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A Correlational Study: Parental Involvement to Student Achievement in Public Education

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A CORRELATIONAL STUDY: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

School of Education

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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

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A Capstone Dissertation

A CORRELATIONAL STUDY: Parental Involvement to Student Achievement in Public Education

by

Brian R. Wilson

This Capstone Project/Dissertation has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
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Abstract

The significance of parental involvement in their children's education, according to literature, is unquestionable. In this study the author examined the correlation between student achievement and parental involvement in public education in grade levels two through twelve. The following research will present varied aspects of obstacles that stakeholders must hurdle in an attempt to overcome these barriers in their quest for student success. Additional focus will present quality models of parental involvement as stakeholders attempt to increase and sustain student achievement in this new era of accountability in education.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A Correlation-Comparative Study: Student Academic Achievement to Parental Involvement at the Secondary Level

Introduction

Academic achievement among school-aged students is a multidimensional facet in public education. Educators constantly engage in educational research to examine the correlation between variables that impact student performance (Hountenville, 2008). Parental involvement could be the indispensable link in educational leaders' quest to leave no child behind and ensure an optimistic future for the children of America. As it is known, children are one-hundred percent of the future. Therefore, educating children must remain a priority for all stakeholders involved in this colossal task.

Parental involvement itself involves very specific behaviors, i.e., attending parent-teacher conferences, although it is not entirely clear that simply increasing these behaviors would produce the desired effects in

student achievement. Even though research consistently shows parent school involvement is important to student achievement, it is not operationalized in terms of behaviors such as obtaining tutoring or doing homework with the child. The positive influence of parental involvement may simply be the message it sends to children. By attending school functions, activities, and meetings at school, parents involved in school may very well indicate the significance of school to their children and what is important to their identity (Oyserman, 2007). In this way, parent school involvement may be associated with better school outcomes because of its proximal effects on a child's sense of who he/she could become. Indeed, parent-school involvement often co-occurs with factors that also contribute to positive school outcomes, such as positive parental outlooks on education (Oyserman, 2007).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (Parent, 2000), "Parental involvement for students in middle and high schools tends to be lower than those in elementary schools. This report showed that in 1996 and 1999, 86% of elementary school parents had at least one meeting with their children's teachers, while 50% of parents of high school children had one visit with a teacher."

Another parental involvement report completed in 2002-03 by the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (Parent, 2005) showed that over 90% of parents of kindergarten through fifth grade students were involved in their children's school work compared with 75% of middle school parents and 59% of the ninth through tenth grade parents were involved. In addition, only 53% of the parents of the eleventh and twelve grade students were involved (2005).

The examination of parental involvement has been a mainstay for educationalists as researchers have studied the correlational effects of parental involvement on student achievement. Almost four decades ago a federal document was printed that discussed the effectiveness of American education. The paper was financed by the United States Office of Education and was written by James Coleman, a notorious educational analyst at the time. The paper, known as the Coleman Report, stated that public education did significantly impact the ability of students to reach their potential. The Coleman Report also sited family environment as the substantial factor for the successful academic achievement among those children. James Coleman concluded that children who lacked support or a value of education in their homes were at a disadvantage

and could not learn at the same rate as those students emerging from wealthier families valuing educational instruction (Coleman, 1966).

Since the materialization of the Coleman Report, educators began to reanalyze the data and research evidence concerning how home variables impact student learning and success. Subsequent to 1966, numerous studies have examined the strong correlation comparing parental involvement and an increase in academic achievement. As early as 1972, researchers supported the Coleman Report with evidence that between 50% and 67% of all variance in student achievement could be reflected on those variables within the home rather than those within the school (Mosteller, 1972). Research has continued to support the theory of parental involvement's being one significant aspect of student success.

Throughout the past forty years, parents and educators have worked to target those specific factors to enhance the success in academia for students. Parents have a desire for their progeny to triumph in life. While educators also care about the success of their students, they understand the high stakes in education today and the pressures put upon districts to improve student performance. To ensure a successful academic performance, students, parents, and

educators must work together to achieve a common bond. Without such a relationship, student success may be hindered or, even worse, a student might fall into complete failure.

It is at the secondary grade level that parental involvement begins to diminish, compared to that of lower grade levels. Particular students begin to struggle academically at this level, when they might not have struggled at lower grade levels (Hountenville, 2008). This result could be influenced by a decline in parental engagement at the secondary echelon for students; therefore, it is imperative to understand the significance of parents and their participation, the involvement effect on student performance, and at what particular grade level parent involvement is essential to student success.

Stakeholders should comprehend the impacts of parental involvement and unite work efforts in utilizing positive interventions to engage students in education and enhance student performance. Current research indicates that students whose parents are connected with the curriculum, in addition to the school, are more likely to perform better and remain engaged in school (Hountenville, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to determine the specific impact parental involvement has on student academic achievement at all levels. The assumption, at the high school level may lead parents to leave the edification of their child in the hands of the student and educator(s), taking a more passive role, as compared to their involvement at the elementary level (Hountenville, 2008). Preceding research has determined the magnitude of parents' impact on their child's education and future success. Nevertheless, this prior research tends to focus on particular grade levels or grade spans with a restricted view of a comprehensive school district. With inadequate funding, more stringent guidelines, and increased accountability, public educators are in pursuit of methods to increase student performance. Therefore, identifying the most influential ages impacted by parental involvement should allow school districts to better focus on those specific areas of needed improvement. Consequently, it is crucial that educators strive to see the correlation that parental involvement has on student achievement at all levels of education, so the stakeholders can collaborate in an effort to enhance the educational process for all students.

Rationale for the Study

The ultimate goal for educators is to increase student performance and achievement. *Goals 2000* was established by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to enhance ties between parents and school districts in hopes that these partnerships would promote the social, emotional, and academic growth of children (Baker, 2000). *Goals 2000,* along with *No Child Left Behind,* has increased accountability and high stakes testing for all school districts. For instance, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education evaluates those districts in the state of Missouri based on student performance. Districts are accredited according to the performance of their student population; therefore, any leverage in increasing student achievement should be examined (DESE, 2008).

The utilization of funds to create, promote, and maintain district parental involvement programs should be based on relevant, data-driven decisions to reinforce the hypothesis that parental involvement enhances student performance at the secondary school level.

Independent Variable

The independent variable in this study is the involvement of parents or guardians as this participation should enable students to better meet their educational

needs. This variable which changes over time will potentially affect outcomes of the dependent variable. For this correlational study, parental involvement will be direct contact with the educators responsible for their child's education through a scheduled parent teacher conference.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is the student achievement scores. Achievement scores will be measured through both grade point averages and the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP). The MAP test is a criterion based test given to students in the state of Missouri and monitored by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The grade point average will be figured as all class grades are averaged together. Students will be enrolled in either six or seven classes per semester. These grade averages will be based on an eleven-point scale to better help pinpoint discrepancies. The MAP, the standardized performance test in Missouri, will utilize an index score in both Communication Arts and Mathematics, which compiles the assessed test results of those students who were engaged.

Null Hypothesis

There will be no significant, positive correlation between parental involvement through parent-teacher conferences and the grade point averages of students, grades 2-12 in selected Missouri Public Schools.

The mean of student performance, measured by grade points averages, will not significantly differ according to gender with equivalent parental involvement.

The mean of student performance, measured by grade point average in grades second through twelfth will not significantly vary among students with equivalent parental involvement.

There will be no significant, positive correlation between districts that have completed the 4th cycle MSIP review in Missouri, parental involvement and students who are proficient in Communication Arts, according to the standardized MAP assessment.

There will be no significant, positive correlation between districts that have completed the 4th cycle MSIP review in Missouri, parental involvement and students who are proficient in Mathematics, according to the standardized MAP assessment.

Limitations of the Study

Parental involvement. Parental involvement in regards to education at home will not be evaluated in this study. Only the active participation at school in the form of a parent-teacher conference will be examined. The length of the conference, intensity, and participation may vary from parent to parent. In addition, a parent questionnaire prepared and compiled by DESE will be utilized to compare the district-student achievement scores with the MAP. One assumption about the questionnaire that is it completed accurately and honestly by the parent/guardian.

Student Achievement. Student achievement scores in regard to grade point average will be examined at the end of the first semester. These grades are given subsequent to parent/teacher conferences conducted in the fall. MAP tests are administered during the spring, and grades three through eleventh are the only grade levels in Missouri selected for the MAP test.

Student Participation. Class scheduling, intrinsic factors, and extrinsic factors may influence student achievement and may or may not be reflected in the grade point average.

Student Population. Approximately six hundred students per year will be selected for this study. Students will be chosen from rural school districts in southwest Missouri where the school district population does not exceed one thousand pupils in grades kindergarten through twelve. This population is taken from the district's September enrollment count as reported to the DESE in Missouri.

Teacher Participation. The replacement of existing educators from year one to year two will not be able to be factored into the study. All replacements are certified by the state of Missouri in those content areas in which they are employed to teach. However, the personnel will vary from district to district.

Years. The data gathered will include that from the 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008 school years. Only schools which have completed the fourth-cycle Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) parent questionnaire by January 1, 2008, will be utilized for MAP data.

Definition of Terms

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. This organization is in charge of overseeing school districts in the state of Missouri (DESE, 2008).

Elementary Level. This educational level is represented by students who are enrolled in the second through fifth grade levels. Students are placed in grade levels according to age and completion of prior coursework.

Goals 2000. Also known as the Educate America Act, this is the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Act which has made parental involvement in a child's education a national priority. School districts are asked to re-examine their parent involvement policies, programs, and practices (Baker, 2000).

Grade point average. Averages are a numerical representation of a student's performance in a given area. For the purpose of this study, the grade point average will be based on an eleven-point scale as zero will represent the lowest and eleven will represent the highest attainable level. An eleven-point scale as compared to a four-point scale will allow for a better view of inconsistencies.

Middle School Level. This educational level is represented by students who are enrolled in the sixth through eighth grade level. Students are placed in grade levels according to age and completion of prior coursework.

Missouri Assessment Program. This is a standardized test given to students in Missouri public schools in grades three through eleventh. This particular criterion-based

test meets the requirement of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (DESE, 2008).

Missouri School Improvement Program. This is a program put into place by the Missouri State Board of Education to evaluate the public school districts in Missouri, based on classification standards as outlined by Senate Bill 380 and the State Board Rule (DESE, 2008).

No Child Left Behind Act, 2001. This act is a federal regulation that requires school districts to show adequate yearly progress in the areas of Communication Arts and Mathematics. It supports the idea all students can learn. All students are required to show progress regardless of subgroups; such subgroups are gender, limited English speaking skills, socioeconomic status, and special needs (DESE, 2008).

Parental Involvement. Involvement is defined by Reynolds as "any interaction between a parent and child that may contribute to the child's development or direct parent participation with a child's school in the interest of the child" (Reynolds, 1992). For the purpose of this study, parental involvement will include the physical presence of the parent(s) at a parent-teacher conference at the school with focus on academic performance. Parent-teacher conferences, grade reviews with teachers, and other

conferences with classroom teachers in regard to student achievement are some examples of said involvement. Parents will sign in at the parent/teacher conference to confirm attendance at the meeting as parental involvement is correlated to grade point averages.

Parent-Teacher Conferences. These are organized meetings between the parents and teachers to discuss students' academic performance in a specific area.

Secondary Level. This educational level is represented by students who are enrolled in the ninth through the twelfth grades. Students are placed in grade levels according to age and units of credits gained toward graduation.

Significant. Significance level is the probability level utilized in proving the hypothesis. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson *r)* will be used in this study. In the Pearson correlation, a correlation above .8 is considered strong while anything below .5 is considered weak. The common significance levels are .05.

Socioeconomic Status. Socioeconomic status has been defined by family income and size, and is adjusted yearly, based on the poverty level as determined by the federal government (Anderson & Togneri, 2003).

CHAPTER II - REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Parental involvement plays an integral part in educating students for tomorrow's society. The keys to success necessary to prepare students for the challenges ahead lie in the hands of parents and educators alike. The future success of student performance relies upon the combined efforts of educators and parents. Districts must explore unique avenues to find the keys to unlock doors which separate parents from total involvement and collaboration with the school system. Only then will the perceptions of students, educators, and parents be transformed, and student success becomes a reality.

Einstein was quoted as saying, "The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were when the obstacle was created" (Phipps, 1989). Collaboration between home and school has always been an existing obstacle, but the current trends tend to see the gap changing. Parental involvement at the

secondary level is decreasing while accountability for educators is at an all-time high. This dilemma of parental involvement is imminent and cannot be avoided. Districts must span the gap between home and school, as expectations for them have been increased by federal regulations, for instance *No Child Left Behind* and *Goals 2000.* Therefore, family involvement in public schools must be a priority.

Historical Perspective

Prior to the 1900's, public education was nonexistent in the United States. Children received education at home from parents and other family members as this educational process met the modest needs of society. Later in the early 1900's, a revolution in the domain of education was brought about by an ever-growing society. This system demanded the need for skilled trainers who could educate America's children. The growth in the educational system brought awareness to the public with regard to the importance of the public educator. During this critical time, teachers emerged as respected professionals. They were viewed as specialists who were in charge of students' academic achievement in the classroom, and they were expected to prepare all students for performance outside of school (Stien and Thorkildsen, 1999). This job description still remains true in the 21st century. Teachers are valued

and respected by society for their knowledge and expertise; consequently, the expectation for educating students remains as a heavy burden on the shoulders of professionals in education.

