond the family, children's social behaviors and school performance were better (Weiss et al., 2005). Their explanation for this finding was that children who were exposed to more heterogeneous social networks had more opportunities to spend time with other adults in socially and cognitively stimulating activities. They concluded by recommending that school leaders and educators enlarge the idea of parent involvement to not only include school and home, but to include the community. Schools officials needed to build up a larger awareness of the community scene, societal traditions, and education and train their staffs to provide for more family involvement opportunities. Examples of family involvement opportunities as suggested by Weiss et al. (2005) include: taking a tour or

revisiting the community and neighborhoods, expanding parent networks, and making connections with community leaders and agencies.

Take a tour or revisit the community. Whether an educator lives in the community or outside it, visiting neighborhoods and talking to people in the community about the places families frequent and the activities that their children access when school ends could provide a wealth of information about children's lives outside of school. Educators could develop lists that document the resources, support, and occasions for family involvement that currently exist, and those that could be created. Home visits also provided educators with an opportunity to listen to parents and to observe how the home supports children's learning. This exploration in the home and community could generate ideas about ways to connect with families and how community activities could intersect with classroom experiences.

Expand parent networks. Educators could help connect parents to each other and expand their social ties. This connection could enrich parents' knowledge about involvement practices to support children's learning. It also could stimulate children's access to other people in the community who could enrich children's social and educational experiences. Family resource centers, for example, provided a space where parents could go to meet each other informally and build a sense of community. With the help of educators, family resources center staff could build parent interest for supporting children's learning in school and after school.

Make connections with community organizations. When schools collaborate with community organizations, they could interact with parents who may be difficult to reach individually. Holding parent meetings in community settings could make parents feel

more comfortable, especially when they could communicate in their native languages and gain access to community translations. Educators could also learn more about their students and families from those who have contact with them in their broader roles as community members. This exposure could also lend itself to exploring new ideas and roles for parents in their children's education. One advantage of creating alliances with community organizations and leaders could be their credibility among parents. The message of family involvement could become more powerful for parents when community leaders expressed and demonstrated support for it (Weiss et al., 2005).

Most educators think of public relations or school-community relations as one-way media such as brochures, newsletters, and other printed materials (Goble, 1993). Goble thought those tools in the overall year-round communication program were important. But if school boards and administrators did not make a commitment through public policy action, such strategies become piecemeal, fragmented, and generally doomed to failure. Goble found educators often said public relations were everyone's business. However, if it was not planned and given high priority in terms of financial and human resources, it became no one's business.

Riley and Wofford (2000) stated, "It isn't easy to transform the goals and structure of school systems so that they do a better job of educating students and connecting with communities" (p. 58).

> It takes hard work and collaboration. It shakes up long-held assumptions about how schools, districts, and neighborhoods should relate to each other. It eliminates some jobs and redefines others. It requires the courage and commitment to do what's right for children. (Riley & Wofford, p. 670)

Methods for linking schools with local communities include "the community schools model, charter schools, and contract schools" (Bryk, 1999, p. 1). These methods are a move away from centralized control toward cite-based management and greater educational decision making by parents.

"Decentralization's emphasis on school-level autonomy for operations and finances, accountability for results, and site-based leadership and governance has important lessons for other attempts to unite schools, families, and communities around improving children's chances" (Bryk, 1999, p. 1). Adelman and Taylor (2008) found that decentralization was a key factor for schools who hoped to benefit from school-community collaborations. Adelman and Taylor stated

> From a decentralized perspective it is a good idea to conceive the process from localities outward. First, the focus is on mechanisms at the school- neighborhood level. Then, mechanisms are conceived that enable several school-neighborhood collaborations to work together to increase efficiency and effectiveness and achieve economies of scale. (p. 8)

According to Gobel (1993), although both parents of students and even nonparents in the community want to know more about schools, people in general were not likely to look for and seek out school information on their own. Therefore, the general public in the community, and even parents to a great level, are unaware of an uninformed about what really goes on in the school's educational setting and about how and why school decisions are made. Gobel established that educators must take the initiative in bringing schools and the community together.

Keeping the public better informed would reap rich dividends in support for education. Parents and others who have had virtually any kind of contact - personal or through publications - with their schools were more understanding and supportive of what educators were trying to do. According to McGrawth (2007) there were several steps forward-looking school boards should take to help keep the community connected. McGrawth recommend making public relations an integral part of the board's strategic plan, mission statement, and community-wide public affairs activities. School boards and administrators should not implement broad-based strategies or manage educational programs without communication, and it was not good policy to manage today and communicate tomorrow. Each management decision required the four-step process of analysis, planning, communication, and evaluation. When the board enacts proper policies, it sends a clear message to the community that the schools are here to serve the students and public. It is establishing renewed credibility. It also is establishing that schools are customer-driven and service-oriented.

Other studies focused on what individual school buildings could do to connect with their local community. Resto and Alston (2006) recommended schools redefine who their customers are and what their needs are by systematically analyzing all the audiences and groups in the school and community who have direct or indirect contact with the education system. Phillipson and Phillispon (2007) advised schools thoroughly research the make-up of their community and its demographic structure so that they know their community, based on solid research, better than any other group or agency. Pomerantz, Moorman, and Litwack (2007) suggested, “Using focus groups, formal and informal surveys, and two-way communication techniques to find out what they know about their

schools and what they would like to know more about" (p. 9). They suggested using this data to carefully analyze, plan, communicate, and evaluate strategies to meet the mission and goals of the school community.

Further studies that have shown to link the school to community and improve academic performance include community volunteers and tutoring programs like that found in a study by Invernizzi (1997) called Book Buddies, where community members read to first and second graders. Compared to baseline scores, students that took part in the program showed significant gains in reading, and students who attended more often showed the greatest gains compared to the control group in the study. Many community programs that work in schools offer academic assistance.

A new term has arisen to describe schools that engage in effectively involving the community, "community schools." Dryfoos (2000) assessed such community schools. According to Dryfoos, community schools feature these typical programs; before and after school academic learning programs, family support programming that help families with a variety of social and health services, and partnerships with the local communities. Community schools that particularly focused on student achievement and learning improved academic performance. Manno of the Casey Foundation (2008) report defined community schools as, "Public schools that are enhanced by coordinated partnerships with organizations that provide diverse activities and programs for students, families, and community members. . . . These schools function as hubs for community life and include community development to support student learning" (p. 2). Research conducted by the Casey Foundation demonstrated that community schools could and did improve student

academic performance and learning, increased parent participation, provided teachers more time for instruction, and helped to make schools and neighborhoods safer.

New studies on the effects and impact of community organizing efforts have shown encouraging results on student achievement. Community organizing adds to remarkable changes in schools including: upgrading facilities, improved teaching and leadership, improved instructional programs, and new resources and funding. Mediratta, Shah, and McAlister (2008) of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University recently recommended the following be put into action by community organizers. They said

> Recognize that all parents . . . are involved in their children's learning and want their children to do well, design programs that will support families to guide their children's learning. . . . Develop the capacity of school staff and families to work together. Link activities and programs for families to improving student learning. Focus on developing trusting and respectful relationships among staff and families. Build families' social and political connections. Embrace a philosophy of partnership and be willing to share power. . . . Build strong connections between schools and community organizations. Include families in all strategies to reduce the achievement gap between White, middle-class students and low-income students and students of color. (p. 2)

Importance of Staff Morale in Parent Involvement and Community Relations

According to Yantis (1996), teachers also need to understand the reasons why it is important to strive for positive community relationships and how those relationships can have both short-and long-term benefits for them. Yantis found that these may have come

in the form of increased community support for additional teaching resources, better facilities, higher salaries, and reasonable class loads. Teachers may have benefited from increased parental involvement, as parents become more aware and supportive of the classroom environment and activities. Staff development programs could have included such things as how to suggest stories for news media coverage, getting stories into the staff newsletter, working with the media, handling a crisis, and for teachers, how to involve parents in the classroom or conduct positive and meaningful parent-teacher conferences.

Many schools have some form of staff development programs. However, studies have shown that there is a considerable difference between schools with excellent morale and those with poor morale in the way those programs were planned and conducted. In the schools with higher morale, teachers and staff were very involved in planning these programs (Yantis, 1996).

According to the work of Boethel (2003), Hensley (2005), Ramirez (1999), and others, "There is a close relationship between the internal social, psychological, and emotional environment of a school and the type of external relations a school has with its community" (Boethl, 2003, p. 9). Low staff morale and poor personal relationships within the school were often carried over to unsuccessful school-community relations. Dissatisfied staff members did not normally represent the school to the public in a way that led to public confidence (Yantis, 1996).

Building on research relating to positive relationships from the work of Scherer (2003) and Wolk (2003), too many negative staff members represent the school in the mind of the public; and if they portray a negative image through off-handed comments or

actions, the public will have a tendency to portray the entire school in an unfavorable way, said Yantis (1996). Yantis said that community relations are the result of the ever flowing images the school and its staff project, whether positive or negative. These same images take years to build trust and confidence, but only moments to be torn down.

A positive external relationship with the community starts within the school. Establishing and maintaining a healthy working environment is the first step in developing positive participation by the entire staff in the school-community relations program (Yantis, 1996). Berman (2003), Katch (2003), and others maintained that, in schools it is the staff, teacher to the bus driver, who are closest to the customer.

The wise school administrator will recognize and build upon that fact as the school-community relations team is developed and the program established. Yantis found the staff that comprised the school-community relations team included all those involved with schools, including administrators, teachers, cafeteria workers, secretaries, bus drivers, paraprofessionals, custodians, and contracted workers. Those people communicate about schools to and with neighbors, bridge partners fellow club members, coffee shop patrons, and all the people they encountered. They are primary sources of information about schools and attitudes regarding school programs and systems. Therefore, all personnel must be kept informed through regular staff meetings and memos, and public relations should be listed among the responsibilities in their job descriptions.

Parent and Teacher Conferences

Fredriksen-Goldsen and Scharlach (2001) stated, “As educators who have a love for working with children, we must examine what might be gained when teachers and

parents conference" (p. 8). Parent-teacher conferences have probably become the most common means for teachers and parents to communicate. Conferences offer parents and teachers the chance to meet and discuss new ideas and provide suggestions for helping children. Together, parents and teachers are provided a chance to talk about a child's behavior, motivation, progress, and the causes for achievements and disappointments (Kansas Parent Information Resource Center, 2009).

The conference style, format, and frequency may vary from school to school, but the most widespread intent is to inform parents about their child's progress. According to Olsen and Fuller (2008), one reason is perhaps simply that they work. For the most part, parents appreciate a time to talk to the teacher about their child's school life, and when done at regular intervals, with administrative time and support, it affords teachers an organized means of ensuring that each family has an opportunity to be personally informed (Olsen & Fuller, 2008).

While both parents and teachers report understandable nervousness about conferences, it is interesting that many teachers view these conferences not as an opportunity but a chore. Teachers notice that the parents they need to see the most do not show up, while both teacher and parents complain that there is never enough time for meaningful conversation (Rockwell, Andre, & Hawley, 1996). Despite the most unnerving situations that parent-teacher conferences can cause, there are a number of strategies that can be used to maximize the likelihood of maintaining the high-quality effects of parent-teacher conferences. The Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (2009) suggested confirming conferences in writing by sending home sign-up sheets to parents so they can pick the very best times.

Olsen and Fuller (2008) and others suggested scheduling parent/teacher conferences both in the evening and during the day to help accommodate parents' busy lives (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). They also suggested scheduling siblings back-to-back, to eliminate the need for multiple trips to the school. Olsen and Fuller (2008) further recommended making the environment less intimidating by seating parents next to the teacher at a table, rather than on the other side of a desk, could reduce the perception of unequal positions. Making parents comfortable with adult-sized chairs could help put them at ease. When possible, not keeping parents waiting and getting up to greet them at the door could communicate care and interest and help make parents feel welcome and valued. Engaging in a minute of small talk before addressing the conference agenda could also help put parents at ease and make the atmosphere friendlier.

Further suggestions from Olsen and Fuller and others included limiting the number of areas discussed in such a short conference, as it is difficult to deal with a multitude of issues at one time (Gonzalez-Mena, 1998) and (National Parent Teacher Association, 2000). A certain way to gain trust and to create two-way conversation with parents according to Olsen and Fuller was to offer something to parents that showed the teacher knows something more about their child than mere grades and test. "What engages her in class? Who are his friends? What role does he play in a group project? How does she express herself?" (Olsen & Fuller, 2008, p.115).

Allen (2007), advocated for student led conferences and allowing evidence of student learning support to the conversation. Allen proposed concrete evidence enables dialogue. Whether it is a formal portfolio or an array of student work spread out on a table, it is crucial that parents see their child as a learner. The evidence may be carefully

selected writing, daily work, projects and teats. Evidence may include artifacts such as photographs of children creating a map of where their favorite book characters live, audiotapes of reading the same story at different points in the year, video clips of a poetry slam. Students may include self-evaluation; parents may also comment and evaluate progress.

According to Allen when conducting parent-teacher conferences, teachers must be aware of the "Ghosts at the table." Expanding on the ideas and work of Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003), Allen studied the perspectives that both parents and teacher brought to traditional conferences. Lawrence-Lightfoot coined the phrase "ghosts in the classroom" to describe the unexplored history that accompany many parents as they reenter classrooms. Allen referenced Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) is that useful and real conversations between teachers and parents are not only achievable, but essentially required for student achievement to occur in schools.

To illustrate these "ghosts in the classroom" she told about a father who, as he was leaving an otherwise unremarkable conference, blurted out, "That same thing happened to me in fifth grade, and I swear it is not going to happen to my child!" Lawrence-Lightfoot commented, "His passion exploded in defense of his child and in self-defense of the child he was" (Allen, 2007, p. 84). Lawrence-Lightfoot stated in a 2004 interview, "there is a rich and emotional subtext underneath the obliged politesse and decorum of parent-teacher meetings that needs acknowledgement" (Choy, 2004, p. 2).

According to Allen, these ghosts reside in our stories as we relive past schooldays experiences. Some are friendly ghosts, when a parent recounts the teacher that spent the

extra time and effort when no one else would, or when another parent received an A in the spelling bee in the third grade, or still yet another parent remembers catching the winning touchdown their senior year. Unfortunately other ghosts are more frightening, when a parent remembers when a teacher read their low test scores out loud, or when a parent was laughed at by the class for stumbling over their words when asked to read aloud, or a parent that dropped the winning touchdown their senior year. "Every time parents and teachers encounter one another in the classroom, their conversations are shaped by their own stories and by broader cultural and historical narratives that inform their identities, their values, and their sense of place in the world" (Allen, 2007, p. 84). Puett Miller (2009) said, "This may seem obvious but most people carry a lot of baggage into these encounters. When that happens, what starts as a simple conversation can quickly escalate into an altercation" (p. 1). Allen suggested teachers tell their own past schoolyard stories or "name our ghosts." These exercises will help teachers make connections to their own pasts and lead them to empathize with others and their ghosts. "Maybe then we'll be able to make connections between our past experiences and what we bring to the parent-teacher conference table" (Allen, 2007, p. 85).

Paratore (2001); Gonzales, Moll, and Amanti (2005); Rolheiser, Bower and Stevahn (2000); and Allen (2007) have all advocated that teachers use evidence portfolios when conducting parent-teacher conferences to help assist communication between students and parents. Sometimes teachers create their own portfolios, but having students facilitate with the reflection and selection of the work that goes into the portfolio can help students develop deeper meaning and understanding of their work and how it is assessed (Paratore, 2001). In an interesting twist presented by Paratore that has shown exciting

results, students and families created the portfolios at home and brought them to the parent-teacher conferences. Paratore found in the Intergernerational Literacy Project (ILP) in Chelsea, Massachusetts, families that developed home-school portfolios and brought them to conferences. “Isn’t that a great idea-parents documenting their children’s literacy learning at home and sharing the portfolio with teachers?” (p. 67). Rolheiser, Bower & Stevahn (2000) recommended beginning by establishing the desired goals, purposes, and audience for the portfolio. Rolheiser et al. stated

> Beginning with your broader educational goals will help you focus decision making about the implementation of portfolios in your educational setting and clarify the purpose of the portfolios. Goals often emerge from an external source. …or an internal source. (p. 37)

The following research contains parent-teacher conference tips provided by the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) (2009). The tips were based on the following resources (Henderson, Map, Johnson, & Davies, 2007; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Weiss et al., 2005; Pappano, 2002). Parent–teacher conferences were a vital part of continuous school to home communication (HFRP, 2009). According to the HFRP (2009), years of research demonstrated that family involvement in education could lead to positive benefits for children and youth, such as increased school attendance, higher academic performance, and improved attitudes about school. Parent–teacher conferences were a critical factor in uninterrupted communication between the classroom and home. This communication predicted positive outcomes for students and for schools. Although many schools may have already been working hard to engage parents in their children’s education, these tips were designed to build on the experiences of the school personnel

and provide them with additional information to help make parent–teacher conferences productive and effective.

It is the duty of the school principal to provide the leadership that will make certain that conferences reach their utmost potential. The HFRP (2009) recommended these tips for principals and school leaders to follow prior to parent-teacher conferences to maximize their efforts: sending the message home, sharing school guidelines**,** publicizing parent-teacher conferences, providing professional development for the staff, and creating a welcoming school environment. Wolf and Stephens (1989) also suggested principals and school leaders can help prior to conferences by "targeting children" for whom ongoing communication may be the difference in achievement or failure. Stein, Richin, Banyon, Banyon and Stein (2000) advised that principals and school building leadership work with school district level administration to develop district wide guidelines and policies for parent-teacher conferences and to conduct workshops and to provide additional training for teachers and staff to improve conferences.

The HFRP (2009) suggested school principals consider these tips during conferences: being available; being visible; and providing school information. Further, the HFRP provided the subsequent ideas for principals to follow after the conferences concluded: getting feedback from teachers and parents, and continuing to encourage family involvement long after parent-teacher conferences have concluded. The HFRP also provided a list of tips teachers could use prior to the start of parent-teacher conferences to get the most out of them. Tips suggested included sending home invitations to parents, reviewing student work; preparing thoughts and materials, sending home reminders, and creating a welcoming environment in both the school and

classroom. Simmons (2002) recommended sending a back-to-school letter home to parents with sign-ups for available fall parent-teacher conference times. Wolf and Stephens (1989) continued by suggesting that, all communication inviting parents to parent-teacher conferences needed to be carefully and plainly written. “If parents are invited to school by letter, for example, the letter should be written clearly in plain language, free of educational jargon, and worded in a way that is positive and inviting” (Wolf & Stephens, 1989, p.1).

Stein et al. (2000) suggested that prior to beginning of parent-teacher conferences; teachers should review any district wide guidelines and/or policies created for the purpose of improving teacher-parent communication. According to these researchers, guidelines created for Centerville School District in Ohio included “developmental characteristics, instructional strategies that help student development, standards for learning and assessment, and character and conduct standards and practices that home, school, and community share” (p. 6).

Ideas and suggestions put forth by the HFRP (2009) for teachers to consider during the conferences included: discussing student progress and growth; using examples of student work; asking questions and listening actively to concerns, questions, and suggestions; sharing ideas and activities for supporting learning at home; seeking solutions collaboratively; making an action plan; and establishing continuing lines of communication. In addition, Rolheiser, Bower, and Stevahn (2000) proposed that teachers and students develop and prepare student achievement portfolios to be displayed and discussed at conferences. “Students may select a given number of entries that reflect their best effort or achievement (or both) in a course of study. The portfolio can be

presented in a student-led parent conference or at a community open house" (Rolheiser et al., 2000, p. 44). Wolf and Stephens (1983) and others recommended teachers should hold conferences in as comfortable of a place as possible for parents, suggesting using adult sized chairs and sitting with parents and not behind the teachers' desk. Furthermore, Giannetti, and Sagarese (1997) suggested ten strategies teacher could employ during conferences to help turn parents from critics to allies:

> Teachers should dust off and roll out the welcome mat; advertise their expertise; implement an early-warning system of interventions; show parents a familiar, positive portrait of their child; convey shared values; reassure parents that their child will be protected in the care of the teacher; demonstrate the inside scoop, empathize with parents that they have a tough job; be an effective and fair disciplinarian, and be a consistent role model. (p. 78)

The HFRP (2009) continued by offering the following ideas and tips for teachers to think about and to consider for after the conferences: following up with the families, continuing to communicate regularly, and connecting in-class activities to the home environment. Following conferences, Wolf and Stephens (1989) recommended contacting parents within a timely manner. Wolf and Stephens suggested that following the conferences, teachers should contact the parents within two weeks. For conferences that were satisfactory, with no unresolved issues, a simple thank-you note would be all that was needed. In cases where home/school interventions had been arranged, regularly scheduled notes and phone calls would be needed to exchange information and to evaluate progress. If the conference did not go well, a phone call to parents a few days after the meeting could be the first step toward re-establishing friendly relations.

Parents are a child's first and most important teacher. Both parents and their child's school have something in common; both want the child to learn and do well. When parents and teachers talk to each other, each one can share important information about the child's talents and needs. Each one can also learn something new about how to help the child/student. Parent–teacher conferences are a great way for parents to start talking to their child's teachers (Harvard Family Research Project, 2009).

The following HFRP (2009) tips and ideas suggested ways that parents could make the most of parent-teacher conferences so that everyone wins, especially the child. The HFRP tips for what parents should expect during parent-teacher conferences included: having a two-way conversation; emphasizing the learning; and discussing opportunities and challenges. Most parents feel at least a little apprehensive when the school calls to schedule a parent-teacher conference. Even if a parent initiates the conference, many worry about what the teacher might say (Puett Miller, 2009). Puett Miller suggested parents prepare to participate by not making the mistake of going into the conferences only to listen. Ideas for parents include considering their child's achievements in the classroom ahead of time, perhaps taking a notepad to jot down ideas, suggestions, or questions, and preparing for the possibility of facing a whole team of teachers at the high school level. Additional, free-lance education writer and teacher Jackie Glassman (2009) advised parents to prepare for parent-teacher conferences by talking to their children beforehand. She suggested parents find out what their children want discussed at the conferences. According to Glassman, a child's response can give a parent insight into what they should address with teachers.

The HFRP (2009) also offered tips and suggestions for parents as to what they and teachers should talk about during the conferences. It was recommended that the conversation should include discussing student progress, parents' thoughts about their child, supporting learning at home, and supporting learning at school. Furthermore, with supporting research from Langdon (1997) and Rich (1998) the HFRP put forth a list of questions and concerns parents should bring up with teachers during parent-teacher conferences. The list included (a) asking the teacher to describe how their child learns best and having them describe how they have tried to meet the known needs of their child, (b) having the teacher provide examples of how they have set high expectations and how they have helped their child reach them, (c) having the teacher explain how they have treated their child fairly and with respect, (d) asking the teacher if they understand that all children are special, (e) having the teacher provide examples of how they have taught the subject matter in class, and (f) asking the teacher if regular contact with the parents has helped their child's conduct and performance. Also, Glassman (2009) recommended the following questions be asked by parents,

> What are my child's strongest and weakest subjects? What can I do from home to extend my child's learning at home? Is my child working up to his or her ability? If not, what can we do to change that? How well does my child get along with classmates? How do you evaluate my child? (p. 1)

Glassman also advised parents to disclose valuable information with teachers about their child, and to be tactful when raising concerns.

Stanberry (2009) supported parents asking the teacher to make available information about the planned curriculum, and to provide examples of their child's

school work. Stanberry also recommended parents look for patterns in their child's work such as: difficult subjects, ongoing problems, new struggles, and improvements in complicated areas.

The HFRP (2009) concluded by suggesting parents follow up parent-teacher conferences by making a plan for themselves and their child, and scheduling another time to talk with the teacher. The HFRP provided several suggestions for ways to communicate—in person, by phone, notes, email. Parents needed to make a plan that works for both them and the teachers. They should be sure to schedule at least one more time to talk in the next few months. The HFRP recommended parents talk to their child; the parent–teacher conference was all about their child, so parents should not forget to include them in the conversation. They may have considered sharing with their child what they learned to show them how the parent would help with learning at home. They should also have asked their child for their suggestions.

Working with Low-income and Diverse Families

Working with diverse and low-income parents is a particular challenge facing many schools today (Weiss et al., 2005). Despite the best efforts of schools and regardless of the benefits of parental involvement, most low-income parents and families of diversity participate less often in the school lives of their children (Diffily, 2004). Due to the difficulties low-income families and families with diversity face, schools must be willing and able to create new methods to connect to these parents. According to Diffily

> It is difficult to describe today's family. Children are now living in a greater variety of family configurations than in previous generations, and families need more support than in previous generations. . . . With the general population more

> mobile than ever before, families with young children are more likely to live away from their parents or other close relatives . . . . Many families look to teachers to provide the support that previous generations received from their own families. (p. 16)

VanVelsor and Orozco (2007) found that some of the hurdles facing low-income parents were not only due to demographic and psychological factors, but also to factors within the schools. School personnel recognized the significance of parental involvement, however, many of the approaches employed by the schools relating to parental involvement focused on school needs. “Parents are invited to support school activities in the classroom, on field trips, and in library or school office. . . . Targeting low-income parents for involvement may call for a broader focus” (VanVelsor & Orozco, 2007, p. 18). Interviews conducted by Lawson (2003) found that teachers viewed parents from a school first “school-centric” point of view, a frame of reference that says how parents can help the school support student educational success. Even though Lawson found parents who shared this “school-centric” point of view, it was also evident that when interviewed, they communicated a story of a larger “community-centric” view; that is, how community concerns relate to a child’s future. It seems vital then when planning approaches to involve low-income families that schools need to reflect on this “community-centric” viewpoint.

Bemak and Cornely (2002) were other the same opinion as VanVelsor and Orozco (2007) when they pointed out the important role guidance counselors can play in “strengthening the relationship between the school and low-income parents by developing and implementing community-based strategies” (p. 7). They suggested that

guidance counselors are in an exceptional position to speak to and provide leadership for putting into action strategies that point toward community needs. “The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) reflected this broad focus in its assertion that school counseling programs represent collaborative efforts benefiting students, parents, teachers, administrators and the overall community” (VanVelsor, & Orozco 2007, p. 19).

Colbert, Vernon-Jones, and Pransky, (2006) and Education Trust (2003) concurred with VanVelsor and Orozco (2007) when they proposed that school counselors who serve low-income families take the school lead and put into practice strategies that take a community centered parent involvement frame of reference. To do this, schools must first recognize the barriers facing low-income parents. VanVelsor and Orozco stated those barriers and responsiblies included work, child care, and elderly care. In addition, transportation issues and lack of adequate resources, especially for immigrant parents, play a factor in deterring lower-income parents from being involved (Benson & Martin, 2003). Low-income parents also indicated their own lack of confidence and intellectual capacities tied to views of racism and their own negative school experiences which contributed to low involvement (Lott, 2003). In several studies, African American parents perceived racism of school personnel as directly correlated to low parental involvement (Taylor, Clayton, & Rowley, 2004). Hill and Taylor (2004) found in their study a direct effect of poverty on the mental health of parents’ ability to connect to and engage in their children’s schools.

Another study found that teachers made generalizations of low-income parents and their ability and their lack of desire to involve themselves in their school (Amatea, Smith-Adcock, & Villares, 2006). Many teachers actually showed negative attitudes

toward low-income families, which led to poor quality of treatment from teachers when parents tried to become involved. The climate of the school can serve as an obstacle to low-income parent involvement. Hill and Taylor (2004) found schools in low socioeconomic neighborhoods were less likely to promote parental participation than schools located in higher socioeconomic neighborhoods. School personnel might be engaging in using professional jargon or sending correspondence with which families were not familiar, for example, sending only letters in English in predominantly Latino communities.

It is crucial for counselors to push teachers to initiate contact with parents to build a relationship. VanVelsor and Orozco (2007) and Simons (2004) suggested that as counselors consider and develop strategies and plans to meet the community centered interests of low-income parents, they will actually learn more about the families in the school. VanVelsor and Orozco stated, "Teachers, however, may know very little about how less-educated parents are involved with their children. Schools counselors can begin to bridge this knowledge gap through proactive communication with parents" (p. 21).

In one study, in the perception of the teachers, it was important that parents contact teachers, but less important that teachers actively contact parents (Barge & Loges, 2003). While both parents and teachers wait on the other to make the first move and contact the other a priceless relationship building and learning opportunity fades away. "If counselors develop varied and understandable methods for communicating with families themselves, they can share these with teachers" (Pelco, 2000, p. 8).

Another recommendation VanVelsor and Orozco (2007), Weiss et al. (2005), Lawerence-Lightfoot (2003), and Delgado-Gaitan (2004) all made to improve parental

involvement of low-income parents was for schools to make home visits. VanVelsor and Orozco recommended school counselor interns, school counselors, and directors and counseling departments on occasion make home site visits. Despite the protest and cries by several in the counseling arena, according to VanVelsor and Orozco, the benefits outweigh the roadblocks. “Home visits minimize the power imbalance between professionals and families and help to overcome barriers related to low-income parents’ work constraints and transportation problems” (p. 21). Counselors are better able to build positive relationships when they enter the home. In one study it was established that parents relaxed more in the home and were more trusting of the school personnel. When counselors developed positive relationships with the parents they were better able to share the dreams of parents and both parents and children were better positioned to achieve those dreams (Amatea, 2006). The counselors might involve other school staff in the home visit program. VanVelsor and Orozco suggested that counselors may devise a plan in which teachers and school administrators get involved in home visits as well.

Getting to know parents is complex and needs more than just welcoming parents to get involved; it entails and necessitates school personnel rolling up their sleeves and actively engaging and reaching out to parents, and learning about the community where their parents and students live. School officials need to identify and then turn to the community leaders in their neighborhoods. In one study, looking at highly successful middle schools serving primarily Latino areas, researchers found school leaders connected and communicating with community leaders. Additionally teachers in these schools knew the community (Jesse, Davis, & Pokorny, 2004). The organizers in these communities had useful, helpful information for schools about the challenges facing the

individuals and families in these locations. Boethel (2003) advised that schools get to know the organizations and agencies serving these communities, and keep addresses and contact records up-to-date, and that many school counselors make these lists available for the school community. Knowing these community organizations and agencies personally, helps school counselors connect with parents and communicate the extent of assistance any service organization can offer (Mapp, 2003).

Many of the needs that exist for low-income families go beyond a focus on educational success of their children; many struggle with the basic needs, like food and health care. “When basic family needs are met, low-income parent involvement may be more consistent with that of parents who have fewer financial concerns” (VanVelsor & Orozco, 2007, p. 22). Counselors and school personnel who are in touch with community service organizations will be better able to offer services and referrals to low-income parents that will meet basic needs such as medical and dental care, and counseling (VanVelsor & Orozco, 2007).