As professionals, educators gained parental trust and confidence through goodwill and positive recognition in the early 1900's. Soon after this, educators began to work closely with parents in developing organizations to benefit students throughout the 1900's. Case in point, parents and teachers formed the National Congress and the Parent-Teacher Association Foundation, two of the predominant organizations formed early in that era. These organizations accelerated the bond between home and school and focused on improving the educational setting for students (Stein and Thorkildsen, 1999).

These types of organizations seemed to proliferate in the 1970's and 1980's. For example, in 1973 fifty parents established a National Coalition of Title I, also known as Chapter I Parents. Three years later the Coalition established the National Parent Center. This organization, a resource for caretakers who desired to be involved in education, assisted parents in becoming aggressively engaged in their children's education with the focus primarily on disadvantaged students (Stein and Thorkildsen,

1999). Furthermore, the Parents as Teachers Program was initiated in 1981, and it is a program that allowed public school districts to help parents effectively nurture their children from before birth until school age. The program once was implemented state-wide in Missouri during the 1985-86 school year. Forty-four other states duplicated the program modeled by Missouri (Cookson, 1996). The 1970's and 1980's were a time of emerging support from organizations that linked school and home.

Throughout the past two decades parents have been adamant in regards to their rights to engage with districts in support of their children's education (Cookson, 1996). It had been documented that as high as 40 percent of all parents had volunteered in their local school district in 1992. In addition, in 2003 the National Center of Educational Statistics reported that 80 percent of parents with school-aged children participated in a minimum of one conference throughout the school year with their children's educators while 60 percent of those parents attended a school function outside of the regular school day (Parent, 2005). However, these statistics are on a steady decline. In 2001 the percent of parents participating in meetings with their child's teachers had fallen below 75% with the majority of the parental visits at the elementary level

rather than the secondary level. Researchers report the number of parent/school organizations is substantial, but the parental percentage energetically involved in their children's educational process is decreasing (Weis, 2003).

Organizational direction of these types of assistance groups is beginning to change in the 21st century as legislators at both state and national levels are becoming actively interested in the parental involvement aspect of public education. Case in point, *Goals 2000*: *Educate America Act* and the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act have established parental involvement as a priority. Seeing this result of *Goals 2000,* in order to receive federal education funds for Title I, school districts must provide proof that one percent of all funds are earmarked for programs that promote parental involvement in schools (Baker, 2000). Schools were asked to re-evaluate their current policies, programs, and practices. *Goals 2000* was designed to alleviate the tension between schools and parents. Legislation was based on theories and studies by researchers and educators that parental involvement will enhance a child's success (Baker, 2000). The transfer of focus from parental or educator initiated programs has become an agenda concern of both federal and state legislators.

Even through 2006, school districts in Missouri are facing legislative mandates forcing school districts to adopt policies in regard to parental involvement. Districts are expected to develop policy at the local level, implementing programs that continue to integrate volunteers and parents into their schools. Currently, this is another mandated regulation for districts.

With regard to correlating parental involvement and student achievement, past research indicates equal and active efforts on the part of parents and educators alike. They have attempted to work together in efforts not only to meet state and federal mandates but to constantly strive to provide better education for today's children. The percentage of organizations which strive to accomplish the goal of joint efforts between the home and school is expected to increase as districts must recognize that parents are a vital element of the academic process.

Parental Involvement

Ballantine was quoted, "Parents are critical to children's success during the school years" (1999). Parental involvement is presented as a unified concept; typologies of parental involvement, parental roles, and nature of partnership have all been identified, illustrating the diversity of its practice and

interpretation. These interpretations are also variously acceptable or unacceptable to the key actors, depending upon their different constituencies and varying situations (Crozier 2000).

Teachers usually want to see parents come to school, but a parent's participation in the educational process of his/her child, particularly in deprived areas, is typically at low levels. Hornby said, "The minimal parental involvement in schools is an international phenomenon, with the majority of parents worldwide having little contact with schools their children attend" (2000). Teachers want parents to do the following: (1) be open with them about their children's special needs or health problems; (2) tell them about any home circumstances which could affect pupils; (3) cooperate in reinforcing school discipline and school programs at home by supervising homework or listening to their children read; (4) teach their child what is expected of them at school and have realistic expectations of what their children are capable of doing; (5) regularly attend Parent-Teacher meetings and discuss their children's progress with them; (6) read and acknowledge reports and letters sent home, and make sure the school has up-to-date address and phone details in case they need to be contacted during the day; (7) keep their

children home if they are not well; and (8) volunteer to help out in various ways in school (Hornby, 2000).

However, parents also have some expectations regarding teachers, as they expect them to do the following: (1) consult parents more frequently and listen to their point of view; (2) have a more open or approachable attitude, and be willing to admit if they do not know something; (3) treat their children with respect; (4) and, more importantly, contact them if they suspect their children have a problem of any kind.

In Denmark, for instance, parents are more satisfied with their communication with teachers, teacher's proficiency, and attention to individual children as compared to their counterparts in the United States. They expect to see better cohesion between day-care centers, schools and recreational arrangements, more opportunities for parental involvement, more attention given to the abilities and needs of individual children, and better books and teaching materials (Instance, 2006).

Apparently, differences in expectations between parents and teachers are prevalent, but many similarities and complementary expectations are ubiquitous. For instance, teachers would like parents to be more open with them, and parents want teachers to listen to them and

consult them more frequently. In addition, teachers want parents to do more volunteer work in schools, and parents say they are willing to do this. In addition, parents and teachers both reinforce the importance of parent-teacher conferences and PTA meetings. These meetings are valuable as they help to clarify expectations on both sides. In most professional development workshops on parental involvement, there is a genuine surprise in the minds of many teachers and parents regarding the expectations placed on them. This indicates the necessity for more consideration to be given to the relationship between teachers and parents since it seems that assumptions are made on both sides without these being made explicit. This raises the issue: How should parents and teachers relate to each other? In order to solve this, various approaches to parent-teacher relationships should be discussed (Instance, 2006).

Types of Parental Involvement

Parental Involvement is understood to be one of the vaguest terms utilized throughout the public education sector as it can fluctuate in meaning. Parental involvement is interchangeable with parental participation along with numerous other descriptions; there are an endless number of behaviors that could be substituted for

the phrase “parental involvement” (Ascher, 1988). For example, the state of California, along with 17 other states, has enacted state legislation and directed boards of education to implement parental involvement policies. The 2004 policy reads, “Parents and guardians have the right, and should have the opportunity, to participate in the education of their children.” This excerpt was a portion of the revision of the original documentation legislated by the state of California recognizing parental involvement as an integral part of improving academic achievement (Zinth, 2005). This terminology is ambiguous and confusing to not only parents and guardians, but to educators and administrators alike. The when, where, how, and to what extent are yet to be resolved. A lack of participation does not always mean parents are neglecting their duties as parents, rather, they have discernment of what is expected or allowed for them to accomplish under the term “parental involvement”.

The confusion is even found throughout research regarding parental involvement. Because of the difficulty in solidifying one definition of the term, many researchers have focused personal endeavors on more specific, categorized areas in the varying categories of parental

involvement (Great Schools, 2005). The breakdown has been examined from a model with two to seven various categories.

In the first category, the Wisconsin Education Association Council divided the term into two distinct categories, separating involvement at home from involvement in a school setting. Involvement at home incorporates parents taking an active role in the student's behaviors in the home. The parents would not only set high expectations for the student but create guidelines in regards to monitoring homework, watching television, and other issues that would impact the productivity of student work (Great Schools, 2005). The parents would appreciate educators and realize the importance of an education as well as hold and vocalize this respect in the home setting. Therefore, the parents ultimately show a true value for the educational process.

In the second category, parents would have a physical presence in the school setting. Actual activity could range from attending a single conference to volunteering at school on a regular basis. The amount of time spent could fluctuate vastly. In both of the aforementioned situations, expectations are favorably set for students with parents who value education and who are keenly in tune

with their children's education, either by participation at school, home, or both (Great Schools, 2005).

However, J. L. Epstein has the most utilized model in which parental involvement is divided into five different categories. Epstein is well respected for his view and model; however, the majority of the approaches based on Epstein's research are targeted toward the primary grade levels (Epstein, 1999). Epstein provides a practical categorization of parental involvement since parents participate in their child's education in abundant dimensions.

Dornbush's and Ritter's research, although similar to Epstein, focuses primarily on secondary level students. Their perception of needs at this higher level differs from those at the lower grade levels.

Seven separate types of parental involvement are found in their research: (a) parents are communicators; (b) parents are supporters of activities; (c) parents are learners; (d) parents are advocates; (e) parents are decision-makers; (f) parents are volunteers/professionals; and (g) parents are home activities teachers (Dornbusch and Ritter, 1988). The eight categories should overlap as students should have uniformity in education at both home and school settings. In addition, this approach has found

that student success is impacted more dramatically if parents utilize each category. In return, the more often the action is performed, the healthier the correlation to student achievement (Dornbusch and Ritter, 1988).

Parental involvement was defined by Reynolds in broad terms, meaning, "it could be comprehended as any interaction between a parent and child contributing to the development of that child" (1992). Regardless of the definition or approach to parental involvement, the best reason for participation is student accomplishments. Few deny the importance of parental involvement throughout the primary and secondary levels. It is accepted as a necessity in schools across the nation. Parents have always been engaged in their children's schooling since public education began (Reynolds 1992). However, recent efforts have broadened the notion of parental involvement. Research has yet to clearly determine which definition of parental involvement is the most accurate or which nature of interaction will make the greatest impact upon student progress. Regardless of the type of involvement, the educational impact parents have on their son or daughter is enormous (Reynolds 1992).

Three Examples of Parent Involvement

There are three types of parental involvement according to Michigan Department of Education (MDE, 2002), and one of them is involvement of parents who lack the understanding of how to assist their offspring with education. With assistance, support, and guidance, these parents may increase their involvement in the learning activities at home and discover for themselves an opportunity to direct instruction and shape their children. Second is involvement when schools persuade students to practice coursework in the home setting; those particular children yield noteworthy gains in the correlated coursework when compared to their counterpart classmates who only actively participate and practice within the school setting. Third, as quoted by MDE (2002),is involvement of parents "who read to their children, have books available, take trips, guide TV watching, and provide stimulating experiences that contribute to student achievement."

Models of Parental Involvement

Over the past quarter century, parental involvement has become a mantra chanted at nearly every school, but the mutual mistrust and skepticism between parents and teachers is hampering education, particularly for many minority

youth (Sagor and Cox, 2004). However, according to Hornby (2000), there are various approaches to parent-teacher relationships, each defined by a different set of assumptions, goals, and strategies. These approaches range from those which attempt to minimize parental involvement to others which actively promote it. These approaches can be conceptualized in the form of models for the practice of parental involvement. The six most common models are protective, expert, transmission, curriculum-enrichment, consumer, and partnership (Hornby, 2000).

Protective Model

The protective model aims to avoid conflict between teachers and parents by separating teaching and parenting functions. Teachers carry out the education of children at school, and the parents' role is to make sure children get to school on time with the correct equipment. This helps to eradicate the notion that parental involvement in schools is an unnecessary and potentially damaging interference, and has no direct effect on children's performance. Some consider this approach as the most common model of parent-teacher relationships (Hornby 2000).

Expert Model

In the expert model, on the other hand, teachers regard themselves as experts on all aspects of development

and education of children whereas parents' views are accorded little credence. Teachers maintain control over decisions while the parents' role is to receive information and instructions about their children. A major problem with this approach is that it encourages parents to be submissive and dependent on teachers. Parents are reluctant to question teachers' decisions and tend to lose faith in their own competence. Another problem occurs because teachers do not make use of the rich source of knowledge parents have about their children, and they tend to overlook important problems or abilities that children might have. In addition, teachers working with the expert model will not be aware of any difficulties parents themselves might experience. All these factors increase the possibility that parents will be dissatisfied with the service they get from teachers who adopt this approach (Hornby, 2000).

Transmission Model

The transmission model is included in the list to support the goals of the school. Teachers who regard themselves as the main source of expertise on children recognize the benefits of using parents as a resource. These teachers believe some of their experience can be transmitted from them to parents, so parents can carry out

some form of intervention with their children. A good example of this approach in the field of education is a paired reading program in which parents are trained to help their children with reading at home. In these circumstances, the teachers remain in control and decide on the interventions to be used but do not accept the theory that parents cannot engage with that imperative part of facilitating progress for their children. Therefore, there is more likelihood that parents' views will be considered and their concerns addressed (Hornby, 2000).

However, to use this approach effectively, teachers need additional skills, such as techniques for guiding parents and interpersonal skills required for establishing productive working relationships with them. These factors will increase the likelihood of parents being satisfied with the service they receive and reduce the tendency for them to become dependent on teachers. The danger of this approach is the assumption that all parents can and should take on the role as resources. This risks overburdening some parents by placing excessive demands on them to carry out an intervention program with their children. The chances of this happening are increased for children with special needs since several different professionals such as speech therapists, psychologists and teachers, may all be

expecting parents to carry out intervention programs at home (Hornby, 2000).

Curriculum-enrichment Model

The goal of the curriculum-enrichment model is to broaden the learners' curriculum by integrating parents' involvement and input into the process. It is based on the assumption that parents have important expertise to contribute, and interactions between parents and teachers around the implementation of the curriculum material will enhance the curriculum objectives of the educational facility (Hornby 2000). The parental involvement focus in this model is mainly on curriculum for which this approach has been widely used in multicultural education. Parents from various ethnic, religious, and cultural groups have been able to collaborate with teachers in order to develop and implement curricula which accurately reflect the history, values and views of the groups which they represent (Hornby, 2000).

On the other hand, parental input needs to be restricted to multicultural education. For instance, two parents with science degrees become involved in designing and teaching curriculum material in the area of science. This model suggests a novel way of involving parents in children's learning, which increases the obtainable

resources to the district, and bestows possibilities for parents and teachers to ascertain from the other stakeholder. Its major drawback, however, is in order to implement this model, it requires that teachers allow parents to have a major input in what curriculum is given through instruction and how it is presented to the learners. This leads to teachers who feel threatened using this method (Hornby, 2000).

Consumer Model

In the consumer model, parents are regarded as being consumers of educational services. The teacher acts as a consultant while the parent decides what action is to be taken. The parent has control over the decision-making process while the teacher's role is to provide him/her with relevant information and a range of options from which to choose. Thus, in this approach the teacher defers to parents who are effectively placed in the expert role. The teacher's role is to listen to the parent's views and help him/her choose from the alternatives available. Since parents are in control of the decision-making process in this approach, they are likely to be much more satisfied with the service they receive, feel more competent about their parenting and less likely to become dependent on professionals. However, this approach, when taken to its

extreme, may lead to an abdication of professional responsibility (Hornby, 2000).

Partnership Model

Partnership models enable mutual support between teacher and parents. Basically, they support each other's efforts. For instance, teachers can provide guidance on how parents can assist their children in the home setting just as parents are able to act as volunteer helpers at school. Parents and teachers will be involved in joint problem solving and decision-making at the levels of individual children, the classroom, and the school. Furthermore, it is a necessity for parents to create a range of opportunities to be engaged in while promoting their children's education both in and outside of the classroom setting (Hornby, 2000).

However, having the model of partnership as an overall guide does not preclude the use of interventions based on the other approaches when they would be more appropriate. For example, the transmission model correctly provides the underlying rationale for many of the parents' involvement projects, such as home school reading schemes. In addition, the adoption of the expert model is justified in prescribing treatment, such as personal therapy or parenting skills programs designed for parents who have

subjected their children to physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. In fact, some interventions, such as parent education programs, can be organized from different perspectives, depending on the group of parents to be involved. In part, they can be organized from the perspective of the consumer model with parents stipulating what guidance or input they would like (Hornby, 2000).

Conversely, they can be organized from the viewpoint of the expert model with teachers' spelling out what parents need to learn. For instance, parents of children with special needs may be able and enthusiastic to select an opposite input comparable to the consumer model whereas parents who have subjected their children to some form of abuse are likely to need professionals to settle what input would be most advantageous. Therefore, flexibility must be prevalent in order to facilitate or assist other models to be utilized if it is considered that the partnership model is considered to be generally the most suitable standpoint from which to develop positive parental involvement. In this model teachers are conscious of addressing parents' needs and acknowledging there are various ways parents can contribute to the development and teaching the children. This progress will smooth the development of effectual partnership between parents and teachers. For such

partnerships to become more than just supercilious ideals, the concept needs to be developed into a model for parent involvement which is designed for direct contact of stakeholders (Hornby, 2000).

Programs

Richard W. Riley, U.S. Secretary of Education was quoted as saying, "Better education is everybody's business." Partnerships and programs between the family and school strengthen the educational process and promote learning; therefore, an increased student outcome is the result. The United States Department of Education is observing an increase in the numbers of partnerships and programs across the United States. Over 700 organizations have formed together in an initiative to set high standards and support student learning throughout the United States (Cookson, 1996).

In creating policy or an organization, districts could follow some of the guidelines utilized in Ventura, California, to benefit their cause. The common goal of parents and teachers is to emphasize academic achievement. Academics are of the utmost importance and should receive the same support as athletics at the secondary level. Collaboration efforts are made to share accomplishments in the academic field just as victories are shared from the

baseball, softball, or football field. If districts are fully devoted to partnerships with the community, professional development is essential to the success of the program. Administrators must have a willingness to support the partnership financially, and educators must partake in the professional development. Districts can not stop or become dissatisfied. Once parents are reached, the district must branch out into the community to form partnerships with the community, keeping the focus on student learning (Weis, 2000). School districts should make a significant effort in formulating a plan to gain partnerships between school, parents, and community.

Traditional parent involvement programs including, PTO's, PTA's, and other organizations are important roles in school districts, but as the stakes in education rise, these organizations may not meet the needs of parents nor of the districts. As educators and parents share the common goal of seeking the best education for their students or children, they must be proactive in their approach and formulate a working program with a policy that has substance. Bottom line: schools succeed when parents are involved in their children's education. These stakeholders are the real leavening agent that makes the

dough rise. Districts must actively engage parents in order to fully benefit the educational process of children.

Communication with Parents

Teachers have the "ability as well as the responsibility to facilitate and help strengthen the relationships of students with their families and communities" (McCaleb, 1995). Schools have a duty to encourage parental interests in the education of their children through an ambition that academic performance levels improve as students benefit from positive parental attitudes. Moreover, teachers often know what sort of activities will enable parental involvement in their schools, but they lack the knowledge of how to effectively put these into action. Research on preferences of parents on the variety of forms of parental engagement has generally established that the majority of parents favor communications with educators to be frequent and informal (Vincent, 1996).

"Communication is the foundation of effective partnership," (Funkhouser, 1997). In a survey conducted in the United States in 1986, according to Hornby (2000), out of the 217 parents of children with a wide range of special needs, 69% wanted to communicate with teachers by means of letters, 51% by parent-teacher interviews, 45% by telephone

calls and only 19% by home visits. Moreover, when another group of parents in the United States was asked to rank twenty different common methods of home-school communication, the most popular methods involved directly approaching teachers by telephone, in person, or parent-teacher interviews. Apparently, it is clear from these findings that there are a few common strategies but also differences among parents regarding their preferred methods of communicating with teachers. Therefore, it is important for schools to be able to offer parents a range of communication options. There are five main methods for developing and maintaining two-way communication between parents and teachers, such as informal contacts, telephone contacts, various printed transmissions, and conferences between stakeholders, and visits at the child's home (Funkhouser, 1997).

Informal or comfortable setting which allows for contacts is a useful way of breaking the ice in most forms of human relationships, and this is the case in relationships with teachers and parents. Such contacts provide a means whereby parents and teachers can meet one another as people with a mutual interest in building relationships for the betterment of the children they serve, thereby helping to minimize the obstructions that

are present as school and home are connected. Informal connections are particularly important for the caregivers of children newly enrolled at the school and in cases when there has been no high level of parent involvement at the school before. In the latter situation, teachers understandably become despondent when the attendance at more formal events, such as parents' evenings, is so poor. When this is the case, it is often best to organize a number of informal events so parents will have more opportunities for contact with the school, thereby establishing the context necessary for the development of other forms of contact (Hornby, 2000).

The organization of informal contacts is illustrated by the following descriptions of four different types of activities, such as school productions, open days, gala days, and outings into the local community. School productions, the type of informal occasion guaranteed to achieve the maximum attendance of parents, is one in which they see their children perform in some way or other. It is possible to organize activities so that all pupils are involved in such events as school concerts or nativity plays and thereby ensure almost 100% parents' attendance. Open days are another way to encourage a large proportion of parents to come into the school. Parents can come along

to see classes in progress and displays of their children's work. Another is gala days, events whose main aim is raising funds for the school by having booths which sell homemade food, and activities, such as races for children and adults, provide opportunities for teachers, parents, and pupils to meet informally. Outings to places, such as local parks on weekends or at holiday time can attract large numbers of parents and other family members (Hornby, 2000).

Benefits for Educational Purposes

The importance of parental involvement has been researched and documented by numerous educators and policymakers. Research has found that parental input has indicated activities at home have a significant impact upon students' academic achievement. Therefore, the greater the frequency of parental participation in their children's education, the greater the benefits will be multiplied in a positive manner.

The Coleman Report in 1966, one of the first concrete studied, concluded that home-based variables were as important as school-based variables when accounting for the differences in student achievement (Coleman, 1966). The Coleman Report has been utilized since its existence and has been verified as an asset to those who have pursued

parental involvement research. Researchers have frequently fostered findings based upon the primary research of Coleman.

In other research, Henderson and Berla produced a "new wave" of evidence in 1994, which stated, regardless of the socioeconomic status or history, students were more apt to succeed and go further in education if their parents were actively engaged in their education (Henderson, 1994). This research proved to be a substantial breakthrough for educators. Dr. Alexa Posny investigated over 200 studies as the Kansas State Board of Education redesigned their educational system. A sixth core principle was devoted to the involvement of parents in the school setting. Henderson and Berla's research was a primary resource for the board of education's sixth principle. In addition, the 1994 results aided in *Goals 2000* introducing parental involvement to that policy. Even though Henderson and Berla's research was completed in 1994, it has proved to be the foundation for numerous policies and further research.

Henderson and Berla found benefits to parental involvement for students, schools, and parents. First, students obtained high achievement scores and were placed in upper level courses, while fewer students were placed in special education programs. Overall, these same students

had an overall, increased positive attitude and behavior that produced higher attendance rates and elevated homework scores. The above associated a high graduation rate among the secondary students. Additionally, the same students were more likely to enroll and complete a postsecondary education. The research findings were overwhelming in that, when parents were involved, children go farther in school (Henderson, 1994).

School districts also reaped the benefits from parental involvement. In short, the measurable objectives of student attendance, discipline referrals, and student achievement were all favorable to school districts. In less concrete benefits, teachers were more positive in regard to their school and students, resulting in higher teacher morale in the district. With the supplementary support from parents and guardians, the district not only reaped the initial benefits but also welcomed the positive reputation the district acquired throughout community (Henderson, 1994).

Henderson and Berla found that parental confidence was elevated as parents participated in their children's learning. Their interest in their children's schools elevated since teachers and administrators demonstrated a true concern for the students. In addition to the

confidence that the parents projected toward the district, the faculty, in turn, had higher opinions of the family and increased expectations with regard to student performance. This allowed teachers to expand student erudition to new levels. Parent involvement gave parents the confidence to engage their children more often at home and even to learn more about themselves as parents. In many cases, parents would often register and participate in continuing education in hopes of advancing their edification (Henderson, 1994).

Ninety-one percent of parents surveyed in 1993 believed it was important for the keen engagement of parents with regards to their sons'/daughters' education, regardless to the grade level (Henderson, 1994). Research in 1994 proved parents and researchers to be correct: Issues of parental involvement are a key component to success. Therefore, when districts mention school improvement, parental involvement is a crucial issue.

Although research is indistinct in establishing which particular family practices are the most beneficial in increasing student achievement, it does conclude the more involvement from parents in the child's instruction, the more probable that interaction will correlate with the student's success. This is proven once again in Eagle's

studies. Student outcomes are again compounded when parent interaction in education is both inside and outside the school setting. These children will achieve more (Gianzero, 1999). For example, 27% of students whose parents were actively involved at the secondary level would attain bachelors' degrees. According to Eagle's study of the same high school students, only 17% of the students with moderately involved parents would receive the same collegiate degree whereas only 8% of students with uninvolved parents would obtain a bachelor's degree (Gianzero, 1999).

Later in 2003, Anderson produced documentation measuring the relationship between parental involvements as it is correlated to the success of their children. A questionnaire was given to students to gauge the contributing factors to either success or non-success. Anderson noted, in prior analysis of parental involvement, that success at the lower grades levels had been directly linked to parental contributions, but little had been studied on those students in grades 7-12. Secondary students determined inadequate preparation for studies and laziness were the significant attributes to their lower achievement. The relevant research indicated environment was critical to success. Those students who had achieved

at a higher cognitive level had a fear of disappointing their parents and thrived on satisfaction. These particular students received parental support at an early level, and it was determined that parental involvement at the elementary age was also crucial to later academic success. The major factor in determining success in grades 7-12 was whether or not the adults in the home kept track of progress at school (Anderson, 2000). Students still need guidance from adults to guide them in a positive direction with regard to education. It is true that, if a child receives early positive guidance and direction with regard to education, the more embedded they will become in the student's values.

One of the latest studies in August 2004 was based on an early study of Henderson and Berla. Dr. John Wherry completed a summary of research for the Parent Institute. The research concluded that students whose parents were actively involved at an above-median level when compared to those below-median parent involvement levels scored significantly higher. Students in core subject matter scored 30% higher on assessments in mathematics, communication arts, science, and social studies. The percentages extended as much as 50% in reading and 40% in math when teachers reported higher levels of outreach to

parents within cited schools. Dr. Wherry's analysis helped confirm the 1994 explorations and illustrated the importance of parental involvement.

Dr. Wherry presented additional key information in 2004. First, as quoted by Dr. Wherry, "The family provides the child's primary educational environment, parental involvement is most effective when it is comprehensive and long-lasting" (Selected 2004). Therefore, involvement is beneficial primarily through high school. Secondly, students from lower socioeconomic status families will benefit more from parental involvement when compared to those of higher incomes. School districts should consider this when presenting policy and creating target groups. Lastly, the benefit for schools is the retention of qualified personnel. Teachers are more likely to achieve tenure and stay at districts with outstanding parental support (Selected, 2004). Research collected throughout these ten years defended the preliminary findings and allowed for more insight into parental involvement.