Diffily’s (2004) research supports the conclusion that parents of children of different cultures and backgrounds view their roles in the education process of their children very differently from most schools’ definition of parental involvement. Within different family patterns and relationships exists widely different needs, beliefs, and family values (Diffily). What educators might see as parents being uninvolved or uncaring-perhaps even abusive-might be viewed very differently by parents (Allen, 2007). Allen stated, “At the risk of stating the obvious, one of the most important things we learn from sustained, respectful dialogue between educators and families is how unique each family is” (p. 57).

Teachers tend to over simplify the uniqueness of the students in their classrooms. They may describe their classroom like this: ten males, nine females, twelve Whites, five African Americans, and two Latinos (Casper & Schultz, 1999). Allen maintained, we may simple describe all the students in our classrooms who come from divorced families as being alike. However, when we think of people we know who are divorced we recognize the difference of each family. Boethel study (as cited in Allen, 2007) when pointing out that when we further think about other more complicated aspects such as religion, sexual orientation, income-levels, blended family, adoptions, and other dynamic family issues, we realize no child that comes from a divorced family into our classrooms is the same as another. Allen (2007) said, "Nobody who has been teaching more than a week would still be likely to define a family as a mother, father, and one or more children" (p. 58). Allen continued by stating that "educators and families in a school who get to know each other in these more complex ways not as families in general, but the very families in this particular learning community have a stronger foundation for supporting the child as a learner" (p.58). Allen posed the following questions:

> Once educators know their students and families, how do they use the information to help their students learn? Do teachers make assumptions, consciously or unconsciously? Sometimes we need more information, a different perspective, than home visits or frequent phone conversations can supply? (p. 58)

According to Allen parents are teachers at home first. They teach cultural norms and values and community rites and rituals, but sometimes their learned experiences are not enough. Teaching assistants, teachers, secretarial and custodial staff, parent volunteers, and other people in the school who have different cultural experiences from

our own could be valuable teachers as educators seek to increase their cultural intelligence. Allen suggested, teachers seek out community partners who can help them understand and learn neighborhood norms to create family partnerships they merit as significant and meaningful.

Diss and Buckley (2005) referred to understanding different cultures as the many factors that define "one's sense of group identity: race, ethnicity, religion, geographical location, income status, gender, and occupations" (p.58). The total of these features has an influence on learning and social relationships (Mackelprang & Salgiver, 1999). "Knowing how to work effectively with students from diverse cultures requires a familiarity with the ideas, values, and practices of the cultural groups" (p. 57).

According to Diss and Buckley, this is significant knowledge for the success of America's public education system in the future. By the year 2010, 45% of all students in U.S. public schools will be ethnic and racial minorities (Diss & Buckley, 2005). "95% of the current teaching force is from the White majority culture. Even more disturbing is the fact that individuals entering the teaching profession tend to come from mostly homogeneous backgrounds with little experience in diverse cultures" (p. 58). When teachers come from different culturally diverse backgrounds than their students, they can without intention and without difficulty misconstrue their students' "cultural based" behavior for special education referral and or disciplinary actions. "Students who display behaviors with which teachers are unfamiliar, especially those of recent immigrants are particularly susceptible to diagnosis for behavior disorders" (p. 58).

Teachers need and must know the cultural differences that exist amongst their students to stay away from miscalculating their students' intentions, skills, and

capabilities (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1997; Mason, 1999; Sue & Sue, 1990). Diss and Buckley found that other unintended problems may take place when teachers use instructional strategies and techniques that are not culturally appropriate to help students learn. Communication between parents and teachers can also become obstructed when "culturally related linguistic and communication styles" are different than more ordinary expectations. Diss and Buckley (2005) stated, "To accommodate the needs of students and families from different cultures the culture of the school itself must foster cultural pluralism" (p. 59).

Summary

The literature that was reviewed for this research study was a mix of studies, reports, articles, journals, reviews, books, and other scholarly writing. There is an abundance of research on parent and community involvement in high schools, how involvement changes as children go through school, and how involvement and collaborations vary by race, gender, and social class. There is an ever growing amount of research on how effective school-family partnerships can be. In addition to research on high quality parent involvement programs, researchers have closely studied high achieving schools and the interventions these schools have used in efforts to engage parents to increase student achievement and success.

Community outreach has help set the stage for school reform in respect to new areas of research in school-community involvement. Led by local community members, this new form of the school based involvement links school, parental, community concerns and priorities. Especially in neighborhoods with low-income and improving schools this community based movement is a powerful tool and needed resource in the

areas of accountability, reform, and school improvement, and these current developments have set the stage for brand new game changing research.

When combining up to date research with earlier studies, a strong pattern of emerging evidence shows that when schools and families work together they can improve the academic achievement of their children. Research has shown that school-family partnerships can have an impact on a child's behavior and attendance at school. Research has also clearly shown that children at risk could benefit from the support of strong positive school-family-community partnerships; but regardless of background, when families invest in the learning of their children, they are likely to academically perform better, stay in school, graduate from high school, and work toward higher education.

A review of the literature also demonstrated that high school age students would undoubtedly gain academically from their high schools supporting parents with helping their children at home and in shaping their educational futures. Studies that focused on high achieving teens everywhere found their parents talked to them about school, encouraged and supported them, kept them focused on their school work, and expected them to go on to further their education after high school. This continual encouragement, assistance, and support has been shown to be a key factor in helping teens overcome changes, challenges, and obstacles that high school may present. What the research has shown is that parent involvement in high school is different than at other grade levels. At the high school level parent involvement should be centered on and around improving learning, developing more explicit abilities and skills, moving students in the direction of more challenging courses, and fostering a greater working relationship between parents and teachers.

The compilation of a framing literature review provided a number of initiatives high schools could exercise to support families to assist their children's educational success: (a) connect with parents to help them understand and be aware of what it is their children are learning; (b) provide parents a voice and a say in the decisions that are made in regards to their children; (c) supply parents with information that will help them with learning at home, what it is their children need to learn, and provide information about how to plan for college and/or a career; (d) encourage and grow positive strong social connections and communication between parents and teachers; (e) developing the families' knowledge of the high school and educational system and how to successfully navigate through it; (f) provide families with access to service organizations and local community groups and agencies; and (g) seek out and capitalize on the opportunities and strengths within the community and among the school's families.

Finally, though cultivating school-family involvement can improve student academic success, it cannot prevail over a low-performing school. Schools must continue to advance the teaching and learning process. As pointed out by Epstein (1997) and her colleagues while conducting a school-family involvement program.

> Fewer than 20 percent of students reach satisfactory scores on the state's new assessments in writing, reading, or math. School, family, and community partnerships can boost attendance and increase achievement slightly, but excellent classroom teaching will be needed to dramatically improve students' writing, reading, and math skills to meet the state's standards. (p. 4)

Literature reviewed in this study suggested programs and school reform efforts will be more successful when parents are highly connected. The literature also

recommended making school-family partnership programs part of school reform efforts. An essential part of those school reform efforts should include community partnerships, especially if schools hope to close the achievement gaps and improve the academic achievement of low-income and minority students. Henderson and Mapp and Henderson (2002) stated

> When parents talk to their children about school, expect them to do well, help them plan for college, and make sure that out-of-school activities are constructive; their children do better in school. When schools engage families in ways that are linked to improving learning, and supporting parent involvement at home and school, students make greater gains. When schools build partnerships with families that respond to their concerns, honor their contributions, and share power, they succeed in sustaining connections that aimed at improving student achievement. And when families and communities organize to hold poorly performing schools accountable, school districts make positive changes in policy, practice, and resources. (p. 79)

Chapter Three: Methodology

This exploratory correlational study called for employment of a pre-test, a post-test, and surveys of teachers, parents, and community members to determine the effects from implementation of methods designed to improve one high school's relations with parents of students and the community which it serves. The researcher hypothesized that the implementation of a community relations and parent involvement action plan would improve community relations, parent involvement, participation in parent-teacher conferences, and student achievement at the high school.

Historically, schools in the literature researched for this study allowed parental involvement to evolve. There is a lack of research which would indicate proactive efforts on the part of schools to promote parental involvement beyond typical scheduled parent-teacher meetings. The resulting disparities in participation levels among schools were viewed as a lack of interest on the part of certain communities rather than as something that a school could influence. In this design, the dependent variables, academic performance (defined by grade point average), and parent involvement, (defined by participation in parent teacher conferences) were measured. The independent variable consisted of the school community forming an action team to develop a school and family community partnership program to provide guidelines and interventions, such as communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community which the school could utilize to positively affect parent involvement. Through the partnership, the action team provided instruction and training on promoting positive parenting attitudes, improving communication connections with families, elevating the number of volunteers and turnout at school events, enriching home learning,

growing the number of parents in decision-making and leadership roles at the high school, and improving community teamwork and partnerships. The impact on the dependent variables was continually measured.

Research Method and Design

One person alone cannot build and maintain a long lasting, widespread and complete process that will involve all families and the greater community surrounding a school. Epstein et al. (2002) developed the concept of an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) that created a fundamental structure to create enduring community and parent involvement. The action team facilitates the development of the wide-ranging program and processes, incorporating all family and community relationships under a single plan.

The first step the high school implemented was the formation of the ATP. The team reviewed present practices and procedures, weighed options based on present levels, decided on and put into action activities and responsibilities, evaluated and assessed the process, and worked to improve and manage all types of involvement. Although the action team was responsible for leading this process, it was supported and aided by staff, parents, and community members.

The study high school's ATP was a collaboration involving teachers from various subject areas, a special education teacher, a guidance counselor, a Communication Arts literacy leader, an administrator, and parents with students in the school. The diverse nature of the team allowed that all its ideas and activities account for the varied needs, concerns and talents within the high school. The ATP is not a never-to-be-repeated committee. It must be the constant if parent and community involvement is to grow and flourish. As teaching staff, students, and parents change, what remains is a dynamic

action team for partnership that continually evolves. Leadership for the team is shared to ensure responsibility and delegated so as not to overburden any one member. This also allows for easy transfer as team members change or move to other positions.

At the beginning of this process, the action team was aware that many teachers and faculty members conducted practices and activities that involved parents on an infrequent basis. Yet, when considering a starting point in an effort to organize good practices to extend the efforts to all teachers and all families it was not clear as to where to begin. In an effort to systematically organize the fragmented involvement patterns, the Action Team started by using surveys to questions and collect information about the high school's current communication practices among personnel and parents called Parent Opinion Questionnaire (see Appendix A); called An Inventory of Present Practices of School, Family, and Community Partnerships (see Appendix B); and called Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships (see Appendix C). The Action Team decided to not interview or survey students and use student GPA instead as a measure of student achievement.

The Action Team drew upon an exploratory correlational study by employing formal surveys to assess current faculty and parent opinions and perceptions, uncover areas of strength and opportunity (see Appendixes A & C), determine expectations of staff and parents (see Appendixes A & C), and evaluate the existing parent communication program (see Appendix B). Survey questions focused on the practices that were currently working well for individual teachers, parents, and for the high school as a whole, how the high school would like for parent and community involvement to evolve, and which current practices should stay, be changed, added, or abandoned in

order to reach school goals. The surveys were also designed to determine what teachers expected of parents and what parents expected of the teaching staff. Survey questions focused on the six areas of parent and community involvement outlined by Epstein et al. (2002): parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. Survey questions determined a percentage of parents that the high school was successfully engaging, and a percentage of parents that the high school was not successfully engaging in their child's education. The survey asked questions regarding current community partnership activities and whether the community partnerships were available to all families. Survey questions were designed to determine student success with academic indicators and how parent and community involvement could help the students and the school achieve even greater academic outcomes (Epstein et al., 2002).

From the ideas and opinions generated and collected from the surveys, the action team worked to develop a one year goal of improving personal communication with parents and families, volunteerism, and community collaboration. The resulting action plan outlined measures taken to improve school/parent communication into the high school's improvement plan. The one-year action plan included specific activities, interventions, and a process for assessing the plan's effectiveness (Epstein et al., 2002).

The program was a process, not a single event solution to a problem. Not all teachers, parents, students, and community members engaged in all types of involvement activities at once. The goal was that with good planning, well-designed and implemented activities and procedures; more families and school personnel could learn to work together in the best interests of children. Likewise, not all students responded

instantaneously and improved their achievement or attitude when their parents became more involved with school. Learning mainly depends on high-quality curriculum supported by research based instruction and feedback and student work completion. However, if the high school can implement partnership programs, perhaps more students will receive support at both school and home, motivating the child to work hard.

The Action Team recommended that an intervention initiative be put into place and agreed upon by the high school staff in an effort to increase one-on-one parent communication by requiring teachers to personally connect with at least two sets of parents every week and to personally contact the family of any student on that student's third class absence. The high school kept a centralized log that the staff would access. The staff was asked to log the date, reason for the contact, and response of the parent.

The Action Team, using a pre-test post-test design study, accessed parent-teacher conference data for the fall of 2007, the spring of 2008, the fall of 2008, and the spring of 2009 in an effort to measure conference attendance prior to the intervention process, during the treatment, and after exposure. This research design process was effective in that the action team and researcher would have more assurance that a change occurred. The Action Team also measured student GPA data during the third quarter of the 2007-2008 school year, the first quarter of the 2008-2009 school year, and the third quarter of the 2008-2009 school year. To restate, the Action Team and researcher were interested in any changes to student achievement data that occurred.

Instrumentation

The first type of instrument used by the action team in the research design in the research design was a self-checklist called An Inventory of Present Practices of School

Family, and Community Partnerships designed by Joyce Epstein et al. (2002) (see Appendix B). According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2003)

> A self-checklist is a list of several characteristics or activities presented to the subjects of a study. The individuals are asked to study the list and then to place a mark opposite the characteristics they possess or the activities in which they have engaged for a particular length of time. Self-checklists are often used when researchers want students to diagnose or to appraise their own performance. (p.130)

The second type of instrument used by the action team in the research design was a nominal scale called Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships also designed by Joyce Epstein (2002) (see Appendix C). When using a nominal scale, the researcher simply assigns numbers to different categories in order to show differences (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). In this study, the researcher assigned numbers 1-6 to each of the six types of involvement variables (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community). When using a nominal scale there is no indication that one type of involvement is any more or less than any other type. In most cases, a nominal scale facilitates computer analysis.

The third type of instrument used by the action team in the research design was a Likert scale called Parent Opinion Questionnaire designed by the Columbia Public School District, Columbia Missouri (2008) (see Appendix A). Parents were asked to circle the number 1-5, where 1 equals strongly agree; 2 equals agree; 3 equals undecided; 4 equals disagree; 5 equals strongly disagrees, which best described how they felt about a

given topic in a given question in the scale. Likert scales are a high-quality way to determine people's feelings or attitude about a given topic (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003).

Population and Sample

An ideal population would be all high school teachers, students, parents, and school community members in the United States. Because of diverse social and economic climates, different laws, and unique and specialized instruction and teaching programs such a generalization was not plausible. A population that might be feasible was a population of randomly selected students, all teachers, parents, and randomly selected community members at the study high school.

The sample included one hundred randomly selected current students, all current teachers, parents, and randomly selected community members. The high school is one of two high schools located in the school district. The city in which the school district is located has a population of approximately 60,000 people and is located on the banks of the Missouri River west of the city of St. Louis Missouri.

The high school itself is located in a historic city in the state of Missouri and has been serving students for more than 155 years. It boasts a proud tradition of academic excellence from the days when the city was a small but thriving river trade town. The high school educates more than 950 students daily, and stresses traditional educational values of performance, discipline, and respect for the community. It is rich with history in its service of meeting the educational needs of the community. In many ways, the growth of the 80-year-old facility has paralleled the growth and diversification of the larger community which it serves. It has always met those challenges and served well the needs of the school district and the community.

Approximately 85% of the district is located within the city limits that bear the same name as the high school. The remaining 15% lies in unincorporated areas. The east side of the district is bordered by the great Missouri River. The school district educates approximately 5,500 students through the efforts of two high schools, one alternative high school, two middle schools, five elementary schools and one vocational technical school. The schools are fully accredited by the Missouri State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and both high schools have been recognized for being Missouri A+ Schools.

The characteristics of the high school teaching staff, recorded by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Schools (2008), are as follows; 70 certified staff members, $46,145 average salary compared with $45,027 for the State of Missouri, 11.6 average years teaching experience compared to 12.4 years for the state, and 27.80% of teachers holding masters degrees compared with 51.3% by the state.

The high school student population, according to statistics published by the Missouri State Department of Education (2008) was: 997 students comprised of 856 Caucasian, 102 African-American, 32 Hispanic, 6 Asian, and 1 American Indian. 247 students or 26% of the population received a daily free or reduced price lunch. The average attendance rate was 92.5% which was below the State average of 94%. 28 students dropped from high school attendance. The school graduated 206 students in 2008 (85.6%) which was comparable to the State graduation rate of 85.2%. In 2008, the high school failed to meet AYP as mandated by NCLB in the areas of Mathematics and Communication Arts.

Data Collection Procedures

The first type of instruments used by the Action Team in the research design was a self-checklist called An Inventory of Present Practices of School Family, and Community Partnerships designed by Epstein et al. (2002) (see Appendix B). A self-checklist is a list of several characteristics or activities presented to the subjects of a study. "The individuals are asked to study the list and then to place a mark opposite the characteristics they posses or the activities in which they have engaged for a particular length of time" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 130). Self-checklists are often used when researchers want students to diagnose or to appraise their own performance.

The second type of instrument completed by teachers in this exploratory correlational research design study was a nominal scale survey on which the subjects responded to the questions by marking an answer sheet. Teachers responded to the Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnership survey, designed by Epstein et al. (2002) (see Appendix C). The Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnership surveys were distributed and collected during a school-wide faculty meeting. Thirty-seven surveys were completed by the teacher participants and returned to the researcher.

The third type of instrument completed by parents called Parent Opinion Questionnaire survey was adopted from a previously released Likert scale survey administered by the Columbia Public School District, Columbia Missouri (see Appendix A). Parent Opinion Questionnaire surveys were delivered home and returned to the high school by students. Over nine-hundred surveys were dispersed, with one hundred and three returned. Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) stated

> Advantages of surveys are that they can be mailed or can be given to large numbers of people at the same time. The disadvantages are that unclear or seemingly ambiguous questions cannot be clarified and the respondent has no chance to expand on, or react verbally to, a question of particular interest or importance. (p. 130)

Students' GPAs were collected from the same randomly sampled size group of one hundred students from the student body during the ending grading period of third quarter of the 2007-2008 school year, the ending grading period of first quarter of the 2008-2009 school year, and ending grading period of third quarter of 2008-2009 school year for comparison. The researcher started with the first student alphabetically, and then chose every ninth student. These 100 students gave the researcher a sufficiently large enough sample size to represent the entire student body.

The researcher collected parent attendance figures at parent-teacher conferences at the high school for the fall of 2007 semester, the winter 2008 semester, the fall 2008 semester, and the winter 2009 semester for data comparison and analysis.

Surveys Validity and Reliability

Both the Inventory of Present Practices of School, Family, and Community Partnerships survey, which helped the action team consider how to either maintain and/or enhance activities within the parent and community involvement program, and the Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships survey, which assessed the power of the different activities and methodologies of involvement are both valid and reliable, and are consistent in measuring what they are designed to measure. Created after years of research and many studies by Dr. Joyce Epstein, director of the National

Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University and her colleagues, the surveys have been replicated in over 1700 schools, 150 school districts, and 20 state departments of education across the country (Epstein & Sanders, 2002).

The Parent Opinion Questionnaire survey was taken from a survey developed by the Columbia Public School District, Columbia, Missouri in order to assess annual parent communication plans. The survey was reproduced with consistent scores and was found to be meaningful and useful in assessing and verifying the attitudes of parents (Columbia Public School District, 2007).

The instruments used in this study have a degree of content-related evidence of validity. The format and questions comprehensively covered the content of the parent and community involvement program and uncovered all variables. Relationships among scores of completed instruments were correlated with the six areas of parent and community involvement to account for criterion-related evidence of validity.

Sample Population

Differences between a sample size and a population will most certainly exist, and it can be difficult to make assumptions about a population from a sample size only. Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) recommended a representative sample size of at least ten percent of the total population as usually significantly sufficient. The sample population included 100 randomly selected current students, 37 teachers (who completed surveys), and 103 parents (who returned surveys).

Study Validity: Internal and External

All studies have a limited scope. With budget and time constraints in mind, the researcher accounted for the following limitations and threats to validity:

History. The occurrence of one or more unplanned or unanticipated experiences would be considered a history threat to internal validity. For example, if during the period of time between parent teacher conferences a group of parents had a different experience or set of experiences that caused a change in behavior a history threat may have occurred causing a different outcome.

Maturation. Change during the passage of time may cause a threat to internal validity known as maturation. Maturation occurs most seriously to the intervention group or when a number of years have passed between a pretest and a posttest. The researcher controlled maturation by prescribing the intervention to all of the participants and shortening the length of time between the pretest and posttest.

Instrument decay. Instrument decay can occur when the instrument is changed in some way. Typically this occurs if the instrument was difficult or too long to score. The researcher lessened the chances of instrument decay by minimizing the changes in the scoring procedure.

Data collector characteristics. If the demographic characteristics of the individual or individuals collecting data are related to variables under investigation this may cause a treat to internal validity. The researcher controlled this by using the same data collector throughout the study.

Data collector bias. The possibility that the bias of the data collector may affect the outcome of results of the data is always a possibility. The process for handling data in this study was as standardized as possible, and since the data collector was the researcher, he used a process that kept respondents to instruments unidentifiable.

Testing. A testing threat to validity occurs when participants change behavior due to their own desires and not to an intervention recommended and implemented between the pretest and posttest.

Statistical regression. Statistical regression may occur when a group in the study scores extremely low on the pretest. Again, the same interventions were offered to all the participants in an effort to control regression.

Attitude of subjects. The attitudes of the subject can cause a threat to internal validity as well. If the participants view the study positively or negatively this may play a role in the confidence in the resulting data. The researcher remedied the threat of attitude of the subjects by prescribing the same interventions to all that were involved.

Implementation. Threats to implementation occur due to personal basis and /or when different individuals are assigned to implement the different invention methods. Due to the number of individuals responsible for actively engaging in the responsibility of working to increase parent and community involvement this was a difficult threat to control. The process of putting a team of individuals in charge of the planning and implementing process helped with the likelihood that the process was somewhat more controlled.

Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher administrated a one-tailed t test with a 0.05 critical value, which separates the critical and noncritical regions, on the three surveys to determine if there was a difference between the parent responses, teacher responses, and the areas determined by the action team as relevant for the six areas of parent and community involvement of parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision

making, and collaborating with the community. If the test values fall inside the critical region, within the tails under the normal bell curve, of greater than plus or minus 0.05 indicating a significant difference, then the null hypotheses should be rejected. If the test values fall in the noncritical region of the bell curve, the researcher has more confidence that the difference is due to some sort of chance and that the null hypothesis should not be rejected.

The researcher completed a one-way analysis of variance test (ANOVA) to determine significant differences between three means of independent groups: student GPA from third quarter of the 2007-2008 school year; student GPA from first quarter of 2008-2009 school year; and student GPA from third quarter of the 2008-2009 school year. When comparing more than two means an F test is used to test a hypothesis. With an ANOVA test, all the means are compared at the same time through an F-test comparison of variances. Even though the researcher compared means in this use of the F test, variances were used in place of the means. According to Blumann (2008)

> With the F test, two different estimates of the population variance are made. The first estimate is called the between-group variance, and it involves finding the variance of the means. The second estimate, the within-group variance, is made by computing the variance using all the data and is not affected by differences in the means. If there is no difference in the means, the between-group variance estimate will be approximately equal to 1. The null hypothesis will not be rejected. However, when the means differ significantly, the between-group variance will be much larger than the within-group variance; the F test value will

> be significantly greater than 1; and the null hypothesis will be rejected. Since variances are compared, this procedure is called ANOVA. (p. 593)

Once the significant F value was found, the work of the researcher was not over. The researcher also ran a Post-Hoc test with a P-value of 0.05 for comparison. The F value will only tell the researcher that the variances are not equal and to reject the null hypothesis. Blumann (2008) stated the following:

> When three or more means are compared, the technique is called analysis of variance (ANOVA). The ANOVA technique uses two estimates of the population variance. The between-group variance is the variance of the sample means: the within-group variance is the overall variance of all the values. When there is no significant difference among the means, the two estimates will be approximately equal, and the F test value will be close to 1. If there is a significant difference among the means, the between-group variance estimate will be larger than the within-group variance estimates, and a significant test value will result. (p. 604)

The researcher needed to determine which variances or means were significantly different by studying the results more closely to determine where the significant differences were. If the resulting ANOVA test was found to be not significant the researcher would not be able to go through with the Tukey's Post-Hoc test for multiple comparisons to verify if there are mean differences in populations among multiple populations (Tukey, 1991; Rothman, 1990).

The researcher completed a t-test of two proportions with a 0.05 critical value on the parent-teacher conference data to determined significance. The t-test determines whether the mean of the two groups of parents who attended parent-teacher conferences

in both the fall and the winter were statistically different from each other. This statistical test analysis was appropriate for the researcher to compare the means of the two groups. The researcher attempted to verify whether there were improvements in attendance by parents at the parent-teacher conferences in both the fall and winter during the school year 2008-2009 (posttest) from the previous school year of 2007-2008 (pretest). This would determine if the intervention strategies were statistically significant.

Summary

Chapter three provided details to the types of statistical tests that were performed and described the statistics. It provided descriptions of the actual sample sizes used and the data research procedures performed. This study used a quantitative pre-test post-test design method and an exploratory correlational design, while implementing various intervention methods of improving school and community relations at the high school. It was hypothesized that by implementing a community relations and parent involvement action plan that community relations, parent involvement, participation in parent-teacher conferences, and student achievement would improve at the high school.

The data collection process began by dispensing and collecting the Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnership surveys; thirty-seven surveys were completed and returned by teachers. In addition, Community Partnership Parent Opinion surveys were delivered home for parents to complete and were returned to the high school by students. Over nine-hundred surveys were sent home, with one hundred and three returned. The action team then used a self-checklist to assess current practices. The researcher used a nominal scale measurement scale in the design, assigning numbers to different categories in order to show differences.

The Action Team for Partnership (ATP) surveyed the high school faculty and parents. The questions were designed to gather current opinions and perceptions of both. Survey questions focused on the six areas of parent and community involvement and were designed to determine which parents the high school engaged and which parents the high school needed to more successfully engaged. The surveys were also intended to determine student academic success and how parent and community involvement could help the students have even more academic success. Using the surveys as a guide, the Action Team developed a one year goal of improving personal communication with parents and families, volunteerism, and community collaboration; outlined the steps needed and recommended interventions be put into place.

During the pre-test post-test design study, the action team retrieved parent-teacher conference data for fall of the 2007-2008 school year, spring of the 2007-2008 school year, fall of the 2008-2009 school year , and spring of the 2008-2009 school year in an effort to measure conference attendance prior to the intervention process, during the treatment, and after exposure. The action team measured student GPA data during the third quarter of the 2007-2008 school year, the first quarter of the 2008-2009 school year, and the third quarter of the 2008-2009 school year. Again the action team and researcher intended to improve student achievement.

During data analysis, in order to determine if to accept or reject the hypothesis, the researcher administered a one-tailed t test with a 0.05 critical value on the surveys to determine if there was a difference between parent and teacher responses and areas determined by the action team as relevant. Next, the researcher completed a one-way analysis of variance test ANOVA to determine significant differences in student GPA.

Then, the researcher completed a t-test of two proportions with a 0.05 critical value on the parent-teacher conference data to determine significance in an order to compare the means of the two groups. Finally, the researcher tried to prove whether improvements in attendance were statistically significant.

In the data analysis procedures, the researcher ran a one-tailed t-test on the three surveys to determine if there was a difference between the parent responses, teacher responses, and the areas determined by the action team as significant (Refer to Table 1, Table 2, Table 3, Table 4, Table 5 & Table 6). Next, the researcher ran a one-way ANOVA test and a Post-Hoc test to comparison on the students' GPA (Refer to Table 7 & Table 8). Then, the researcher ran a test of two proportions on the parent-teacher conference data from 2007, 2008, and 2009 (Refer to Table 10 & Table 11). Chapter three has provided explanation to the methodology used in this study of this high school's attempts to improve parent and community involvement. Chapter four will report the results.

Chapter Four: Results

This chapter contains a description of the sample and results of the research data analysis. This chapter also addresses the research question, hypothesis, and the null hypothesis. The research question was, Will implementation of a community relations program and parent involvement plan improve community relations, parent involvement, participation in parent-teacher conferences, and student achievement at the high school? The hypothesis stated, implementation of a community relations and parent involvement plan will improve community relations, parent involvement, participation in parent/teacher conferences, and student achievement at the high school. The null hypothesis stated that implementation of a community relations and parent involvement plan will not improve community relations, parent involvement, participation in parent/teacher conferences, and student achievement at the high school.

Data Analysis

The researcher completed a one-tailed t-test with a 0.05 (1.645) and 0.01 (2.326) critical value on the three surveys to determine if there was a difference between the parent responses, teacher responses, and the areas determined by the action team as relevant for the six areas of parent and community involvement of: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community.

In Table 1, the term Teacher Action refers to survey responses related to parenting techniques that the teachers indicated they were currently utilizing. Teacher Non Action refers to survey responses related to parenting techniques that the teachers indicated they were currently not utilizing.

Table 1

Utilization of Parenting Techniques as Perceived by Teachers and Parents.

	Teacher	Teacher Action	Teacher Non Action	Parent	Teacher-Parent	Teacher Action – Non Action
Number	259	37	22	618		
Average response	2.51	2.50	2.56	3.78		
Std. Dev.	0.98	0.99	0.99	1.05		
t-stat					-16.607	-0.302
					Teacher < Parent	Not significant

Note. alpha = .05

Table 1 illustrates that the teacher responses were significantly lower than parent responses and the Teacher Action compared to the Teacher Non Action did not indicate a significant difference. Due to the lack of significance, the researcher did not reject the null hypothesis.

In Table 2, Teacher Action refers to survey responses related to communication techniques that the teachers indicated they were currently utilizing. Teacher Non Action refers to survey responses related to communication techniques that the teachers indicated they were currently not utilizing.

Table 2

Utilization of Communication Techniques as Perceived by Teachers and Parents

	Teacher	Teacher Action	Teacher Non Action	Parent	Teacher-Parent	Teacher Action – Non Action
number	516	222	296	1236		
Average response	3.21	3.03	3.43	3.81		
Std. Dev.	1.15	1.17	1.11	1.06		
t-stat					-10.573	-3.957
					Teacher < Parent	Action < Non Action

Note. alpha = .05

Table 2 illustrates that the teacher responses were significantly lower than parent responses and the Teacher Action was significantly less than Teacher NonAction. Due to the significance, the researcher did reject the null hypothesis.