> Former California Governor Gray Davis was quoted, "No one is more important than parents in sending the signal that reading and education matter and that school work is not a form of drudgery, but a ticket to a better life… By giving up their

> work to read to their children, to assist at home, to engage the process of learning, parents can set an example for their children that are powerful and positive" (Selected, 2004).

Overall, research from 1966 to 2005 has substantiated the theory that parental involvement will impact student achievement in a positive manner. Each parent is an immeasurable resource that can be tapped by educators to increase student learning. It takes a collaborative effort of school districts working with parents, patrons, and community to make the difference that will impact student learning for a lifetime. Consequently, secondary schools in the future should strive to incorporate parents into their children's educational plan.

The parental involvement in assisting with educating their children is of "unquestionable significance" (Fiore and Whitaker, 2001). A study conducted in New Zealand in 1986, according to Hornby (2000), reported that mothers who engaged in reading sessions with their children every night after helping their children with school homework had a positive impact upon their children. Those children improved their reading skills when compared to their classmates. What is more startling about the result of this study is the fact that the parents involved were newly

arrived immigrants from Cambodia and they, themselves, were learning to read English along with their children. This finding provides a very strong foundation for the belief in that a child's education is impacted by the involvement of a parent. Since parents who could hardly speak English might facilitate their children's reading progress through working with them at home, parents who have literacy difficulties themselves could also be able to help. In fact, the potential benefits for all parents who help in this way are clear (Fiore and Whitaker, 2001).

"Parents should be encouraged take a holistic approach to literacy at home, and even to advocate, challenge, or change what they may see as unacceptable school programs or lack of support for students" (McCaleb, 1995). Parents are not always aware of the opportunities they have to influence and in some countries to establish a formal body for different stakeholders. To run schools requires initiative which is not always acted upon. Another issue is the fear that, if parents raise critical issues about school, there might be a negative impact on their children (Instance, 2006). Family literacy or parent-child literacy programs and projects developed as a response to "growing evidence that cycles of low literacy tend to repeat themselves across generations" (Hiatt, 2001; Instance,

2006). In 1985 the National Assessment of Educational Progress highlighted the connections between a mother's level of education and the reading achievement of her children. Lower maternal education levels tended to correspond with lower paying jobs, poverty, and lower reading achievement on the part of children in the family. However, many children from poor family backgrounds whose parents did not finish high school or attend college achieved high levels of literacy. Consequently, parental education and income levels do not fully explain why some children succeed in school and others do not. According to Hiatt (2001) in Handel (1999) study, he noted, "Expectations and attitudes toward literacy, family routines, and resources of information and experience – the social capital the family can provide—affect the growing child's literacy development, as does the interpersonal environment with the family" (Funkhouser 1997). Parents who provide opportunities for learning by sharing books, interacting with children in literacy tasks, and modeling literacy through reading and writing themselves can positively influence their children's literacy development. Consequently, the aim of most parent-child literacy projects is to foster book sharing and other literacy-related activities within families. Many programs provide

early childhood education, adult basic education, and joint parent-child literacy activities (Hiatt, 2001). In addition, evidence has highlighted the role of schools in promoting parental interaction with children's literacy comprehension and the significance of the interaction as home and school are linked with a close relationship. For instance, an investigation of home and school influences on literacy development found a strong relationship between teacher-initiated parent contacts and student gains in reading comprehension (Hiatt, 2001). In recognition of the influence of home and school interaction, school regulations now make outreach to families a school responsibility, following the National Education of Family-School Partnerships (Hiatt, 2001; Funkhouser, 1997). Fiore and Whitaker (2001), referring to the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, pointed out that, in order to have successful parent involvement programs, it should begin with assessing necessities of the family and attention in regards to techniques of interaction with school districts. Whitaker was quoted, "The program should have a clear set of measurable objectives based on parent and community input to help foster a sense of cooperation and communication among families, communities, and schools. In addition, a bilingual parent-family liaison should be

hired and trained to directly contact parents and coordinate family activities" (Fiore and Whitaker, 2001).

Obstacles to Parental Involvement

Parents are the first educators at home and should be utilized as partners with educators to enhance the educational outcome; however, many parents find obstacles to breaking the barrier of participation and actively contributing to their individual child's education. These constraints may range from simple excuses to legitimate concerns, but for involvement in education at the secondary level, the barriers must be broken.

The first constraint is that parental involvement shows a precipitous decline from the primary level to the secondary level. Reasons vary and fluctuate as to why students in grades 7-12 are less likely to receive parental involvement when compared to a younger sibling (LeBahn, 1995). The structures of the middle and high school levels are more complicated than those of the lower grade levels. Students work with a number of diverse instructors rather than one classroom teacher. In addition, parents perceive that children at this age need more autonomy and can be more self-sufficient (Gianzero, 1999). However, contrary toparent's perceptions, neither parents nor researchers dispute parental involvement is still momentously needed

and has an explicit impact for students at the secondary level.

To help understand dissimilarities between parents, the National Parent/Teacher Association conducted a survey of parents and teachers. This survey helped to explain the constraints both parents and teachers felt when dealing with the issue of parental involvement at public schools and the limitations which prevented a cohesive working relationship (Simon, 2001).

According to this survey, the number one barrier for parents is the constraint on time. Students at the secondary level are busy with school, employment, and friends; compound this with both parents working or a single parent family and a total of 89% of the surveys found time to be a major confining factor. In addition to time, parents felt inadequate at school. Past experiences may have attributed to this feeling; parents often felt intimidated and unwelcome by districts. This feeling of inadequacy was compounded by educational changes. School is not what it once was. Parents lack an understanding of the current system, feeling they have little to contribute or do not have the know-how to become involved (Simon, 2001).

Parents cannot shoulder the complete burden; school districts and professionals must do their part. However, a number of factors make it difficult for teachers as well. Once again, time is the ultimate factor that affects teachers. An astounding 95% of teachers surveyed stated they would be unwilling to participate in an in-service that would help to assist teachers in increasing parental involvement. Teachers believe it is the responsibility of either parents or administrators to close the gap between school and home, and oversee these programs. Money for programs, feeling threatened, and expectations of others were at the top of the list for additional reasons why teachers avoided active participation in programs associated with parental involvement; however, none of the aforementioned items exceeded 30% whereas time constraint was recorded at a lofty 95%. Although all teachers in the study recognized the value of parental support and involvement, they were still reluctant to create or administer a partnership between parents and teachers (Ramirez, 2000).

One essential thing districts can perform in an effort improve student achievement is for educators to strategize and get parents on board. Districts must break down barriers. The first step is to provide parents with simple

and accurate information in a non-threatening manner. Parents are easily intimidated by schools as many have had unpleasant experiences in the past and base current beliefs on those past situations. Encouragement and flexibility are the keys. As time has been identified as the number one constraint to the lack of participation, districts must be flexible in schedules and policies to meet the needs of all patrons. One size does not fit all parents. Elimination of this could begin by considering the input of all stakeholders and encouraging them to share their ideas with the district (Hannon, 1995). Schools may need to start encouraging parents to make small contributions, such as the sharing of careers, hobbies, or other topics of interest. By starting small, parents will not feel overwhelmed. Districts should acknowledge that a significant transformation will take place over time if change is founded by data-driven information. Schools will face reluctance, but the benefits of a strong parental involvement program may far exceed the challenges.

Funkhouser was quoted, "When families are involved in their children's education, children earn higher grades and receive higher scores on tests, attend school more regularly, complete more homework, demonstrate more positive attitudes and behaviors, graduate from high school

at higher rates, and are more likely to enroll in higher education than students with less involved families. For these reasons, increasing family involvement in the education of their children is an important goal for schools, particularly those serving low-income and other students at risk of failure" (1997). The most practical and important question, however, is how to create more effective parental participation, and also remove barriers and obstacles. At the most basic level, this means all parents are informed about their rights and opportunities to have a say in their children's education (Instance, 2006).

Generally, schools are not oriented toward collaboration with families or communities, and, although students and their families are taught to accommodate the schools, only infrequently is the school open to the families' language and culture (McCaleb 1995, Preface). Parents' lifestyles and work lives may not accommodate intensive involvement, but there also may be parents who are simply not interested (Instance, 2006). Therefore, Funkhouser put it into the following perspective: "Achieving effective school-family partnerships is not always easy. However, barriers to family involvement in schools arise from many sources, some related to the

constraints facing teachers and other school staff, some related to the challenges and pressures that families face, and others related to language, cultural, and socioeconomic differences between families and school staff" (1997). It may be possible to seek alternative ways to consult parental opinions, such as organizing regular surveys or consultations at the national, regional, or local level in which parents are asked about a number of major issues (Instance, 2006). For instance, the reason for lack of parental involvement in America is oftentimes cultural diversity or the internalized oppression of non-dominant groups. In Europe, particularly in the United Kingdom, the main barrier was work commitment followed by child-care difficulties and lack of time (Instance, 2006).

Usually, students from immigrant cultures or non-English and non-standard-English home environments have not had equal status with students from the dominant culture. Rather than a student hearing the lessons in his own language, his teacher's voice and language are unfamiliar to him. The knowledge and cultural practices of his native country or his home have been devalued as our society views knowledge as a commodity that generally can be gained only through formal schooling. Moreover, most young children are strongly identified with their families. When students come

from families whose own formal schooling has been minimal or nonexistent, there is a tendency for these students to experience the contradictions between their own lives and their early schooling experiences. These children are immediately struck by the abundance of books in schools. These books will make an impression on the student that school is a repository of real knowledge and the fount of real learning. Consequently, when these children reflect back on their home environments, the contractions immediately become obvious. They will think that, if there are so many books in the school and they have so few or none in their own homes, then it only means that they do not know anything, or maybe their families do not know much, and they won't ever know much either. Maybe schooling is not for them, or maybe they are in the wrong school and they do not belong here (McCaleb, 1995).

Apparently, this is a sad and discouraging scenario. When parents believe they are ignorant, that they have no knowledge of value to teach or share, their self-image is communicated to their children. Therefore, children who believe they are ignorant as they have been told all their lives also feel "less capable of learning anything new in school" (McCaleb, 1995). The limited participation by parents with the realms of educational decision-making is

compounded via the fact that these stakeholders who do participate are not representative of the parent body as a whole. The fact that parents with certain backgrounds, such as white, middle class, and higher educated, tend to be over represented among the activists becomes an even greater problem each time their decisions serve limited self-interests rather than those of the whole body (Instance, 2006).

For many schools, these obstacles tend to be formidable barriers to enhancing the engagement of parents when their children's education is involved. According to McCaleb (1995), occurrences within other school communities, however, illustrates how involved families and districts can work together in overcoming these barricades through productive and mutually satisfying means. According to McCaleb (1995), the desire among most parents is ardent to actively participate in the education of their children, although they often feel ill-equipped to give the needed support at home and many times feel ignored or criticized by the school when they try to advocate for their children. This rejection is predominantly experienced by many parents who are not members of our society's dominant culture. They are mostly immigrant parents who have limited English skills or very little formal schooling in their country of

origin , cultural minorities, or disenfranchised people who are products of an historically racist system of education that never offered them access to quality education (McCaleb, 1995).

Time and Resource Constraints

Funkhouser (1997) was cited, "Schools can be sensitive to time pressures facing parents by scheduling meetings at night, particularly in neighborhoods where parents feel safe traveling to the school at night, or before shifts to accommodate the schedules of working parents, or on weekend mornings to address parents' safety concerns." Throughout the educational setting, educators can remove the barrier of time and resource as a result of presenting timely announcements of school activities and educational meetings, permitting parents an opportunity to alter and arrange schedules. Schools and teachers can also initiate generated mail and telephone systems or homework hotlines so parents/guardians have an opportunity to communicate with the school in regards to their children's progress and still stay in the comfort zone of their homes. Some schools offer the same event more than once and provide essential materials to parents who could not attend, thus keeping them informed. Resource constraints can be addressed and minimized by the fact that these parents are provided with

transportation and additional services to provide for other siblings so attendance to the school events is a viable option. Home visits can be made, or school-initiated events can be scheduled near families' homes (Funkhouser, 1997).

Mutual Distrust between Parents and School

Although teachers know parental involvement is very important to a child's development, they may lack the skills to communicate effectively with parents. Without necessary skills and information with regards to communication, distrust and misperceptions will flourish concerning district personnel and parents. In fact, according to Funkhouser (1997), "Most parents and school staff receive little training on how to work with one another. "Moreover, even though extensive research suggests the need for and importance of parental involvement in education, seldom do teachers and administrators listen to the voices of the parents themselves (McCaleb, 1995). Similarly, there are also "parents that are difficult to deal with," and it is oftentimes an "insurmountable task" (Fiore and Whitaker, 2001). For instance, according to the 1997 U.S. Department of Education Report (Funkhouser, 1997):

"Almost half of the principals in K-8 schools

report lack of staff training in working with parents is a great or moderate barrier to parent involvement. Initiatives to bridge the information gap between parents and schools through workshops and a variety of outreach activities such as informative newsletter, handbooks, and home visits, both parents and school staff across these programs are learning how to trust each other and work together to help children succeed in school. Approaches include helping parents support learning at home, preparing parents to participate in school decision-making, and providing teachers, principals, and school staff with strategies for reaching out to parents and working with them as partners. Moreover, these approaches share an emphasis on training and information that is grounded in the needs and goals of families and school staff, while focusing on changing negative attitudes that parents and school staff may hold toward each other" (Funkhouser, 1997).