In Table 3, Teacher Action refers to survey responses related to volunteering techniques that the teachers indicated they were currently utilizing. Teacher Non Action refers to survey responses related to volunteering techniques that the teachers indicated they were currently not utilizing.

Table 3

Utilization of Volunteering Techniques as Perceived by Teachers and Parents

	Teacher	Teacher Action	Teacher Non Action	Parent	Teacher-Parent	Teacher Action – Non Action
number	296	37	259	103		
Average response	3.21	2.14	3.18	3.50		
Std. Dev.	1.15	1.31	0.98	1.18		
t-stat					-9.729	-5.761
					Teacher < Parent	Action < Non Action

Note. alpha = .05

Table 3 illustrates that the teacher responses were significantly lower than parent responses and the teacher action was significantly less than non-action. Due to the significance, the researcher did reject the null hypothesis.

In Table 4, Teacher Action refers to survey responses related to learning at home activities that the teachers indicated they were currently utilizing. Teacher Non Action refers to survey responses related to learning at home activities that the teachers indicated they were currently not utilizing.

Table 4

Utilization of Learning at Home Activities as Perceived by Teachers and Parents

	Teacher	Teacher Action	Teacher Non Action	Parent	Teacher-Parent	Teacher Action – Non Action
number	222	NA	NA	1030		
Average response	2.64	NA	NA	3.85		
Std. Dev.	.094	NA	NA	1.01		
t-stat					-16.424	NA
					Teacher < Parent	NA

Note. alpha = .05

Table 4 illustrates that the teacher responses were significantly lower than parent responses. Due to significance, the researcher did reject the null hypothesis.

In Table 5, Teacher Action refers to survey responses related to decision making techniques that the teachers indicated they were currently utilizing. Teacher Non Action refers to survey responses related to decision making techniques that the teachers indicated they were currently not utilizing.

Table 5

Utilization of Decision Making Techniques as Perceived by Teachers and Parents

	Teacher	Teacher Action	Teacher Non Action	Parent	Teacher-Parent	Teacher Action – Non Action
number	333	148	185	0		
Average response	2,82	2.75	2.90	NA		
Std. Dev.	1.04	0.98	1.08	NA		
t-stat					NA	-1.261
					NA	Not significant.

Note. alpha = .05

Table 5 illustrates that the teacher action compared to Teacher Non Action is not significantly different. Due to the lack of significance, the researcher did not reject the null hypothesis.

In Table 6, Teacher Action refers to survey responses related to collaboration activities with the community that the teachers indicated they were currently utilizing. Teacher Non Action refers to survey responses related to collaboration activities with the community that the teachers indicated they were currently not utilizing.

Table 6

Utilization of Community Collaboration Activities as Perceived by Teachers and Parents

	Teacher	Teacher Action	Teacher Non Action	Parent	Teacher-Parent	Teacher Action – Non Action
number	259	185	74	206		
Average response	3.58	2.40	2.66	4.01		
Std. Dev.	1.06	1.07	1.01	0.98		
t-stat					-14.938	-1.811
					Teacher < Parent	Action < Non Action

Note. alpha = .05

Table 6 illustrates that the teacher responses were significantly lower than parent responses and the Teacher Action was significantly less than non-action. Due to the significance, the researcher did reject the null hypothesis.

For the following statistical analysis the null hypothesis states that implementation of a community relations and parent involvement plan will not improve student achievement at the high school. A one-way ANOVA test and a Post-Hoc test with a P value equal to 0.05 for comparison of parental involvement and the student GPA.

Table 7

Analysis of Variance One Way Tests the Relationship between Parent Involvement Interventions and Student GPA

Descriptives

GPA

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean: Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval for Mean: Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
1.00	71	2.9217	0.8090	0.0960	2.7302	3.1132	0.71	4.00
2.00	101	3.1758	0.6395	0.0636	3.0496	3.3021	1.00	4.00
3.00	102	3.0730	0.7617	0.0754	2.9234	3.2226	0.50	4.00
Total	274	3.0717	0.7363	0.0448	2.9841	3.1592	0.50	4.00

ANOVA

GPA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.693	2	1.346	2.511	0.083
Within Groups	145.301	271	0.536		
Total	147.994	273			

Table 7 illustrates F=2.511 with a sum of squares of 2.693 between the groups and 2 degrees of freedom (p=.083). The conclusion is to not reject the null hypothesis and for the researcher to proceed to the Tukey's Post Hoc test for each mean comparison.

Table 8

Post Hoc Tests

Multiple Comparison

Dependent Variable: GPA
Scheffe

(I) Type	(J) Type	Mean Difference (I - J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1.00	2.00	-0.25414	0.1134	0.083	-0.5333	0.0250
.	3.00	-0.15128	0.11317	0.410	-0.4298	0.1273
2.00	1.00	0.25414	0.1134	0.083	-0.0250	0.5333
.	3.00	0.10286	0.10279	0.607	-0.1501	0.3558
3.00	1.00	0.15128	0.11317	0.410	-0.1273	0.4298
.	2.00	-0.10286	0.10279	0.607	-0.3558	0.1501

Table 8 illustrates the researcher rearranged the means from lowest to highest (Type 1-2-3), with the smallest p=.083 occurring between type 1 and type 2. The differences between the means were not significant. Table 7 and 8 showed that any improvements in student GPA were determined to be insignificant and the researcher must not reject the null hypothesis.

The null hypothesis states that implementation of a community relations and parent involvement plan will not improve participation in parent/teacher conferences. The researcher ran a z-test of the difference between two proportions with a 0.05 critical value on the parent-teacher conference data to determine significance. In fall of the 2007-2008 school year, 250 parents attended parent-teacher conferences. There were a total of 994 students in the high school. In offspring of the 2007-2008 school year, 117 parents attended conferences. Student population was 957. In fall of 2008-2009 school year, 281

parents attended conferences. Student population was 917. In spring of the 2008-2009 school year, 183 parents attended conferences. Student population was 903.

Table 9

Parent/Teacher Conference Attendance Figures Fall 2007 through Winter 2009

Total conferences 2008 -2009		1329	1036
2007-2008		926	534
TOTAL PARENTS 1st SEMESTER	2008	Total of Students	% of Parents Attended
281		917	30.6
Total Parents 2007		Total Students	% Parents
250		994	25.2
TOTAL PARENTS 2nd SEMESTER	2009	Total of Students	% of Parents Attended
183		903	20.3
Total Parents 2008		Total Students	%Parents
		957	12.2
117			

Table 10

The Relationship between Parent/Teacher Conference Attendance from Fall 2007 and Fall 2008

Fall	2007	2008	2007 Proportion	2008 Proportion	Fall Total	Total Proportion
Number	250	281	0.251509	0.306434	531	0.277865
Total	994	917			1911	

Table 10 illustrates that the test value of -2.677881 compared to the critical value of -1.96 at an alpha level of 0.05 is very significant. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 11

The Relationship between Parent/Teacher Conference Attendance from Winter 2008 and Winter 200.

Winter	2008	2009	2008 Proportion	2009 Proportion	Winter Total	Total Proportion
Number	117	183	0.122257	0.202658	300	0.16129
Total	957	903			1860	

Table 11 illustrates that the test value -4.711872 compared to the critical value of -1.96 at an alpha level of 0.05 is very significant and the researcher must reject the null hypothesis.

Hypothesis and Null Hypothesis Findings

The hypothesis of this study was, Implementation of a community relations and parent involvement plan will improve community relations, parent involvement, participation in parent/teacher conferences, and student achievement at the high school. The null hypothesis of this study was, Implementation of a community relations and parent involvement plan will not improve community relations, parent involvement, participation in parent/teacher conferences, and student achievement at the high school. The researcher could confidently accept the hypothesis as it relates to improving participation in parent-teacher conference, but must accept the null hypothesis in regards to improving student achievement at the high school.

In other words, the implementation of a community relations and parent involvement plan had a significantly positive impact on parent teacher conference attendance, but did not have a significantly positive impact on student achievement.

Summary

Chapter four focused on quantitative analysis of the responses to the statements on the surveys from teachers and parents and the effects of the intervention program on raising student achievement. After careful analysis of the research data, the researcher was able to accept the portion of the hypothesis concerning improvement of participation in parent-teacher conferences; however the null hypothesis must be accepted when analyzing student achievement. In other words, the independent variables had a statistically significant influence on the dependent variable, parent/conferences, but did not have a statistically significant influence on the dependent variable, student achievement.

Chapter Five: Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

Epstein et al. (2002) stated that schools and families are foundational to the developmental growth of a child. In more recent times communities have received consideration for their role in the development of children and for improvement of student achievement in school. "Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence, for example, identifies schools, families, and communities as major institutions that socialize and educate children" (Epstein et al., 2002, p. 30). Similarly, Heath and McLaughlin (1987) found community involvement to be important because "the problems of educational achievement and academic success demand resources beyond the scope of the school and of most families" (p. 579). Student academic successes are of interest to each of these institutions and are best achieved by cooperation, support, and action by all three. *A Nation at Risk* placed demands for accountability on the nation's schools. "Too many schools and school systems are failing to carry out their basic educational mission, many of them in urban and rural settings are overwhelmed by the social and emotional needs of children who are growing up in poverty" (Shore, 1994, p. 2). Schools continually need to seek more strategies to successfully improve the lives of and effectively educate all students. The purpose of this study was to determine the elements in a community relations and parent involvement plan that improve the partnerships among the school, parents, and community.

Answering the Research Questions

The research question for this study was, Will implementation of a community relations and parent involvement program improve community relations, parent involvement, participation in parent/teacher conferences, and student achievement at the

high school? After analysis of survey data (see Appendixes A & C) it was concluded that despite the number of interventions that the Action Team and parents perceived the high school was engaged in to influence parent involvement, teachers perceived the high school was actually conducting less interventions than the school actually was to affect parent involvement.

Regarding improved parent involvement as measured by participation in parent/teacher conferences, the independent variables (The Action Team for Partnership, parent call list, PIE, parent newsletter, school website, staff websites, Responses Now System, and the community service organizations and agencies database) had a positive and statistically significant influence on the dependent variable, parent involvement as measured by increased participation in parent/teacher conferences. Regarding improved student achievement as measured by grade point average, the independent variables listed in the previous sentence did not have a positive and statistically significant influence on the dependent variable, student achievement. In other words, the teachers at the high school believed the school was far less engaged in partnering with parents and community then it actually was, and the independent variables bore significantly on parent teacher conference attendance, but did not significantly influence student achievement.

Implications of the Findings

The results of this research study on parent and community involvement in the study high school provided a cause for reflecting on its results. Improvement of family and community involvement in the school cannot result from an event, but instead is a process that can be expected to generate results over time.

The findings of this study provided an understanding due to the perceived lack of interventions by teachers affecting parent and community involvement of the importance of the Action Team for Partnership's role in leading the school efforts to assess any partnership before implementation. The findings pointed to the challenges of finding time for teachers and the study high school staff to communicate and fully engage in the process of collaboration with parents and the greater community. A void of time must be set aside for routine, ongoing, collegial, and collaborative dialog to enhance and refine communication skills and efforts among all stakeholders and community partners. The findings suggested that improvements in communication between the school and home need to be attained, and that the study high school stands to substantially benefit from a well-planned, continuous parent and community involvement partnership program.

Recommendations for Practice

Whereas a single research study on a single high school cannot guarantee a sound basis for the practices that will improve parental and community involvement and student achievement in all high schools, this study would suggest that the following recommendations could provide assistance and a beneficial starting point for a broad audience of schools and practitioners interested in improving family and community relations. The recommendations are aimed at continuing to develop and improve on encouraging community partnership activities which lead to positive measurable outcomes for the study high school and its students. Not every recommendation will improve family involvement nor result in improved student academic achievement. Rather, the practices and activities should be specifically selected to help students and families. The results of any recommendations are directly influenced by the quality of the

practices, the implementation of the activities, and the practitioners' craftsmanship and fidelity.

Previous studies on the process of educating and training school personnel have shown the way to improved community involvement. (See, for examples, Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein, 2005.) Led by the Action Team for Partnership (ATP) a high school staff can expect to improve on a comprehensive community involvement program by providing teachers and other school personnel extensive training in parent and community involvement in schools.

A finding from the study was that communication was a major weakness in the study high school. Therefore a goal of training would be to improve communication by providing background information and activities on school, parent, and community involvement for teams of the study high school teachers and staff. A recommendation from the study is that training workshops introduce key topics for any school determined to improve parent and community relations programs, followed by group activities and practices for the teachers focusing on how to apply the new information within the school community. (See, for examples, Epstein et al., 2002.) The topics and exercises should center on the six types of involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community) and should engage and challenge the teachers with the end purpose of writing the year two action plan for partnership (Epstein et al., 2002). The workshops will give the Action Team for Partnership valuable input, and the fundamentals to plan and to put into practice the year two program. Workshop training facilitators should involve the student council, parent organizations, and local community organizers when developing agendas and practice

activities that fit the special needs of the study high school. (See, for example, Diss & Buckley, 2005.)

The Action Team for Partnership (ATP) can work in any high school with the decision-making leadership body, and will serve as the group that facilitates and implements activities associated with improving parent and community involvement. (See, for examples, Leon, 2003; Gobel, 1993; & Vantis, 1996.) The school building administration should recruit and retain teachers who fundamentally adhere to the ideals of partnership (Bemak & Conely, 2002). Those teachers new to the teaching profession, or experienced teachers who are new to a building, should receive additional regular professional development in partnership training throughout the school year to continue to reinforce their practices and initiatives. (See, for examples Constantio, 2007; Oslen & Fuller, 2008.)

Schools could consider improving school-to-home communication by providing a parent handbook for parents and families on teen/ adolescent development to parents and families. (See, for examples, VanVelsor, 2004.) Presently, most families with students in high school still need more information with better support and guidance to help their teens succeed during high school. Supported by the research of Adelman and Taylor (2008), Gustatson (1998), Simon and Harvey (2002), and Catsambis (1998), the school could use its handbook to provide parents with better information on school curriculum, assessment, teacher progress reporting and grading practices, homework strategies, school organization and contact information, and tips on working with teenagers. Another recommendation is that a high school counselor or other school personnel contact and meet with the parents of all incoming freshmen students within the first weeks of school

to discuss and develop a five year plan which takes students through graduation, and extends through an additional year of transition past graduation. (See for examples, VanVelsor, 2004; Diss & Buckley, 2005.)

A high school could consider making available additional community programs and service resources to teens and parents. The interests and needs of young adults are much more diverse in adolescent years. Schools should continue to seek out resources and services within the community to continue to successfully serve the needs of students and their families. (See, for examples, Leon, 2003.)

The study high school currently has a directory of useful community organizations and resources accessible by its staff and families. (See, for examples, Diss & Buckley, 2005.) Personnel in high schools should continue to seek out new opportunities and community partnerships to help families gain access to all available services and programs. (See, for examples, Weiss et al., 2005.) It is not always easy for teachers to collaborate with community members outside the school, but it is essential for community involvement to occur and be effective. Early enthusiasm must be followed by sustained actions for success over time. (See, for examples, Diffily, 2004; Adelmann & Taylor, 2008.)

Schools intending to improve a parent and community relations program could consider providing various opportunities to include parent representation on school decision making committees, including teacher hiring committees. Typically, parents will have a different view point from teachers regarding school issues. By including parent participation on committees, schools can help to recognize and identify with the issues

important to parents and families. (See, for examples, Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007.)

Supported by the research of Epstein (2002, 2005), Bridgeland et al. (2008), Balfanz (2000), Catsambis (1998), and Hover-Demspey and Sandler (1997), schools could consider developing and incorporating a comprehensive Teacher Involves Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) initiative to assist parents in helping their child at home. TIPS could be of assistance to any high school teacher who wants to help parents and students connect with homework activities. TIPS interactive homework activities are designed to encourage families to learn at home together. It promotes homework completion leading to classroom successes. The homework assignments necessitate students talking to someone at home about what the students are learning in the classroom. TIPS pushes all families to be involved with the learning process, not just the ones who might already be involved. Homework is still the responsibility of the student, but by integrating parents into the process, families understand what is expected of their child by teachers, resulting in increased homework completion and hand-in rates. It requires students to share the learning process with parents, and provides communication opportunities for teachers with parents. It helps parents recognize and realize the hard work of teachers, and pave the path to a partnership between the teacher, the parent, and the student; keeping all three well informed and involved in with the curriculum and the learning process. It helps parents appreciate the importance of homework and provide opportunities to talk about homework and school at home. It is still the responsibility for teams of teachers to develop homework assignments. Well planned homework activities should have an explicit purpose, designed to extend practice opportunities to improve the skills and

learning of the students. (See, for examples, Marzano & Pickering, 2001.) Along with the TIPS initiative a high school should develop a standards-based grading system and report card. Such a common reporting system allows teachers to more effectively communicate with families which course level expectations their students have mastered and which standards students may still need more time to master. (See, for examples, Marzano & Pickering, 2004; Marzano, 2005.)

Recommendations for Future Research

As a course of action, schools could consider conducting additional staff and parent opinion surveys in year two of the process. (See, for examples, Epstein et al., 2002.) The survey information could be weighed against baseline survey data for significance. Information gained from year two surveys should be quite telling as to the effect the program is having on teacher and parent communication and overall satisfaction of the high school. In addition, school districts may want to consider district-wide staff and parent opinion surveys in future studies. (See, for example, Blumann, 2008.)

The study high school should consider continuing to follow the original 100 students' academic achievement data. The students' GPAs could be attained at the end of upcoming quarters and tested for significant gains. Significant gains in student GPA could help prove the success of the process when given more time. (See, for example, Blumann, 2008.)

The high school should continue to track parent attendance rates at parent-teacher conferences in subsequent years. Data from attendance rates from both fall and winter parent-teacher conferences should be compared to previous years. Significant gains in

attendance rates could help provide evidence of success of the program. (See, for examples, Blumann, 2008.)

The study's results could prompt schools to investigate the significance of the recommended comprehensive parent and community involvement training workshops to be conducted with teachers for the purpose of improving communication. Additional research should show whether the training workshops are meeting the desired goal of improving communication by providing background information and activities on school, parent, and community involvement for the staff. Further research should focus on if the key topics and group practice interventions are having the desired effects when applied by teachers.

The study high school should consider testing the significance of the TIPS initiative and standards-base report card as interventions. The study high school should investigate whether, after proper training and teacher participation, TIPS and standards-based reporting are helping parents and students connect with homework activities, and if the TIPS interactive homework activities encouraging families to learn at home together by promoting more homework completion ensuing in classroom successes. This recommendation is sound for any school which employs the TIPS initiative. (See, for examples, Epstein et al., 2002, 2005; Bridgeland, et al., 2008; Balfanz, 2000; Catsambis, 1998; Hover-Demspey & Sandler, 1997; & Marzona, 2005.)

Currently, the researcher is testing the relationship between parent and community involvement and student achievement. Further research may consider testing the inverse of the hypothesis which is if student academic achievement improves, will

parent participation and community involvement improve. (See, for examples, Blumann, 2008.)

Contribution to Leadership

Considerable parts of the body of this research have suggested the actions of teachers, parents, community partners, and the decisions of leaders matter and are linked directly to student achievement. In fact, certain leadership endeavors have revealed provable connections to improved student academic success (Reeves, 2006; Marzano, Walters, & McNulty, 2005). Actually, some specific factors established during this study have contributed to improved school leadership and are associated with school improvement. The factors this process brought forth that contribute to improved leadership include: inquiry, implementation, monitoring, and shared leadership decision-making.

During the study, leaders within the study high school inquired about the causes of defeats and victories associated with parent and community involvement. By correctly investigating and identifying these causes, school leaders were able to provide a process that helped forge better school-wide partnerships. By examining how successfully or unsuccessfully the study high school effectively implemented the parent and community involvement plan, leadership became more aware of success. For any school improvement plan to be effective, leadership must be fully involved in the implementation process. Leaders continually monitor how well important components are implemented and the degree to which interventions are applied and utilized. The process of monitoring essential elements contributes to school leadership. Decision-making and leadership are a shared activity. Reeves (2006) stated, “Leadership is neither a unitary

skills set nor a solitary activity" (p. 10). The ATP involved and engaged the skills and talents of numerous people throughout the high school community. Teachers, parents, students, and community partners were all involved in developing the initiatives investigated in this study. It was clear that leadership decision-making became more precise when delegated to a diverse group than to one person.

For systemic change within an organization to occur everyone must be held accountable (Reeves, 2006). The groups of adults charged with the work of helping students learn cannot be divided into those who are held accountable and those who are not. It is the job of leadership to bring these groups together, and to understand that everything is connected under a single purpose to help students succeed. Teachers and parents must share in a willingness to work together in collaboration to carry out the mission of student achievement. School leaders must articulate their vision for teacher and parent partnerships and do what is necessary to accomplish it (Marzano, Walters, & McNulty, 2005).

Summary

Teachers and parents have the greatest impact on the developmental growth of a child. The role of the local community has also become essential in development of children and in student successes in school. The social and academic success of students is of interest to teachers, parents, and community, and is best achieved through strong positive partnerships. All schools continually need to improve these partnerships in an effort that educates all students. The purpose of this study was to add to the current knowledge pertaining to school and community relations, parent involvement, and student achievement. The research particularly looks at school and community relations,

parent involvement, and student achievement in a high school, and how with the data the high school could improve parent and community involvement efforts to increase student achievement.

The recommendations of this research study were designed to institute, monitor, and improve specific programs which could improve parental and community involvement in a school. Unfortunately, not all recommendations will improve involvement, nor improve student academic success, although, the programs and activities should help a broad array of students and families. Research shows that a high school can improve its involvement program by providing teachers and other school personnel a wide range of parent and community involvement training workshops. Workshops should not only provide activities, but also ongoing practice with learned concepts and skills for all school personnel. Families of students in high school need more information and ongoing support from the school to provide more and relevant information about teens and school for their families. That handbook should also contain parent friendly information on curriculum, instructional practices, grading, homework and school contact information. This study on high school evidences the importance of (a) making available additional community service program resources and continuing to seek out additional resources within the community to help parents and families, (b) providing opportunities to include parents in on leadership decisions and committees, and (c) developing and utilizing wide-ranging TIPS to help parents assist their child with homework.

Recommendations for additional research should include: (a) conducting additional staff and parent opinion surveys. The surveys should be measured against

baseline survey data. In future studies, the school district should conduct district-wide staff and parent opinion surveys, (b) continuing to track students' GPAs and parent attendance rates during parent-teacher conferences. Significant gains in both could help provide evidence of success of the program, (c) investigating the recommended parent and community involvement training workshops. The investigation should test to determine if the training workshops are meeting the desired goals of improving parent/teacher relationships, (d) testing the significance of the TIPS intervention, and (e) conducting research to determine that if student academic achievement improves, will parent participation and community involvement improve.

This research study suggested that the actions of teachers, parents, and community partners can make a difference in parent and community involvement within a high school. These actions result from specific leadership efforts within the school to focus a staff on implementing a parent and community involvement program that is also monitored and assessed on a continuous basis to ensure improvement.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the findings of this study point to a valuable lesson learned from leaderless piecemeal approaches many schools undergo when implementing parent and community involvement programs. Without engaged leadership, continuous parental and community partnerships improvements in schools cannot be sustained or grow. The vision, efficacy, and craftsmanship of school leaders are the linchpin that connects the efforts of the school with families and community. Strong leadership actively engages the staff and is the steady hand that guides the way for the free flow exchange of ideas and information. School, parental, and community relationships are essential for the success

of students. The leaders of schools and the schools themselves that can envision these relationships as woven into the fabric of the school culture stand to substantially improve the chances of their students' life-long success.

References

Adelman, H., & Taylor, L. (2008). *School-community partnerships: A guide*. Retrieved May 10, 2009, from UCLA, Department of Psychology, School of Mental Health Project Web site: http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/guides/schoolcomm.pdf

Allen, J. (2007). *Creating welcoming schools*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Amatea, E. S., Smith-Adcock, S, & Villares, E. (2006). From family deficit to family strength: Viewing families' contributions to children's learning from a family resilience perspective. *Professional School Counseling*, *9*, 177-188.

Amato, C. (1996). Freedom Elementary School and its community: An approach to school-linked service integration. *Remedial and Special Education, 17*(5), 303-309.

Anderson, K., & Minke, K. (2007). Parent involvement in education: *Toward an understanding of parents' decision making. Journal of Educational Research, 100*(5), 311-323.

Balfanz, R. & Mac Iver, D. (2000). Transforming high-poverty urban middle schools intro strong learning institutions. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 5*(1/2), 137-158.

Ballantine, J. H. (1999). Getting involved in our children's education. *Childhood Education*, *75*(3), 170-171.

Barge, J. K., & Loges, W. E. (2003). Parent, student, and teacher perceptions of parental involvement. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 31,140-163.

Becher, R. (2004). Parent Involvement: A Review of Research and Principles of Successful Practice. In L. Katz (Ed.), *Current Topics in Early Childhood Education*, 6. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Bemak, F., & Cornely, L. (2002). The SAFI model as a critical strategy for school counselors. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *80*, 322-331.

Benson, F., & Martin, S. (2003). Organizing successful parent involvement in urban schools. *Child Study Journal*, 33, 187-193.

Benson, P. (1997). *All kids are our kids: What communities must do to raise caring and responsible children and adolescents*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Berman. S. H. (2003). Practicing democracy in high school. *Educational Leadership, 61*(1), 35-38.

Boethel, M. (2003). *Diversity: School, family, and community connections*. Annual report of the National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Bridgeland, J., Dilulio, J., Streeter, R., & Mason, J. (2008). *One dream two realities: Perspective of parents on America's high schools*. A report by Civic Enterprises in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises.

Bryk, A. (1999). *Improving school-community connections: ideas for moving toward a system of community schools*. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Burke, M. (2001).Recruiting and using volunteers in meaningful ways in secondary schools. *Bulletin*, *85*(627), 46-52.

Campbell, C., Gillborn, D., & Lall, M. (2004). *Parental involvement in education*. NDC Evaluation Report. Sheffield Hallam University.

Caspe, M., & Lopez, E. (2006). *Lessons from family-strengthening interventions: Learning from evidence-based practice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.

Casper, V., & Schultz, S. (1999). *Gay parents/straight schools: Building communication and trust*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Catsambis, S. (1998). *Expanding knowledge of parental involvement in secondary education-effects on high school academic success* (John Hopkins University, Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk, Report 27). Abstract retrieved March 15, 2009, from http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/techReports/Report27.pdf

Christian, K., Morrison, F. J., & Bryant, F. B. (1998). Predicting kindergarten academic skills: Interactions among child care, maternal education, and family literacy environments. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *13*(3), 501-521.

Clark, R. (1993). Homework-focused parenting practices that positively affect student achievement. In N.F. Chavkin (Ed.), *Families and schools in a pluralistic society* (pp. 85-105). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Colbert, R. D., Vernon-Jones, R., & Pransky, K. (2006). The school change feedback process: Creating a new role for counselors in education reform. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, *84*, 72-82.

Coleman, S., Hoffer, T. (1989). *Public and private high schools: The impact of communities*. New York: Basic Books.

Columbia Public School District. (2008). *Parent survey*. Retrieved February 19, 2009, from http://www.columbia.k12.mo.us/

Commer, J. P., & Haynes, N. M (1991). Parent involvement in schools: An ecological approach. *The Elementary School Journal*, 91(3), 271-277.

Constantino, S. (2007). Keeping parents involved through high school. *Education Digest*, 73(1), p. 57-61.

Cooper, C. (2005). Evaluating parent empowerment: A look at the potential of social justice evaluation in education. *Teachers College Record, 107*(10), 2248- 2274.

Cotton, K., & Reed-Wikelund, K. (1989). Parent involvement in education. *School Improvement Research Series, 3*, Close-Up #6. Retrieved October 8, 2008, from http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/567

Cotton, K. (2003). *Principals and student achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Crowson, R. L., & Boyd, W. (1993). Coordinated services for children: Designing arks for storms and seas unknown. *American Journal of Education*, 101, 140-179.

D'Andrea, M. D., & Daniels, J. (1997). Continuing the discussion about racism. *Aces Spectrum*, 58, 8-9.

Davis, D. (2000). *Supporting parent, family, and community involvement in your school*. Portland, OR*:* Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Dean, M. J. (2006). Can we get beyond letter grades? *Educational Leadership, 63*(8), 52-55.

Delgado-Gaitan, C. (2004). *Involving Latino families in the schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Diffily, D. (2004). *Teachers and families working together*. Boston: Pearson Education.

Diss, R. E., & Buckely, P. K. (2005). *Developing family and community involvement skills through case studies and field experiences*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Dornbusch, S. M., & Ritter, P. L. (1988). Parents of high school students: A neglected resource. *Educational Horizons, 66*, 75-77.

Drake. S. M., & Burns. R. C. (2005). *Meeting standards through integrated curriculum*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Dryfoos, J. (1998).The rise of the full-service community school. *High School Magazine*, *6*(2), 38-42.

DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & DuFour, R. (2005). *On common ground: The power of professional learning communities.* Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

Duran, R., Durna, J., Perry-Romero, D., & Sanchez, E. (2001). Latino immigrant parents and children learning and publishing together in an after-school setting. *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk*, *6*, 95-113.

Eccles, J., & Harolds, R. (1996). Family involvement in children's and adolescents' schooling. In A. Booth & J. F. Dunn (Eds.), *Family-school links: How do they affect educational outcomes?* (pp.3-4). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Epstein, J. (2001). New directions for school, family, and community partnership in middle and high schools. *Bulletin 85*, (627). 3-7.

Epstein, J., Clark, L, Salionas, K, & Sanders, G. (1997). *Scaling up school-family-community connections in Baltimore: Effects on student achievement and attendance*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.

Epstein, J. (1995) School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76(9), 701-711.

Epstein, J. (1997). *School, family, and community partnership: your handbook for action.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Epstein, J. (2001). *School, family, and community partnership: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Epstein, J., Sanders, M., Simon, B., Clark Salinas, K., Rodriguez Jansorn, N., & VanVoorhis, F. (2002). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Epstein, J. & Clark-Salinas. K. (2004). Partnering with families and communities. *Educational Leadership*, *61*(8), 12-18.

Epstein, J. L. (2005). Attainable goals? The spirit and letter of the No Child Left Behind Act on parental involvement. *Sociology of Education, 78*, 179-182.

Erwin, J. C. (2003). Giving students what they need. *Educational Leadership*, *61*(1), 19-23.