Language and Cultural Differences

Every family functions as a learning environment, regardless of its income level, structure, or ethnic and cultural background. In this respect, according to Funkhouser (1997):

> "Every family has the potential to support and improve the academic achievement of its children. When parents hold high expectations for their children and encourage them to work hard, they support student success in school. However, language and cultural differences can make communication and family participation in school activities difficult. For instance, U.S. Department of Education survey data show parents who do not speak English at home are less likely to participate in school-based activities and more likely to participate in fewer activities over the course of the school year. However, many schools with innovative leadership and a creative and hardworking staff have found ways to bridge these differences while cultivating meaningful school-family partnerships" (Funkhouser, 1997).

Desiring to reach out to parents with little formal education, schools today work with a diverse group of parents, some of whom may not easily understand all of the written communications sent to them and may see themselves as unprepared to help their children with homework or schoolwork. In addition, parents who have bad memories about their own experiences in school may have trouble helping children with schoolwork, especially in subject areas that they themselves did not master. Among the schools surveyed, some creative solutions to this barrier included parent meetings that review activities non-readers can carry out with their children to promote literacy. For instance, school staff helps non-reading parents by using use newspapers and focusing on home learning activities. Parents and children look at ads and make price comparisons or discuss the weather, which often includes pictorial representations of the weekly forecast. In addition, on a weekly basis, the bilingual parent involvement coordinator makes telephone calls to non-reader parents in order to verbally relay information previously sent home as written notices about student progress. Even for parents who read well, the prospect of helping with their children's schoolwork is often daunting (Funkhouser, 1997).

Additionally Funkhouser was quoted:

"Any parents are haunted by their own memories of school, and are uncomfortable in a setting which brings those memories back. One school district hired a third-party contractor to operate a mobile center to expand its outreach to include those parents who are uncomfortable in a school setting. The mobile resource center specifically targets parents of private school students so parents learn effective parent involvement strategies, such as how to help students engage in learning activities at home. On the other hand, parents may also doubt their ability to help their children master new content, especially in math and science. Schools can help remove these fears by giving parents a chance to experience first hand what their children are learning in an environment that is pleasant and non-threatening. Although breaking the language barrier between English speakers and those whose primary language is other than English constitutes a giant step toward increasing parent involvement in their children's education, building bridges with families of different cultures and backgrounds also deserves special attention if

> all families are to feel comfortable participating in school activities" (Funkhouser, 1997).

We simply cannot ignore cultural diversity, and we cannot force acceptance of the dominant culture for benefit of education since "rejecting the culture of your family and community is an awfully high price to ask a child or parents to pay for school success" (Sagor and Cox, 2004). In this regard, a home-school liaison can play a crucial role in reaching out to parents of different backgrounds and building trust between home and school. A parent usually fills the note of home-school liaison, one who lives in the neighborhood or someone else with close ties to both the school and the community. Since the home-school liaison is closely identified with the community and shares similar cultural background with parents, he or she is well equipped to reach out to parents and invite them to become more involved in their children's education. Through the home-school liaison, schools can build relationships with parents founded on understanding and trust (Funkhouser, 1997).

Local Community Support

"Being culturally different meant you were especially valuable and needed since you have something unique to contribute to the education of the community" (Sagor and

Cox, 2004). Some schools have nourished and strengthened school-family partnerships by tapping the supports available in their local communities and beyond (Funkhouser, 1997). However, there are still those who rightly perceive that schooling is not open to external influence, and argue that parents and the community should have a very limited say as to what goes on inside schools. This argument is quite surprising since there do not seem to be any signs that parents are clamoring to run schools themselves, except in extreme cases of exit, such as home schooling. Moreover, those systems in which parents already exercise a high degree of participation are likely to be those that also have the greatest trust in schools and teachers, and accept the idea that, as professionals, teachers are responsible for education (Instance, 2006).

Collaborative efforts to provide families and schools with the tools they need to support learning can ultimately benefit all those interested in and affected by the quality of children's education. Among school programs studied, successful parent involvement strategies often grew out of school-community partnerships with local businesses, agencies, colleges and universities, as well as supports provided by school districts and states. Since schools rarely have sufficient funds, staff, or space for all

family involvement activities they want or need to offer, many of them forge partnerships with local businesses, agencies, and colleges or universities to provide family services. These services include educational programming and a homework hotline, social services such as prevention of substance abuse and child abuse prevention, conferences and workshops, adult education, health services, refurbished school facilities, and refreshments for and transportation to school-sponsored events (Funkhouser, 1997).

Schools work with community partners to meet both the academic and basic survival needs of their students. For instance, hairdressers come to school to give students free haircuts, a dental program gives uninsured students free check-ups and dental work, and a business partner provides employee volunteers for mentoring and tutoring. District and state supports for family involvement can include policies, funding, training, and family services that contribute to successful family involvement. With the support of districts and states, school-family partnerships have a strong chance of succeeding, and schools can draw on a broad system of expertise and experience. District and state-run parent resource centers are one good example of how schools can benefit (Funkhouser, 1997).

Community context affects parenting, parenting style, and even the goals of parenting. If these were accounted for simultaneously in a design, we might increase our understanding of the more complex nature of the parental racial socialization context. This is necessary because it can inform schools about how they can better teach children social-problem solving skills since school and community climates must be considered in order to have effective child training. Doing this may push the school beyond typical concerns and may extend the schools' work into the community (Weisner, 2005).

Children's Achievements

Effective school-family partnerships benefit all involved- school staff, parents, and students (Funkhouser, 1997). Schools in many countries now recognize the importance of involving parents in the teaching of reading and writing (Hannon, 1995). Recent research demonstrates that parent involvement can be an important contributor to achievement among students as greater levels of parental involvement in education are correlated with higher educational achievement in many social science researches (Maton and Greif, 1998). Therefore, according to Funkhouser, "Effective school-family partnerships can have important benefits for parents as well, helping them to

perceive their children's school in a more positive light, enhancing their sense of efficacy as parents, and changing their perceptions of their children as learners" (1997).

The experience of schools and district programs supports an inference that parent involvement significantly impacts the achievement level of the child. Although it is impossible to attribute student achievement or other positive outcomes in any of these schools or districts solely to their parent involvement activities, it does appear that many schools that make parent involvement a priority also see student outcomes improve. For instance, according to Funkhouser (1997), out of the thirteen schools surveyed, eight report gains in student achievement over the last one to three years, four report gains in attendance rates or attendance rates consistently over 95%, and two of them report a substantial decrease in disciplinary referrals over the last several years. These positive outcomes may be due to increased parent involvement itself, or more likely due to a whole constellation of factors, such as strong instructional program and commitment to high standards for all students. However, further study of these programs would be needed to determine the relative influence of the various factors. Nevertheless, it appears that strong parent involvement is

an important feature of many schools in raising student achievement (Funkhouser, 1997).

In theory, positive parent-teacher relationships will result in trust and congruence between home and school, which will then help children progress further and faster. However, improvements in parents' and teachers' social relationships do not necessarily increase the amount of interaction in educational issues. Moreover, increasing congruence of home and school often means, in practice, that the home is required to change to match the school, a task that many parents will be unable or unwilling to undertake. Therefore, conclusive evidence of the direct link between parental improvement and achievement is hard to obtain because of the many variables involved (Vincent, 1996). According to Carvalho (2001), "The value of parental involvement has become an acceptable truism across a wide spectrum of political positions," and all of them seem to endorse parental involvement as a fundamental component of successful schooling. However, she added "that it is important to distinguish between parental involvement in education" as a desirable attitude and practice of individual parents in the interest of their children's school achievements, and parental involvement as policy strategy designed to promote it where it appears

lacking. This can also be a formal incentive aimed at enhancing school outcome in an indirect way in the name of democratic opportunity. It is, therefore, necessary to take caution since parental involvement is neither consensual nor is its practice necessarily positive, leading sometimes to undesirable excesses on the part of parents, and with negative consequences for children, teachers, and the school community. In general, the policy formula of parental involvement espouses a much-romanticized view of education and family-school relations. It encloses and conceals different parental role constructions and levels of involvement related to family and school, particular contexts and practices, as well as potential conflicts in family-school and teacher-parent relations, even among parents associated with diversity as in social class, ethnicity, family organizations, and values (Carvalho, 2001).

National Education goals of the United States, according to Christenson and Sheridan (2001), brought the idea that all stakeholders with families and schools alike are responsible allies in preventing failure for these children in school. Schools and involved parents are designed to include primary domain of protective factors for children, predominantly those living in high-risk

areas. The goal is not simply to obtain family involvement in the child's future through education, rather an association of noteworthy contexts in efforts to strengthen the child's learning and development. These connections have been known as a security blanket to advance learning opportunities and experiences for the child in a school setting; thus, building relationships between home and school is similar to obtaining crucial recognition vertically throughout the grade levels. For instance, Carvalho (2001) was quoted:

> "Family involvement in a child's early years shifted from orientation of how to get parents involved to how to support families to promote positive child development. As a result, the questions regarding school-aged children also moved from how to get parents involved towards what schools can do to promote positive child and family development and highlighted the significance of instituting shared meaning across home and school to interrupt the cycle of children's failure. This means moving from a culture of failure to a culture of success."

The argument regarding this is that we must always recognize that failures in school are caused by the

inability or unwillingness to communicate, or simply "relationship problems" (Carvalho, 2001).

In general, these connections are observed as the method to cultivate resilience, which means the unification of the resources available in the school, family, and community dedicated to a strong progression and the individual child's triumph in academia. Families are explicitly linked with schools, and educators are encouraged to check how school policies and practices actually influence their relationships with families (Christenson and Sheridan, 2001). Goals 2000 of Educate America Act, Christenson and Sheridan (2001) further explain, set expectations that every student has the opportunity to begin their education with a readiness to learn, and school districts endorse collaborative partnerships which enhance the involvement of parents in facilitating the social, emotional, and academic growth of children (Christenson and Sheridan, 2001). Goal 1 is "School Readiness," "Meaning all children will have access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that will help prepare them for school. Importantly, every parent in the United States will be a child's first teacher and devote each day to helping their preschool child learn, and every parent will have access to

the training and support they need", as stated by Carvalho. (Carvalho, 2001).

Goal 2, on the other hand, set "parent participation" by the year 2000. Continuing with goal 2, Carvalho stated:

> "Every school should promote partnerships to enhance parental involvement and participation in the social, emotional, and academic growth of children. The purpose of this goal is to ensure every state will develop policies to assist local schools and local education agencies in establishing programs for increasing partnerships that can respond to the different needs of parents and the home. This includes parents of children who are disadvantaged or bilingual, or parents of children with disabilities. More importantly, every school will actively engage parents and families in a partnership, which supports the academic work of children at home and shared educational decisions made at school" (Carvalho 2001).

Consequently, parents and families will help ensure that schools are adequately supported, and will hold schools and teachers to high standards of accountability (Christenson and Sheridan, 2001).

However, following the argument of Vincent (1996) and Carvalho (2001) earlier that there is no direct link between parental involvement and achievement, we need to find out why it has been given so much attention. Christenson and Sheridan argued:

> "Interest in family-school relationships has increased immeasurably due to the dramatic changes in the structure and function of families and the consistent, cumulative findings home environments and out-of-school time contribute to children's learning. Furthermore, school reform efforts, which were only focused on teacher and school practices, have not been overwhelmingly successful in improving student achievement, particularly for low income and ethnic students" (2001).

It is, therefore, clear that parents are recognized as an important factor in developing children's learning habits. If there is some problem with the correlation relating parent participation and academic achievement of the student, the obstacle is strong policy (Christenson and Sheridan, 2001).

Consequently, federal policies for family involvement in the United States established in the 1999 National

Education Goals were further explicated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of the U.S. in the same year as well as the Title 1 of U.S. Department of Education (Christenson and Sheridan, 2001). Furthermore, position statements from professional organizations reinforce these policies as shown in the position statements revised and passed by the National Association of School Psychologist (NASP) for home-school collaboration. These statements emphasize that the home-school collaboration is a process that guides the development of goals and plans between families and schools predominantly in promoting educationally and psychologically healthy environments for all children and youth. Moreover, the revised statement highlights a resilience-based orientation evident in most family involvement models (Christenson and Sheridan, 2001).

It appears that school, district, state and federal policies and regulations provide the necessary but insufficient structure within which practitioners operate. Therefore, to impact the actions of stakeholders, including parents and educators alike, policies should be required to be discernible, comprehended, and given support by instruments put into place which monitor, enforce, and give technical assistance. Family-professional collaboration should be considered as a professional obligation since it

has been so strongly and consistently supported by research. Similarly, school staff and families are aware that partnerships succeed because stakeholders are "motivated" rather than obligated to collaborate among themselves; thus, work in school restructuring is essentially relevant (Christenson and Sheridan, 2001). Restructuring efforts are an activity that could change fundamental assumptions, practices, and relationships within the school and the community in ways that lead to the enhancement of student learning outcomes (Christenson and Sheridan, 2001).

Discussion

Families are inherently different in their skills, knowledge, resources, and time available to promote student engagement and learning at school. There are several statistics regarding children who dwell in poverty. High risk situations are repeated in educational, political, and economic fields. While these figures are highly descriptive of the conditions of many children's lives, they may serve to obscure the highly relevant concept of social capital for understanding differential achievement levels. The amount of adult-child interaction involving academic and personal matters, as well as the social and community support system for families as social capital in

homes, is shrinking because of several contextual factors. These factors include "single parent and dual-income families, and sense of alienation in communities" (Christenson and Sheridan, 2001).

Since educational progress and performance depend on input from home and school, school achievement will not last or be enhanced if educators simply replace necessary family resources with more school resources. Academic and developmental outcomes for children will last if schools provide students with attitudes, efforts, and conceptions of self, instead of opportunities, demands, and rewards. Schools can reward, demand and provide opportunities for children, but families provide the building blocks such as attitude, effort, and conception of self that make learning possible. This is the social capital needed by schools to enhance learner outcomes.

Students' lack of interest for learning is a concern, and parents have been identified as integral in fostering children's attitudes toward learning. Elementary and secondary teachers recognized for excellence in teaching identified students' apathy for learning as a significant concern for academic success. Results of various family studies involving varying income and ethnic backgrounds, have indicated the presence of three factors in homes

strongly linked to student achievement. According to Christenson and Sheridan (2001), "These factors are strong, consistent values about the importance of education, parents' willingness to help children" and intervene at school, and parents' ability to become involved in learning-related activities (Christenson and Sheridan, 2001). Considerable variations in family environments within a social class support the conclusion that what parents do vis-à-vis the education of their child is substantially more significant than who they are. Similarly, the structure of the family is not inherently decent nor wicked, per se, but what is imperative is that the parents provide "pro-educational resources for children whether financial, material, or experiential" (Christenson and Sheridan, 2001).

Since the 1980's, according to Chavkin (1993), studies overwhelmingly demonstrate that parent involvement is a key determinant of the success that a child has in school and, like Christenson and Sheridan (2001), Chavkin (1993) also believes that it is imperative for educators to find out the current practices and attitudes of minority parents in regards to the parental participation they partake of their children's education (Chavkin, 1993). Educators would benefit from data identifying homework-related parenting

practices since such knowledge would promote the development of activities to enable parents to effectively support their children's homework efforts and attain higher levels of achievement. Some important variables identified for children's academic development include parents' rules and expectation for their children's home-learning behaviors, parents' provisions for learning materials, parents' tutorial behaviors that facilitate homework activities, and parents' efforts to expose their children to positive role models. Variables like these are able to predict twice as much variance in student-achievement outcomes as family-background variables (Chavkin, 1993).

Parents' homework-related behaviors, such as providing a setting appropriate for homework completion, making resources available to the child, guidance, and monitoring, are mirrored by parental personality structures, such as the acquisition of homework support strategies, homework expectations, high education-attainment expectations for the child, and awareness of community support opportunities. These demographic variables clearly clarify the social context in which children live were all considered in past research. Therefore, Chakin (1993) said, "Home-process variables, parental-personality variables, and family-background circumstances have been

found to work together to shape student-achievement patterns."

Other often-neglected players in parental-involvement strategies are instructional volunteers, who, according to Michael (1990), have a positive effect on students' reading skills, attitude adjustments, overall academic achievement, and letter grades. Teacher effectiveness was greater because of volunteers, but some teachers viewed volunteers as a threat. Parents whose children worked with a volunteer supported these instructional programs while those volunteer instructors expressed more understanding of school problems than anybody does (Michael, 1990). Studies found that volunteers enhanced teacher effectiveness and increased student achievement in reading and grammar on all grade levels, irrespective of aptitude, sex, and ethnicity. Although they have not been the subject of research affecting parental-involvement, these volunteers also provide non-instructional services to schools that significantly affect daily operations. Furthermore, these kinds of volunteer activity, such as working in school offices and libraries, supervising playgrounds and cafeterias, monitoring field trips, fund raising, and coaching, have not been the subject of research thus far. However, the data on school volunteerism suggests that it

accounts for many thousands of volunteer hours each year (Michael, 1990).

Conclusion

As parents play a vital role in their child's education, parental participation in relations to academic achievement has become essential at nearly every school. However, the mutual mistrust and skepticism between parents and teachers seems to hamper its progress. Consequently, several models have been designed in an attempt to actively promote parental involvement, such as protective, expert, transmission, curriculum-enrichment, consumer, and partnership models (Michael, 1990). However, the partnership model is generally the most suitable standpoint from which to develop positive parental involvement. In order to facilitate this kind of approach, communication between teachers and parents should improve, thus proper communication is essential. Since communication is the foundation of effective partnership, teachers should learn to communicate with parents frequently and informally, providing a means whereby parents and teachers can meet one another as people with a mutual interest on behalf of the children (Funkhouser, 1997). The significance of parents' active involvement in their children's education is unquestionable and beneficial; thus, parents should be

encouraged to take a holistic approach to literacy at home and support school programs that promote their children's development. These programs, on the other hand, should have a clear set of measurable objectives based on parent and community input in order to build strong cooperation and communication among families, communities, and schools. However, removing obstacles and other objections preventing the success of parental involvement is essential (Carvalho 2001). Overall, school and parent participation and collaboration, positive home-process variables, parental-personality variables, and environmental circumstance working together could effectively shape and maintain student achievement.

Summary

Currently, despite limited resources, school districts are under increasing pressures to increase student achievement, and meet federal and state guidelines. Parents, legislators, and educators alike comprehend the significance in propelling American education to the next level, as our students compete globally in the 21st century. Districts cannot accomplish this enormous task alone. As students are the future's greatest resource, it is important for schools to find new and innovative ways to tap the source most invested in children, parents.

Furthermore, as districts strive to reach higher achievement levels, these decisions to involve parents, patrons, and the community must be driven by solid data.

Research has proven that different factors impact student achievement. The correlation between student achievement and parental involvement is clear. Research from the Coleman Report in 1966 to the present support the hypothesis that parental involvement will increase student achievement. Therefore, districts should plan for additional parental involvement in schools. Benefits could prove boundless. From all perspectives, parental involvement flourishes with optimistic possibilities in enhancing student achievement.

CHAPTER III- METHODOLOGY

Introduction to Research

The involvement of parents in their children's lives has always been of unquestionable significance. From the environment parents create at home to the extent of participation in children's activities, all have been known to have a significant impact on child development and performance. The areas of research and scientific study are so diverse and vast that it is difficult to focus one and exclude the others. All elements involved in child development are deeply intertwined, and that is why this particular study touches upon them and displays their role in student achievement at schools. For the purpose of this study, different types of parental involvement and their limitations along with factors contributing to and deterring academic achievement will be discussed.

When compared to the importance of public school districts in the state of Missouri, the emphasis on increasing student achievement scores is at an all-time

high; and school administrators are referring to school testing as "high stakes." The bar has been raised and school districts are desperately seeking ways to meet these new challenges. For many years educators and researchers have debated those issues which impact student performance. As policymakers participate more in school reform, parental involvement in education has become one of the most recent topics among educators. Research has suggested that parents influence their children significantly and impact learner outcomes positively with regards to standardized testing.

For these reasons the focus of this study is to determine whether a correlation between parental involvement and student performance exists. Student achievement scores will be compared to parental involvement. Parental involvement will be defined as a conference held between the parent/guardian and instructor as they confer about the progress of the particular student. In adding validity to this study, student achievement will be divided into two separate entities. Data gathered from grade point averages in addition to proficient scores on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) will be the two factors potentially affected by parental involvement in this study. The analysis of the data will

attempt to determine if a significant positive relationship exists between the two variables.

Participants in Grade Point Average

The population of study will involve students in grades two through twelve from selected rural school districts in Southwest Missouri within a close proximity to Springfield, Missouri. Each school will not exceed a student population of one thousand students, according to Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education annual September count.

Approximately six hundred student outcomes will be measured on a yearly basis. Students involved with this study will not be discriminated against or excluded from this study due to age, gender, race, socioeconomic status, etc. Additionally, no student will be identifiable by name as a number is assigned to each participant. However, students will be differentiated by gender. This data must be attainable in order to scrutinize the differences between genders and to prove or disprove the aforementioned hypothesis.

Only grade point averages and parental involvement will be measured as both variables occur in a school setting. Consequently, no observations or additional data

will be recorded in regards to the participants in this study.

Participants in MAP

The population examined in this measurement will be all public school districts in Missouri which completed the fourth cycle of the Missouri School Improvement Program. All school districts that were evaluated by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in fiscal years 2007 and 2008 will have data gathered on parental involvement, proficient student communication arts achievement scores, and proficient student mathematics achievement scores. No school will be excluded as data will be gathered and documented on approximately two hundred plus school districts in Missouri. Additionally, districts or schools will not be identifiable as districts are assigned numerical identifications.

Instruments in G.P.A.

The instruments utilized in this study will be data gathered from each participating rural school district in southwest Missouri. To begin, the first semester grade point averages will be scrutinized to obtain a clear picture of the performance level of each student. The grade point average will be based on an eleven-point scale to better enable an error among student achievement scores.

These scores will be recorded to the nearest one-hundredth with rounding of five or greater to the next highest number and a numeric standard of four or lower to the lesser. With regards to the eleven-point scale, a score of eleven would represent a near perfect or excellent score and would be represented as an A on the student's academic progress report, while a zero would indicate a failing grade or an F for the student's academic level. The aforementioned grades will represent the calculated transcript grades from the school district's student database as the overall average for the semester will be the final grade utilized for correlation.

Grade point averages will be correlated with parental involvement, which for the purpose of this study is a parent conference with the student's teacher(s). School administrators will provide the documentation of parental involvement for each student as this information is reportable to Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and can be viewed on the District Report Card. These parent-teacher conferences, for which data is gathered, may either be scheduled or unscheduled in nature. Nonetheless, communication between the parent and educator should be primarily intended for the discussion of education and the academic improvement of the child.

Instruments in MAP

All instruments examined when comparing parental involvement and proficient student scores in both Communication Arts and Mathematics on the Missouri Assessment Program will be gathered from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. First, parental involvement data will be accumulated from the fourth-cycle advanced questionnaire for parents. The specific question in the advanced questionnaire asks parents if they have attended parent-teacher meetings at their children's schools. The percent of parents who indicate they have attended such meetings will be utilized in this correlation. Frequency of these particular meetings is not scrutinized in this comparison. DESE in Missouri requires that all districts submit the confidential results of the fourth cycle advanced questionnaire for parents back to DESE for computation. Then this information is disseminated back to the stakeholders for analysis. For the validity of this study, the particular question on the advanced parental questionnaire appears to be significant in examining state-wide parental involvement rather than a reliance on specific and targeted schools.

The additional data will also be collected from DESE in Missouri. As all public school districts in the United States must submit data on the progress and proficiency of students in both Communication Arts and Mathematics in accordance with the No Child Left Behind Act, Missouri public schools utilize the MAP test in an attempt to measure students academic progress. The adequate yearly progress (AYP) for students that are proficient in both Communication Arts and Mathematics will be accumulated for comparison. Data indicating proficient students in AYP has been gathered since 2002 and will continue until 2014; however, data collected in Communication Arts and Mathematics will only be examined in the years during which the district endured the MSIP review from DESE in Missouri. Consequently, the advanced parental questionnaire for the fourth cycle MSIP will be taken from the corresponding school year as the AYP data in Communication Arts and Mathematics.

Procedures in G.P.A.

Data accumulated annually on the approximately six hundred students with regards to parental conferences and grade point average will be collected for four consecutive years from 2005 through 2008. Prior to collection of data, approval from each district superintendent will be received

by the researcher. It will be understood that all assembled data from districts, specific schools, or individual students will not be identifiable. Each student will be assigned a numerical number and remain anonymous. The grade point average collected for each particular student will be reported for the semester directly following the parent-teacher conference held at the school. In the case in which no parental or guardian involvement occurs at the school, a zero will be assigned for the absence of parent-teacher contact.

In this correlational study, student achievement, corresponding to students' cumulative grade point averages, will represent the dependent variable. Hence, parent involvement, signified by the recorded parent-teacher conferences at school, will be the independent variable for this study. As a result of comparing variables, the Pearson r will be utilized to determine the potential correlation between parental involvement and student achievement.

In this strand of the study, students will be analyzed in accordance to subgroups. The first comparison will differentiate between genders. The researcher seeks to determine differences in correlations due to differing gender among students, answering a hypothesis. Yet another

hypothesis will be tested as well as students will be divided into grade levels to better interpret what grade level is most beneficial for parental involvement in education. Grade levels will be divided into three separate areas. Elementary will symbolize students in grades two through five, while middle school grade levels will embody students in grades six through the eight. The high school will finalize the grade levels as high school students will correspond to grades nine through the twelve.

An enhanced example and division of these differentiated areas can better be examined in Figure 1. The data gathered should determine the correlation between parental involvement and student achievement in public education. The correlations will be separated by both gender and grade level, allowing researchers to observe the impact of parental involvement and student performance at each level.

Figure 1

This database, using SPSS version 11.0, will be utilized in calculating the correlation between parental involvement (parent visits) and student achievement (semester grade point average).