Farkas, S., Johnson, J., Duffett, A., Foleno, T., & Foley, P. (2001). *Trying to stay ahead of the game: Superintendents and principals talk about school leadership.* Retrieved July 25, 2005, from http://www.publicagenda.com/research/pdfs/ahead_of_the_game.pdf

Ferguson, C. (2008) *The school-family connection: Looking at the larger picture*. Austin, TX: National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools.

Fraenkel, J., & Wallen, N. (2003). *How to design and evaluate research in education*. New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Frazer, H., & Fitzduff, M. (1994). *Improving community relations, community relations council* (3rd ed.). Belfast: Community Relations Council.

Fredriksen-Goldsen, K. I., & Scharlach, A. E. (2001). *Families and work: New directions in the twenty-first century*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Giannetti, C., & Sagarese. M. (1998). Turning parents from critics to allies. *Educational Leadership, 55*(8), 40-42.

Glassman, J. (2009). *Make the most of parent-teacher conferences*. Retrieved September 9, 2009, from http://school.discovery.com/parents/teacherlink/articles

Goble, N. (1993).School-community relations: New for the 90's. *Education Digest*, *59*(4), 45-49.

Gonzalez-Mena, J. (1996). *Home, school, and community relations*. Albany, NY: Delmar.

Gonzales, N., Moll, L., & Amanti, C. (2005) *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Gotts, E. & Purnell, R. (1987). School-family relations and effective schools. *Education and Urban Society,* 19, 115-118.

Guskey, T. (2000). *Evaluating professional development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Gustafson, E. (1998). Quantifying landscape spatial pattern: What is the state of the art. *Ecosystem*, 1, 143-156.

Hall, P., & Hall, N. (2003). Building relationships with challenging children. *Educational Leadership*, *61*(1), 60-63.

Hara, S. R. (1998). Parent involvement: The key to improved student achievement. *School Community Journal*, 8(2), 9-19.

Heath, S. B., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1987, April). A child resource policy: Moving beyond dependence on school and family. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 68, 576-580.

Henderson, A. T., & Berla, A. (1994). *A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement.* Washington, DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Henderson, A. T. & Mapp, K. L. (2002*). A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on students achievement.* Austin, TX: National Center of Family & Community Connections with Schools: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Henderson, A. T., Mapp, K.L., Johnson, V., & Davies, D. (2007). *Beyond the bake sale: The essential guide to family-school partnerships*. New York: The New Press.

Hensley, M. (2005). Empowering parents of multicultural backgrounds. In N. Gonzales, L. Moll, & C. Amanti (Eds.), *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms* (pp.143-152). London: Psychology Press.

Hill, N. E., & Olsen, G. (1998). *Home-school relations: Working successfully with parents and families*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Hill, N. E., & Taylor, L. C. (2004). Parental school involvement and children's academic achievement. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 13*, 161-164.

Holliday, A. (1997). 106 Ways to better school-community relations. *Education Digest*, *62*(5),15-19.

Hoover-Dempsey, K., Battiato, A., Walker, J., Reed, R., DeJong, J, & Jones, K. (2001). Parental involvement in homework. *Educational Psychologist, 36*, 195-210.

Hoover-Dempsey, K., & Sandler, H. (1997). Why do parents become involved in their children's education? *Review of Educational Research, 67*, 3-42.

Howley, M. (1999). Parent and community involvement in rural schools. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, *20*(6), 5-15.

Invernizzi, M., Rosemary, C., Richards, C., & Richards H. (1997). At risk readers and community volunteers: A 3-year perspective. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 1*(3), 277-300.

Jehl, J., & Kirst,M. (1992). Getting ready to provide school-linked services: What schools must do. *Future of Children, 2*, 95-106.

Jesse, D., Davis, A., & Pokorny, N. (2004). High-achieving middle schools for Latino students in poverty. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 9*, 23-45.

Jeynes. W. H. (2005). Parental Involvement and secondary school student educational outcomes: A meta-analysis. *The Evaluation Exchange*, *4*(1 & 2), 2-6.

Katch, J. (2003). On listening to children. *Educational Leadership*, *61*(1), 44-47.

Kansas Parent Information Resource Center. (2009). *Ideas for holding successful parent-teacher conferences*. Retrieved August 5, 2009, from http://www.kpirc.org/resources/about/parent-involvement-plan

Kohm, B., & Nance, B. (2007). *Principals who learn: Asking the right questions, seeking the best solutions*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Kozmisky, E., & Kozmisky, L. (2003). Improving motivation through dialogue. *Educational Leadership*, *61*(1), 50-55.

Lareau, A., & Horvat, E. M. (1999). Moments of social inclusion and exclusion: Race, class, and cultural capital in family-school relationships. *Sociology of Education*, *72*(1), 37-53.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. (2003*). The essential conversation: What parents and teachers can learn from each other*. New York: Random House.

Lawson, M. A. (2003). School-family relations in context: Parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement. *Urban Education*, *38*, 77-133.

Leon, L. (2003). Parents and secondary schools. *Principal Leadership*, *7*, 32-37.

Longoria. T. Jr., (1994). School politics in Houston: The impact of business involvement. In C. Stone (Ed.), *Changing urban education* (pp. 184-198). Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.

Lott, B. (2003). Recognizing and welcoming the standpoint of two-income parents in the public schools. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, *14*, 91-104.

MacDowell, M. (1989). Parents in education: An old tradition renamed. *Educational Leadership, 47*, 8-11.

Mackelprang, R., & Salsgiver, R. (1999). *Disability: A diversity model approach in human service practice*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Manno, S. (2008). *Closing the achievement gap: School, community, family connections*. Baltimore. MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Mapp, K. L. (2003). Having their say: Parents describe why and how they are engaged in their children's learning. *School Community Journal*, *13*, 35-64.

Mapp, K. L, & Henderson, A. T. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*. The National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Marzano, R. (2005). *Building background knowledge for academic achievement: Research the works*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Marzano, R., Walters, T., & McNulty, B. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Marzano, R., & Pickering, D. (2004). *Building academic vocabulary: Teacher's manual*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Marzano, R., Pickering, D., & Pollock, J. (2001). *Classroom instruction that works: Research based strategies for increasing student achievement.* Danvers, MA: McRel.

Mason, T. C. (1999). Prospective teachers' attitudes toward urban schools: Can they be changed? *Multicultural Education*, 6(4), 9-13.

Mawhinney, H.B. (1994). The policy and practice of community enrichment of schools. *Proceedings of the Education and Community Conference, Department of Educational Administration*. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Educational Administration.

McGrawth, W. H. (2007). Ambivalent partners: Power, trust, and partnership in relationships between mothers and teacher in a full-time childcare center. *Teachers College Record, 109*(6), 1401-1422.

McKay, M. M., Atkins, M. S., Hawkins, T, Brown, C., & Lynn, C. J. (2003). Inner-city African American parental involvement in children's schooling: Racial socialization and social support from the parent community. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *32*, 107-114.

McPartland, J.M., & Nettles, S.M. (1991). Using community adults as advocates or mentore for at-risk middle school students: A two-year evaluation of project RAISE. *American Journal of Education, 99*, 568-586.

Mediratta K, Shah, S, & McAlister, S. (2008) *Organized communities strong schools: A preview of research findings*. New York: Annenbreg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.

Mendas, E. (2003). What empathy can do. *Educational Leadership*, *61*,(1), 56-59.

Merz, C., & Furman, G. (1997). *Community and schools: Promise and paradox*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Mickelson, R. (1999). International Business Machinations: A case study of corporate involvement in local educational reform. *Teachers College Record, 100*(3), 476-512.

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Schools. (2008). *School Statistics*. Retrieved November 17, 2008, from www.dese.state.mo.us

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Schools. (2009a). *No child left behind act*. Retrieved May 14, 2009, from www.dese.state.mo.us

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Schools. (2009b). *Show-me standards*. Retrieved July 24, 2009, from www.dese.state.mo.us

Massachusetts Department of Education. (2000). *The parent, family, and community involvement guide*. Retrieved November 12, 2008, from http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/sac/parent/pandc.pdf

National Parent Teacher Association. (2008, September 5). *National standards for parent/family involvement programs*. Retrieved October 7, 2008, from http://www.pta.org/programs

National Parent Teacher Association. (2000). *Building successful partnerships: A guide for developing parent and family involvement programs*. Indianapolis, IN: National Educational Service.

Oslen, G., & Fuller. M. (2008). *Home-school relations: Working successfully with parents and families* (3rd ed.). Boston: Pearson Education.

Pappano, L. (2002). *The connection gap*. New York: Basic Books.

Paratore, J. (2001). *Opening doors, opening opportunities: Family literacy in an urban community*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Pelco, L. E., Jacobson, L., Ries, R. R., & Melka, S. (2000). Perspectives and practices in family-school partnership: A national survey of school psychologists. *School Psychology Review*, *29*, 235-250.

Phillipson, S., & Phillipson, S. N. (2007). Academic expectations, belief of ability involvement by parents as predictors of child achievement: A cross-cultural comparison. *Educational Psychology, 27*(33), 329-348.

Pollock, J. (2007). *Improving student learning one teacher at a time*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Pomerantz, E. M., Moorman, E. A., & Litwack, S. D. (2007). The how, whom, and why of parents' involvement in children's academic lives: More is not always better. *Review of Educational Research*, *77*(3), 373-410.

Pool, C. (1998). Web wonders. *Engaging parents and the community in schools, 55*(8), 88.

Price, H. B. (2004). *Mobilizing the community to help students succeed.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Puett Miller, C. (2009). *Effective parent-teacher conferences*. Retrieved February 10, 2010, from http://parenting.kaboose.com/education-and-learning/school-life/effective-parent-teacher-conferences.html

Rasmussen, K. (1998). Making parent involvement meaningful. *Education update, 40*(1), 9-14.

Reeves, D. (2007). *Ahead of the curve: The power of assessment to transform teaching and learning*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree

Reeves, D. (2006). *The learning leader: How to focus school improvement for better results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Ramirez, A. Y. (1999). Survey on teachers' attitudes regarding parents and parental involvement. *School Community Journal*, *9*(2), 21-39.

Resto, W., & Alston, (2006). *Parent involvement at selected ready schools*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

Riley, R. W., & Wofford, H. (2000). The reaffirmation of the declaration of principles. *Phi Delta Kaplan,* 81, (9), 670-672.

Robbins, P., & Alvy, H. (2004). *New principals field book: Strategies for success*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Rockwell, R., Andre, L., & Hawley, M. (1996). *Parents and teachers as partners: Issues and challenges*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace.

Rolheiser, C., Bower, B., & Stevahn, C. (2000). *The portfolio organizer*. New York: Assn for Supervision and Curriculum.

Rothamn, K. J. (1990). No adjustments needed for multiple comparisons. *Epidemiology*, 1, 43-46.

Scherer, M. (2003). Relationships, relationships, relationships. *Educational Leadership*, *61*(1), 5.

Schmoker, M. (1999). *Results: The key to continuous school improvement* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Schmoker, M. (2006). *Result now: How we can achieve unprecedented improvement in teaching and learning*. Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Shaver, A. V., & Walls, R. T. (1998). Effect of Title I parent involvement on student reading and mathematics achievement. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 31, 90-97.

Simmons, D. (2002). Increasing parent/school communication. *Classroom Leadership, 6*(1), 7-8.

Simon, B. (2000). *Predictor of high school and family partnership and the influence of partnership on student success*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Johns Hopkins University.

Simon, B. (2001). Family involvement in high school: predictors and effects. *Bulletin*, *85*(627), 8-20.

Simon, B. (2004). High school outreach and family involvement. *Social Psychology of Education*, 7, 185-209.

Stein, R., Richin, R., Banyon, R., Banyon, F., & Stein, M. (2000). *Connecting character to conduct.* Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (1990). *Counseling the culturally different: Theory and practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Wiley.

Taylor, L. C., Clayton, J. D., & Rowley, S. J. (2004). Academic socialization: Understanding parental influences on children's school-related development in the early years. *Review of General Psychology*, *8*, 63-178.

Toffler, A., & Toffler, H. (1995). Getting set for the coming millennium. *Futurist*, 29(2), 10-15.

Tomlinson, C. A., & Strickland, C. A. (2005). *Differentiation in practice. A resource guide for differentiating curriculum*. Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Tukey, J. W. (1991). The philosophy of multiple comparisons. *Statistical Science*, 6(1), 100-116.

U. S. Department of Education. (2004). *No child left behind: A toolkit for teachers*. Retrieved May 10, 2009, from www.nclb.gov

VanVelsor, P., & Orozco, G. (2007). Low-income parents in the schools: Communitycentric strategies for school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, *11*(1), 17-24.

Van Voorhis, F.L. (2001). Interactive science homework: An experiment in home and school connections. *NASSP Bulletin, 85*(627), 20-32.

Weiss, H. B., Kreider, H., Lopez, M. E., & Chatman, C. M. (2005). *Preparing educators to involve families: From theory to practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage.

Whitaker, T. (2003). *What great principal do differently*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

Wolf, J., & Stephens, T. (1989). *Effective skills in parent/teacher conferencing* (2nd ed.). Columbus, OH: College of Education, The Ohio State University.

Wolk, S. (2003). Hearts and minds. *Educational Leadership, 61*(1), 14-18.

Yantis, J. (1996). Get staff involved in community relations. *Education Digest, 61*(5), 52-55.

Appendix A

Parent Opinion Questionnaire

In an effort to better serve the students, parents, and community of the high school, the staff would like to gather some information and opinions about us from you. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions.

Where do you get most of your information about the high school?
(You may choose more than one)

__ Phone conversation with a teacher

__ E-mail conversation with a teacher

__ Phone conversation with a counselor

__ E-mail conversation with a counselor

__ Community Newspaper

__ School website

__ School Newsletter

__ Other _____

__ I receive very little information regarding the school

Please indicate how much you agree with each of these statements as it relates to your experience at the high school by circling the number of your choice.

1=Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Undecided 4=Disagree 5=Strongly Disagree

1. I am aware of the HS's goals for improving student achievement	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel informed about the HS's issues and events	1	2	3	4	5
3. It is clear the HS is dedicated to academic achievement for all children	1	2	3	4	5

4. The HS publications and other communications provide useful information	1	2	3	4	5
5. The HS publications and other communications focus on student and academic achievement	1	2	3	4	5
6. The HS staff members are friendly, welcoming and provide good service to parents, students and community members	1	2	3	4	5
7. The HS is a good place for my child to learn	1	2	3	4	5
8. My child is challenged by his or her school work	1	2	3	4	5
9. Students at the HS show respect for each other	1	2	3	4	5
10. I like the way the school building and grounds look	1	2	3	4	5
11. I feel my child is safe at the HS	1	2	3	4	5
12. I feel that my child's personal belongings left at the HS are safe	1	2	3	4	5
13. As a parent, I feel welcome at the HS	1	2	3	4	5
14. I can talk with my child's teachers easily	1	2	3	4	5
15. The teachers at the HS are excited about their work	1	2	3	4	5
16. I feel comfortable talking with the principal	1	2	3	4	5
17. I know the school's rules and behavioral expectations for my child	1	2	3	4	5
18. When it comes to discipline at the HS, my child has been treated fairly	1	2	3	4	5

19. The HS keeps me informed about how my child is doing	1	2	3	4	5
20. Teachers at the HS expect my child to learn	1	2	3	4	5
21. Teachers give my child individual help when he or she need it	1	2	3	4	5
22. Sports and other extracurricular activities add a lot to the HS	1	2	3	4	5
23. I am satisfied with my child's overall academic progress at the HS	1	2	3	4	5
24. I am satisfied with my child's overall academic progress in English	1	2	3	4	5
25. I am satisfied with my child's overall academic progress in math	1	2	3	4	5
26. I am satisfied with my child's overall academic progress in science	1	2	3	4	5
27. I am satisfied with my child's overall academic progress in social studies	1	2	3	4	5
28. If provided the opportunity, I would volunteer in the HS	1	2	3	4	5
29. I have access to the internet either at work or at home	1	2	3	4	5
30. I use the website to track my child's progress	1	2	3	4	5
31. I am highly satisfied with the level of communication efforts of the HS	1	2	3	4	5

I would like to volunteer in the school in the following manner

__ Assisting in a classroom

__ Giving talks

__ Monitoring hallways

__ Leading Activities

__ Dances

__ Drama and Music performances

Note. From *Parent Survey*, by Columbia Public School District, 2008, http://www.columbia.k12.mo.us/

Appendix B

An Inventory of Present Practices of School, Family, and Community Partnerships

This inventory will help to identify our school's present practices for each of six types of involvement that create a comprehensive program of school, family, and community partnerships. To be completed by the school parent involvement and community relationship action team. (Epstein, 2002)

TYPE 1-PARENTING: BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES OF FAMILIES
Assist families with parenting skills and setting home conditions to support children as students, and assist schools to understand families

_ We support parent education workshops and other courses or training for parents.