I.D.	Gender	Grade	Grade Point Average	Parent Visits
1	Male	12	7.14	1.00
2	Male	4	7.50	0
3	Male	5	10.16	2.00
4	Male	8	10.00	0
5	Male	2	8.14	1.00
6	Male	3	9.33	3.00
7	Male	4	5.87	0
8	Male	6	7.14	1.00
9	Female	11	5.28	1.00
10	Female	10	7.71	0
11	Female	4	7.16	0
12	Female	9	9.66	1.00
13	Female	8	10.16	1.00
14	Female	3	7.71	2.00
15	Female	2	7.66	1.00
16	Female	5	8.50	0

As viewed in Figure 1 above, the researcher was able to categorize individuals according to gender and grade levels. Additionally, the G.P.A. is listed for a

correlation to parent visits during the coinciding year in which the grades were earned.

Procedures in MAP

Data on over two hundred schools in Missouri will be collected for the 2007 and 2008 school year. The percentage of parents' reporting a conference with their child's teacher(s) on the advanced fourth cycle parent questionnaire through the MSIP standard for the particular school district will be compared to the proficient areas of both Communication Arts and Mathematics.

In this component to the correlational study, the research studies the differences between parent involvement and student achievement; however to completely investigate the hypothesis, students again must be examined according to grade level, though gender will not be separated because gender can be identified according to the districts' or schools' AYP and proficient students, but the advanced parental MSIP survey is not divided according to gender.

In this area of the correlational study, student achievement corresponding to both students proficient in Communication Arts and Mathematics will represent the dependent variable. Consequently, parent involvement, signified by the percentage of parents reporting visits with their child's instructor, will be the independent

variable for this study. As a result of comparing variables, the Pearson r will be utilized in determining the potential correlation between parental involvement and student achievement.

Once again, an enhanced example and division of these differentiated areas can better be examined in Figure 2. The data gathered should determine the correlation between parental involvement and student achievement in public education. The correlations will only be separated by grade level, allowing researchers to observe the impact of parental involvement and student performance at each level.

Figure 2

This database, using SPSS version 11.0, will be utilized in calculating the correlation between parental involvement (percentage of parents conferencing) and student achievement (proficient scores in Communication Arts and Mathematics).

I.D.	School	% Parent Conferences	Proficient Communication Arts Scores	Proficient Mathematics Scores
1	Elementary	82.80	21.70	18.30
2	Elementary	86.49	44.80	31.10
3	High School	57.89	3.10	2.90
4	Middle School	68.90	49.00	29.30
5	Elementary	90.54	58.00	32.60
6	Middle School	83.78	31.20	39.80
7	High School	74.56	20.80	22.90
8	High School	79.79	29.40	24.20
9	Elementary	100	23.20	19.30
10	Middle School	75.44	40.30	22.40
11	Middle School	75.54	41.70	34.20
12	High School	88.64	14.30	9.90

13	High School	67.44	7.30	4.60
14	High School	88.64	14.30	9.90
15	Elementary	92.31	52.60	55.60
16	Elementary	95.00	35.60	32.60

In Figure 2, the reader can view an example of how the percentage of parent conferences, in each designated grade level, correlate with the standardized MAP test in both Communication Arts and Mathematics.

CHAPTER IV - RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was designed to determine the correlation between student achievement and parental involvement at the secondary level in public schools. The data gathered from each district was used to answer the following hypotheses:

(1) There will be no significant, positive correlation between parental involvement through parent-teacher conferences and the grade point averages of students, grades 2-12 in selected Missouri Public Schools.

(2) The mean of student performance, measured by grade points averages, will not significantly differ according to gender with equivalent parental involvement.

(3) The mean of student performance, measured by grade point average, in grades second through twelfth will not significantly vary among students with equivalent parental involvement.

(4) There will be no significant, positive correlation among districts, that have completed the 4th cycle MSIP review in Missouri, parental involvement and students who

are proficient in Communication Arts according to the standardized MAP assessment.

(5) There will be no significant, positive correlation among districts that have completed the 4th cycle MSIP review in Missouri, parental involvement, and students who are proficient in Mathematics according to the standardized MAP assessment.

A correlation, utilizing the Pearson r, was calculated to determine the coefficient and determine the relationship between the aforementioned independent and dependent variables. In each comparison, the student performance, which is either stated in grade point average or proficient scores, will be sighted as the dependent variable. Therefore, parental involvement is independent variable.

Figures

The following pages contain the figures which give the best representation of discrepancies in grade point averages and proficient scores on the MAP test when parental involvement is correlated with those academic achievement scores. Furthermore, these discrepancies and correlations will interpret the potential significance of the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement.

In figures 3 through 12, the following data will help in determining the three hypothesizes listed below. This data was gathered from the 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008 school years. Individual grade point averages are correlated with parental involvement. The data is disaggregated according to both grade level and gender for a more thorough examination and better interpretation of discrepancies.

(1) There will be no significant, positive correlation between parental involvement through parent-teacher conferences and the grade point averages of students, grades 2-12 in selected Missouri Public Schools.

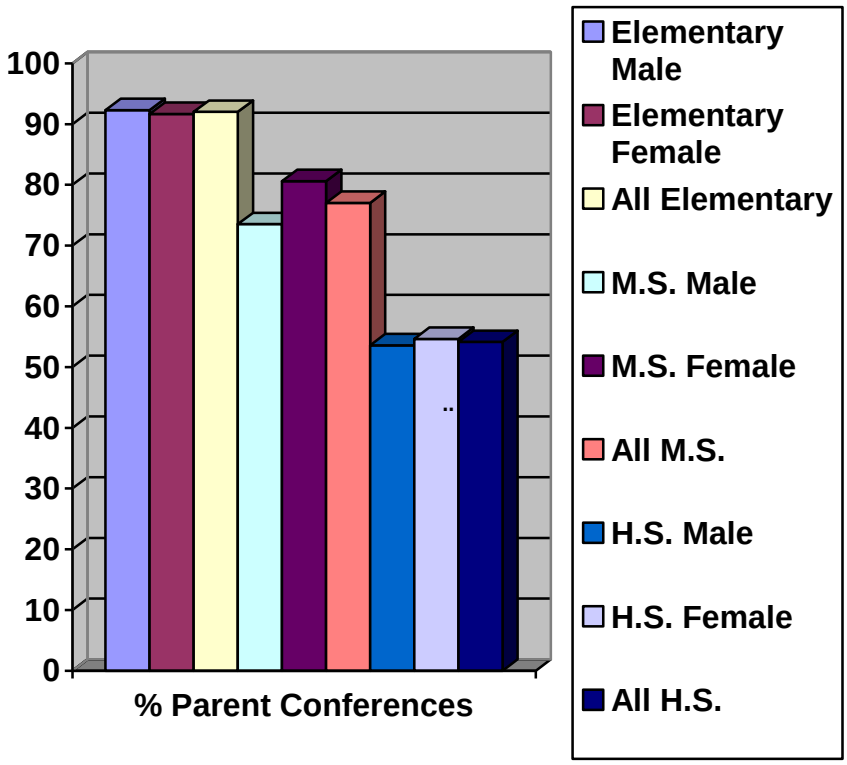
(2) The mean of student performance, measured by grade points averages, will not significantly differ according to gender with equivalent parental involvement.

(3) The mean of student performance, measured by grade point average, in grades second through twelfth will not significantly vary among students with equivalent parental involvement.

Figure 3

This chart represents the percentage of parents who attended parent/teacher conferences for students in grades two through twelve. The data collected was obtained for the

2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 school years. Data is separated by both gender and grade level.

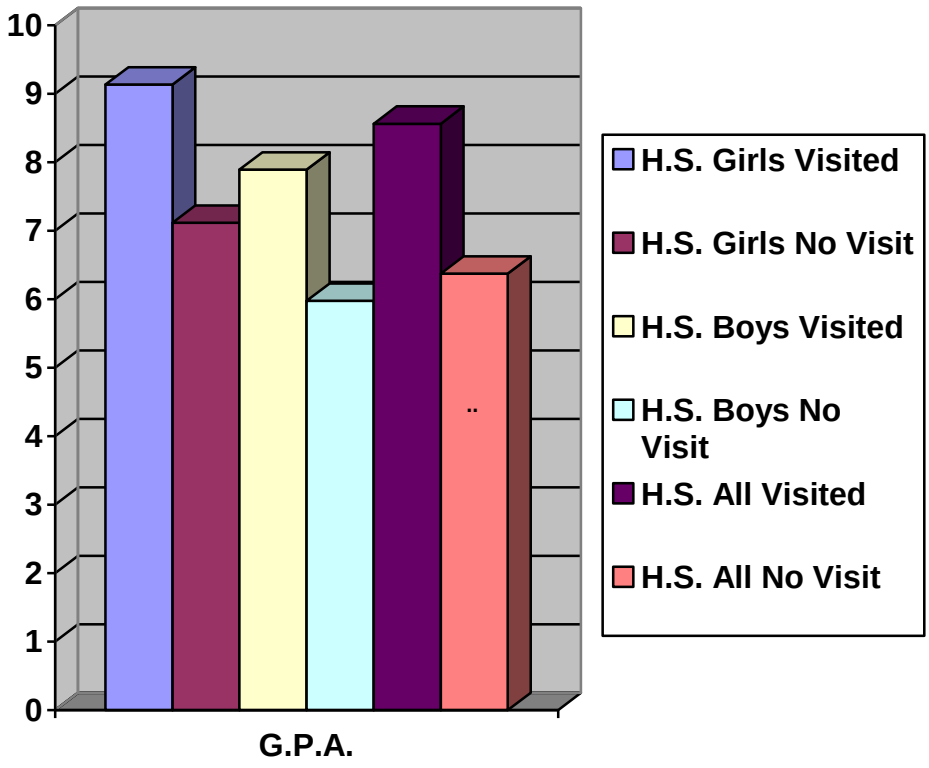


In Figure 3, the data reported indicates that parents are more likely to attend conferences at their children's schools in the lower grade levels when compared to the upper levels. Ninety-two percent of all parents are involved at the elementary level contrasted to fifty-four percent at the secondary level, with the middle school percentage located in the intermediate position of seventy-seven percent in attendance during parent-teacher conferences. Additionally when evaluating differences in gender, the percentage of parents who visited with the

teacher was higher among females at both the middle school and high school levels. Adversely, the elementary parents of male students edged the parents of female students by less than 1.5% for parent conferences.

Figure 4

This chart represents the grade point average for all students in grades nine through twelve at the high school level for those selected districts. The data collected was obtained for the 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 school years. First, students are divided according to gender for better differentiation. Second, student data is separated according to differences in conferences/visits of parents with school educators on enhancing the education process for that particular child.



In Figure 4 the data illustrates the differences in grade point average (G.P.A.) of students at the high school level. The data clearly indicates both male and female students achieve higher grades when their parents attend parent conferences at school. Both male and female students with parental involvement achieve nearly 2.0 points on an 11.0 grading scale higher than their classmates with no parents conferencing with teachers. This leaves an average of all students with involvement with a G.P.A. of 8.56, as those with no involvement score at a level of 6.341. Additionally, female students

outperform male students when evaluated through G.P.A. at the local level on every level tested, including all students with parental participation or the lack of involvement by the parent(s).

Figure 5

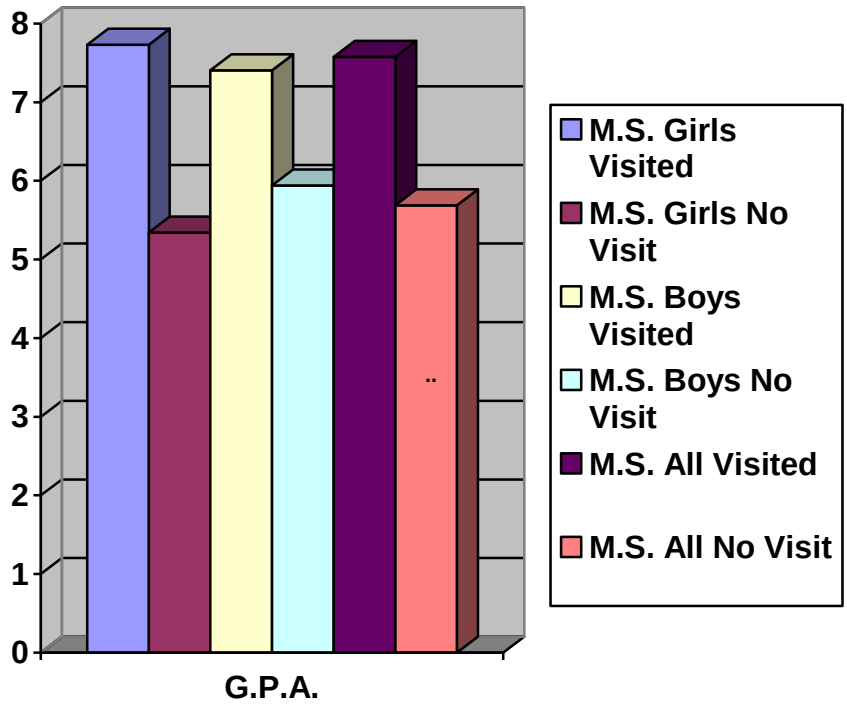
This figure represents the correlation between high school students' grade point averages (G.P.A.) and parent conferences. Students in grade levels nine, ten, eleven, and twelve are represented by gender, as well as depicted overall. These 752 high school students were selected from the 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008 school years as the Pearson r was utilized in the administration of this correlation.