_ We provide families with information on child or adolescent development.

_ We conduct family support programs with parent-to-parent discussion groups.

_ We lend families books or tapes on parenting or videotapes of parent workshops.

_ We ask families about children's goals, strengths, and talents.

_ We sponsor home visiting programs or neighborhood meetings to help families understand schools and to help schools understand families.

TYPE 2-COMMUNICATING: BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOLS
Conduct effective communications from school to home and from home to school about school programs and children's progress

_ We have formal conferences with every parent at least once a year.

_ We provide language translators to assist families as needed.

_ We provide clear information about report cards and how grades are earned.

_ Parents pick up report cards.

_ Our school newsletter/website includes:
    _ A calendar of school events

_ Student activity information
_ Curriculum and program information
_ School volunteer information
_ Samples of student writing and artwork
_ School policy information
_ A column to address parents' questions
_ Recognition of students, families, and community members
_ Other _____

_ We provide clear information about selecting courses, programs, and/or activities in this school.

_ We send home folders of student work weekly or monthly for parent review and comments.

_ Staff members send home positive messages about students on a regular basis.

_ We notify families about student awards and recognition.

_ We contact the families of students having academic or behavior problems.

_ Teachers have easy access to telephones to communicate with parents during or after school.

_ Teachers and administrators have e-mail and/or a school website to communicate with parents.

_ Parents have telephone numbers and/or e-mail addresses of the school. Principal, teachers, and counselors.

_ We have a homework hotline for students and families to hear daily assignments and messages.

_ We conduct an annual survey for families to provide reactions to school programs and share information and concerns about students.

TYPE 3-VOLUNTEERING: INVOLVEMENT AT AND FOR THE SCHOOL
Organize volunteers and audiences to support the school and students

_ We conduct an annual survey to identify interests, talents, and availability of volunteers.

_ We have a parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings, and resources for families.

_ We encourage families and the community to be involved at school by:
- _ Assisting in the classroom
- _ Helping on trips or at assemblies
- _ Giving talks
- _ Checking attendance
- _ Monitoring halls, or working in the library, cafeteria, or other areas
- _ Leading clubs or activities
- _ Other _____

_ We provide ways for families to be involved at home or in the community if they cannot volunteer at school.

_ We have a program to recognize our volunteers.

_ We organize class parents or neighborhood volunteers to link with all parents.

_ We schedule plays, concerts, games, and other events at different times of the day or evening so that all parents can attend some activities.

TYPE 4-LEARNING AT HOME: INVOLVEMENT IN ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES
Involve families with their children in homework and other curriculum related activities and decisions.

_ We provide information to families on required skills in all subjects.

_ We provide information to families on how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.

_ We provide information on how to assist students with skills that they need to improve.

_ We regular schedule of interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning with a family member.

_ We ask parents to listen to their child read or to read aloud with their child.

_ We provide calendars with daily or weekly activates for families to do at home and in the community.

_ We help families help students set academic goals, select courses, and programs, and plan for college or work.

TYPE 5-DECISION MAKING: PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP
Include families as participants in school decisions, and develop parent leaders and representatives

_ We have an active parent organization.

_ Parent representatives are on the schools' advisory council, improvement team, or other committees.

_ We have an Action Team for Partnerships to develop a goal-oriented program with practices for all six types of involvement.

_ Parent representatives are on district-level advisory councils or committees.

_ We develop formal networks to link all families with their parent representatives for decision making.

_ We involve all parents to get input and ideas on school polices.

_ We provide information on school or local elections for school representatives.

_ We involve parents in selecting school staff.

_ We involve parents in revision school and/or district curricula.

TYPE 6-COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY
Coordinate resources and services from the community for families, students, and the school, and provide services to the community

_ We provide a resource directory for parents and students with information on community agencies, programs, and services.

_ We provide information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programs, and services.

_ We work with local businesses, industries, and community organizations on programs to enhance student skills.

_ We offer after-school programs for student, with support from community businesses, agencies, or volunteers.

_ We sponsor intergenerational programs with local senior citizen groups.

_ We provide “one-stop” shopping for family services through partnerships of school, counseling, health, recreation, job training, and other agencies.

_ We organize service to the community by students, families, and schools.

_ We include alumni in school programs for students.

_ Our school building is open for use by the community after school hours.

Note. From *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action* (pp. 208-211), by J. Epstein, M. Sanders, B.Simons, K.Clark Salinas, N.Rodriguez Jansorn, and F.VanVoorhis, 2002, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. Adapted without permission.

Appendix C

Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships

This instrument is designed to measure how our school is reaching out to involve parents, community members, and students in a meaningful manner. The measure is based on the framework of six types of involvement. The selected items show that our school is meeting challenges it involves all families, and increase student success in school. To be completed by the high school staff. (Epstein, 2002)

Directions: Carefully examine the scoring below before rating our school on the six types of involvement. As you review each item, please circle the response that comes closest to describing our school. A score of 4 or 5 indicates that the activity or approach is strong and prominent. A score of 1, 2, or 3 indicates that the activity is not yet part of the school's program, or needs improvement. The results provide information on the strength of current practices of partnership and insights about possible future directions or needed improvements in our school's partnership program.

Scoring Rubric:

1. Never: Strategy does not happen at our school.

2. Rarely: Occurs in only one or two classes. Receives isolated use or little time. Clearly not emphasized in this school's parental involvement plan.

3. Sometimes: Occurs in some classes. Receives minimal or modest time or emphasis across grades. Not a prevalent component of this school's parental involvement plan.

4. Often: Occurs in many but not all classes or departments. Receives substantive time and emphasis. A prevalent component of this school's parental involvement plan.

5. Frequently: Occurs in most or all classes or departments. Receives substantive time and emphasis. A highly prevalent component of this school's parental involvement plan.

I. PARENTING: Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.

The High School:	Rating				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Frequently
1. Conducts workshops or provides information for parents on child or adolescent development.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Provides information, training, and assistance to all families who want it or who need it, not just to the few who can attend workshops or meetings at the school building.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Produces information for families that is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Asks families for information about children's goals, strengths, and talents.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Sponsors home visiting programs or neighborhood meetings to help families understand schools and to help schools understand families.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Provides families with information on developing home conditions or environments that support learning.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Respects the difference cultures represented in our student population.	1	2	3	4	5

Other Type 1-Parenting activities	1	2	3	4	5

II. COMMUNICATING: Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.

	Rating				
The High School:	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Frequently
1. Reviews the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and nonprint communications	1	2	3	4	5
2. 2. Develops communications with parents who do not speak or read English well, or need large type.	1	2	3	4	5
3. 3. Provides written communication in the language of the parents and translators as needed.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Has clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and from school to home.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Conducts a formal conference with every parent at least once a year.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Conducts annual survey for families to share information and concerns about student needs, reactions to school programs, and satisfaction with their involvement in school and at home.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Conducts an orientation					

for new parents.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Sends home folders of student work weekly or monthly for parent review and comment.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Provides clear information about the curriculum, assessments, achievement levels, and report cards	1	2	3	4	5
10. Contacts families of students having academic or behavior problems.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Develops school's plan and program of family and community involvement with input form educators, parents, and others.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Trains teachers, staff, and principals on the value and utility of family involvement and ways to build positive ties between school and home.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Builds policies that encourage all teachers to communicate frequently with parents about curriculum plans, expectations for homework, and how parents can help.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Produces a regular school newsletter with up-to-date information about school, special events, organizations, meetings, and parenting tips.	1	2	3	4	5
Other Type 2-Communicating activities	1	2	3	4	5

III. VOLUNTEERING: Recruit and organize parent help and support.

The High School:	Rating				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Frequently
1. Conducts an annual survey to identify interests, talents, and availability of parent volunteers in order to match their skills and talents with school and classrooms needs.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Provides a parent or family room for volunteers and family members to work, meet, and access resources about parenting, childcare, tutoring, and related topics.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Creates flexible volunteering opportunities and schedules, enabling employed parents to participate.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Schedules school events at different times during the day and evening so that all families can attend.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Reduces barriers to parent participation by providing transportation and child care, and by addressing the needs of English language learners.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Trains volunteers so they use their time and efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Recognizes volunteers for their time and efforts.	1	2	3	4	5

8. Encourage families an the community to be involved with the school in a variety of ways (assisting in classroom, giving talks, monitoring halls, leading activities, etc.	1 2 3 4 5
Other Type 3-Volunteering activities	1 2 3 4 5

IV. LEARNING AT HOME: Provide information to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions and planning.

	Rating				
The High School:	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Frequently
1. Provides information to families on how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Provides information to families on required skills in all subjects	1	2	3	4	5
3. Provides ongoing and specific information to parents on how to assist students with skills that they need to improve.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Makes parents aware of the importance of reading at home, and asks parents to listen to their child read or read aloud with their child.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Assists families in helping students set academic goals and select courses and programs.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Schedules regular interactive homework that requires students to	1	2	3	4	5

demonstrate and discuss what they are learning with a family member.	
Other Type 4-Learning at home activities _____	1 2 3 4 5

V. DECISION MAKING: Include parents in school decisions to develop leaders and representatives

	Rating				
The High School:	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Frequently
1. Has an active parent organization.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Includes parent representatives on the school's advisory council, improvement team, or other committees.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Has parents represented on district-level advisory council and committees.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Involves parents in organized, ongoing, and timely ways in planning, reviewing, and improving school programs.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Involves parents in revising school and district curricula.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Develops formal networks to link all families with their parent representatives	1	2	3	4	5
7. Includes students (with parents) in decision-making groups.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Deals with conflict openly and respectfully	1	2	3	4	5

9. Asks involved parents to make contact with parents who are less involved to solicit their ideas and report back to them.	1 2 3 4 5
Other Type 5-Decision making activities _____	1 2 3 4 5

VI. COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY: Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

	Rating				
The High School:	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Frequently
1. Provides a resource directory for parents and students with information on community services, programs, and agencies.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Involves families in locating and using community resources.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Works with local business, industries, libraries, parks, museums, and other organizations on programs to enhance student skills and learning.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Provides "one-stop" shopping for family services through partnership of school, counseling, health, recreation, job training, and other agencies.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Opens its building for	1	2	3	4	5

community use after school hours.	
6. Offers after-school programs for student with support from community businesses, agencies, and volunteers.	1 2 3 4 5
7. Solves turf problems of responsibilities, funds, staff, and locations for collaborative activities to occur.	1 2 3 4 5
Other Type 6-Collaboring with the community activities: _____	1 2 3 4 5

Note. From *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action* (pp. 330-334), by J. Epstein, M. Sanders, B. Simons, K. Clark Salinas, N.Rodriguez Jansorn, and F. VanVoorhis, 2002, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. Adapted without permission.

Appendix D

January 20, 2009

Dear Parents:

The parent and community relations committee at St. Charles High School would like to gather some information and opinions in an effort to strengthen the partnership between school and family. The surveys are anonymous and the results are reported as summary data and will in no way be connected to you or your child. The goal is to determine the level of school and family relationships, and to uncover what our families feel is successful and what we can improve on.

The committee has attached a copy of the survey and would appreciate your feedback. If you are willing to fill out the survey, please complete the attached form and send it back to school with your child. Students should return the surveys to their eighth block teacher.

The committee knows your time is valuable and you are busy with family obligations. We hope to be able to gather feedback that will help make St. Charles's programming as effective as possible.

At the end of the year when the research is complete, you will be provided with the results of all the feedback received.

Thank you and if you have any questions, please call me. 443-4105

Sincerely,

Corey Sink,
Assistant Principal
St. Charles High School

Appendix E

September 2008

Dear Teachers:

I am currently working on my doctoral dissertation for Lindenwood University and would like to gather some information and opinions in an effort to strengthen the partnership between school and family. The surveys an inventory of present practices of school, family, and community partnerships. They are anonymous and the results are reported as summary data and will in no way be a reflection of you or your opinions. The goal is to determine the current level of school and family relationships, and to uncover what we feel is successful and what we can improve on.

I have attached a copy of the survey and would appreciate your feedback. I am trying to encourage participation, but participation cannot be coerced. Please complete the survey and return it to Deb Zahn by the end of next week. I know that you are busy and I truly appreciate you taking the time to not only provide me feedback but to help St. Charles High School evaluate our programming so that we can improve.

At the end of the year when the research is complete, you will be provided with the results of all the feedback received.

Thank you,

Corey Sink, Assistant Principal St. Charles High

Appendix F

May 12, 2008

St. Charles City School District
1025 Country Club Road
St. Charles, MO 63301

Dear Mrs. Danielle Tormala,

I am currently a candidate in the Lindenwood University Doctoral Program. I would like to conduct research on the effect community relations and parent involvement have on student achievement. The research will be conducted utilizing randomly selected student GPA data from the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years. The school in which the research will be gathered is St. Charles High School. I would like your permission to gather GPA data on randomly selected students as a measurement for success or failure of the research.

As part of the research process permission from parents will be gathered if their child is randomly chosen to complete the survey. Parents and teachers will also be asked to complete a survey for additional feedback. The names of the students, teachers and parents participating will remain anonymous.

I would greatly appreciate your consent to my request. If you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached at:

(314) 691-1811 or (636) 443-4105 or by email at csink@mail.stcharles.k12.mo

A duplicate copy of this request has been provided for your records. If you agree with the terms described above, please sign the release form below and send one copy in the envelope provided.

Sincerely,

Corey Sink
St. Charles High School
Assistant Principal

Permission granted for the use of the research process as described above:

Name & Title Danielle S. Tormala Date 8-11-08

cc: Mr. Randal Charles and Dr. Mark Eggers

Vitae

Robert Corey Sink is currently an assistant principal at St. Charles High in the City of St. Charles School District, in St. Charles Missouri. Prior to becoming an assistant principal at St. Charles, Mr. Sink taught seven years in the business and marketing department at St. Charles High School. Mr. Sink also was involved in coaching football and track and field, as well as sponsoring DECA. Before working in the field of Education, Mr. Sink spent several years in industry including subsidiary contact work for both the Ford Motor Company and U.S. Sprint.

Educational studies have resulted in a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Degree from the University of Missouri, Columbia, a Bachelor of Science in Business Education Degree from Southeast Missouri State University, and a Master of Arts in Educational Administration Degree from Lindenwood University.