	N	**T-test**
H.S. Male Students (9-12)	416	.369
H.S. Female Students (9-12)	336	.392
H.S. All Students (9-12)	752	.374

In Figure 5 a weak correlation is shown to be present at all levels with an overall correlation of .374 at the high school. Female students have a .023 stronger correlation when compared to their male counterparts at the high school level. The correlation between G.P.A. and parent conferences at the high school level is the strongest of all grade spans during the years examined.

Figure 6

This chart represents the grade point average for all students in grades six through eight for those selected districts. The data collected was obtained for the 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 school years. First, students are divided according to gender for better differentiation. Secondly, student data is separated according to differences in conferences/visits of parents with school educators.



In Figure 6 the data illustrates the same scenario as the data at the high school level. The data clearly indicates both male and female students achieve higher grades when their parents attend parent conferences at school. Using an 11.0 scale, females with parental involvement at the middle school level have a G.P.A. 2.39 points on an 11 point scale higher than classmates with no parental involvement. The males are almost one point lower than their female counterparts with a 1.47 discrepancy. Parental involvement among middle school students correlates with rising averages. Again at the middle school level, girls have a higher G.P.A. when parents are involved. Adversely,

middle school boys' G.P.A. edges the females slightly, when no involvement of parents is documented.

Figure 7

This figure represents the correlation between middle school students' grade point averages and parent conferences. Students are represented by gender, as well as depicted overall. These 752 high school students were selected from the 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008 school years, as the Pearson r was utilized in the administration of this correlation.

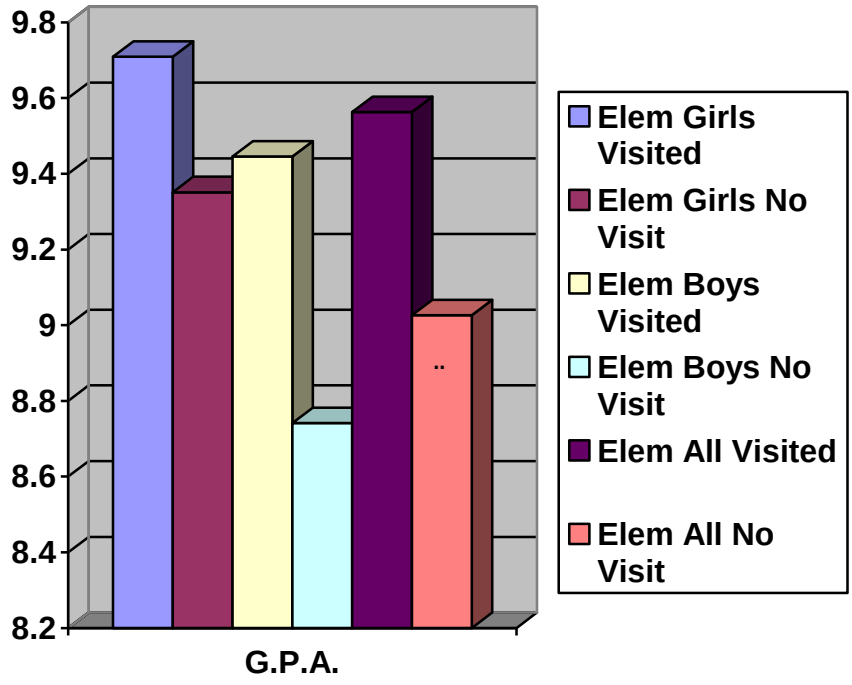
	N	**T-test**
M.S. Male Students (6-8)	272	.233
M.S. Female Students (6-8)	268	.343
M.S. All Students (6-8)	540	.287

In Figure 7 a weak correlation is shown to be present at all levels with an overall correlation of .287 at the middle school. Female students have a .11 stronger correlation when compared to their male counterparts at the

middle school level. This is a larger discrepancy than is found at the aforementioned high school level. The correlation between G.P.A. and parent conferences at the middle school level is found to be significant; however, the significance is .087 less than the significance found in the grade spans with the high school levels.

Figure 8

This chart represents the grade point average for all students in grades six through eight at the middle school level for those selected districts. The data collected was obtained for the 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 school years. First, students are divided according to gender for better differentiation. Secondly, student data is separated according to differences in conferences/visits of parents with school educators.



In Figure 8 the researcher is again able to determine that students with parent support at school tend to score a higher level G.P.A. when compared to those students without parental support. Overall, a .54 difference is found with the advantage to students who have parental involvement. The largest discrepancy is among boys with a difference of .71 on an 11 point scale. Once again, the advantage is given to boys with the involvement of their parent(s). Furthermore, when compared to the high school and middle school classmates, the elementary female students scored above their male counterparts at every level as well.

Figure 9

This figure represents the correlation between elementary school students' grade point averages and parent conferences. Students are represented by gender, as well as depicted overall. These 752 high school students were selected from the 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008 school years as the Pearson r was utilized in the administration of this correlation.

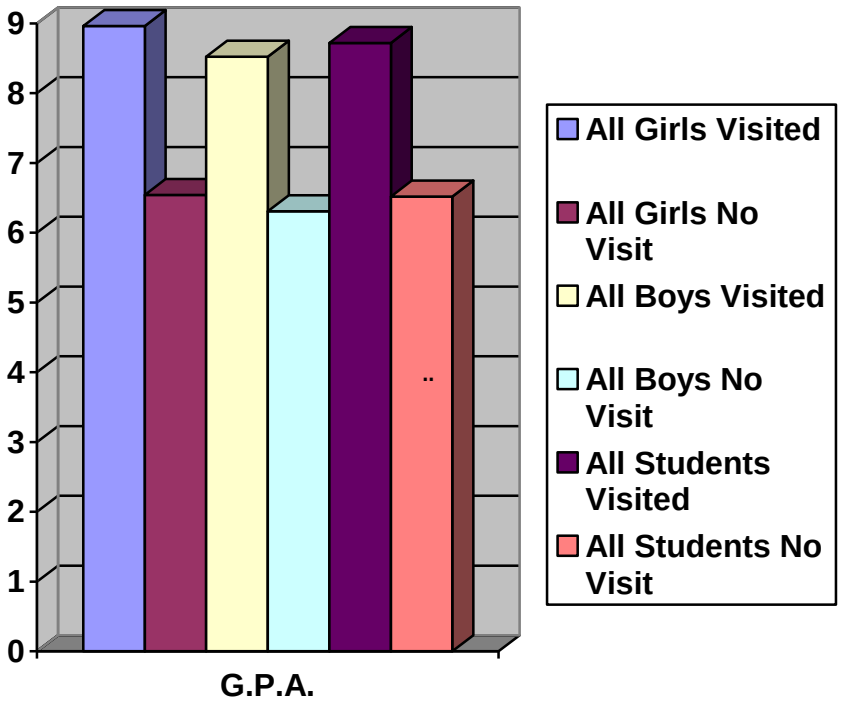
	N	**T-test**
Elementary Male Students (2-5)	800	.118
Elementary Female Students (2-5)	664	.063
Elementary All Students (2-5)	1464	.091

In Figure 9 an extremely weak correlation is found among elementary students in both genders, leaving an overall correlation of .091. Conversely, the elementary grade level has the least significant correlation of all grade levels examined. However, the elementary does not fit the pattern of the high school and middle school as the

correlation between parental involvement and G.P.A. is more significant among males when compared to their female classmates. It is noted that overall the elementary students had in excess of ninety-two percent of their parents attend the conferences at school, leaving less than eight percent of students with G.P.A. data for those student with no parental support.

Figure 10

This chart represents the grade point average for all students in grades two through twelve at all school levels for those selected districts. The data collected was obtained for the 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 school years. First, students are divided according to gender for better differentiation. Secondly, student data is separated according to differences in conferences/visits of parents with school educators.



In Figure 10 G.P.A. is expressed by gender, as well as examined by all students, whether parents/guardians had a conference with school officials or chose not to attend. Girls in grades two through twelve who had parents which visited represented the highest G.P.A. at 8.96 on an eleven-point scale. This is 2.42 points above their female counterparts and .44 above the opposite gender with no parental involvement. This grouping of males with parental involvement followed suit again by surpassing male students without parental involvement by 2.21 points on an average G.P.A. Overall students with parental involvement through parent conferences scored 2.20 points above those without

involvement with a G.P.A. of 8.72 when compared to an average of 6.52. This pattern has been followed in all grade levels, resulting in a distinction between the two groupings when the data was compiled for all students.

Figure 11

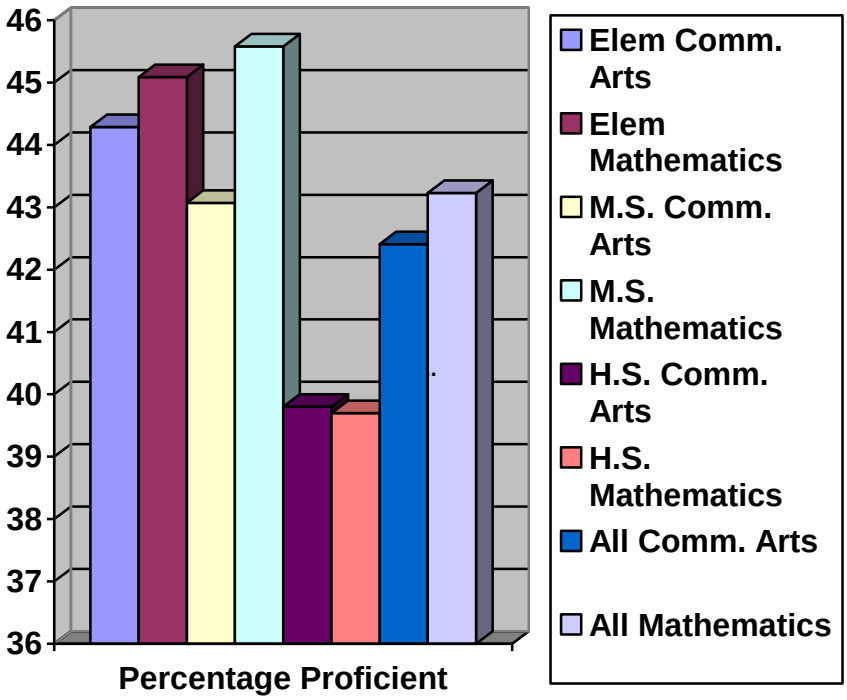
This figure represents the correlation between all students' grade point averages (G.P.A.) and parent conferences. Students in grades two through twelve are depicted below. Furthermore, the disaggregated data is separated according to gender to more accurately identify discrepancies between male and female. Yet again, these 2756 students were selected from the 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008 school years as the Pearson R was utilized in the administration of the Pearson r to determine the correlation for this study.

	N	**T-test**
All Male Students (2-12)	1488	.204
All Female Students (2-12)	1268	.209
All Students (2-12)	2756	.207

In Figure 11 a moderately weak correlation is shown to be present at all levels with an overall correlation of .207 for the 2,756 students from whom the data was collected. Female students have a slightly stronger correlation than males by .005 in both the high school and middle school grade levels.

Figure 12

This figure represents the percentage of students at each grade level (Elementary, Middle School, and High School) as well as all students combined who were proficient in the areas of Communication Arts and Mathematics. The data collected from almost 500 hundred schools was analyzed according to the AYP proficient areas which as DESE ascertained for both 2007 and 2008. All data for districts being reviewed in the 4th cycle MSIP during those years will be presented. Data is disaggregated according to both grade span, and proficient areas for Communication Arts and Mathematics.

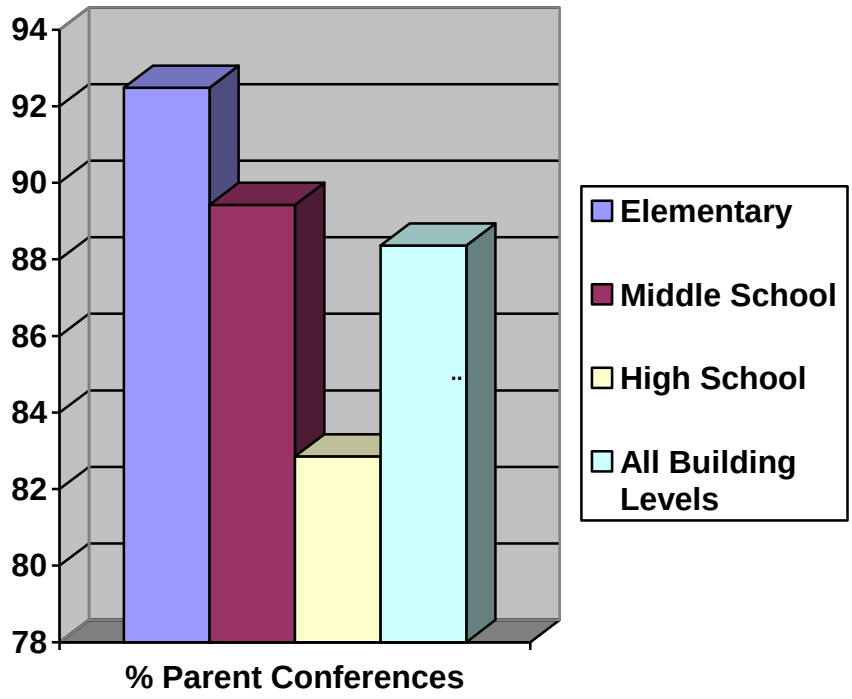


In Figure 12 the researcher is able to determine that overall, students are more proficient in Mathematics compared to Communication Arts by less than one percent. This same pattern is followed at both the Elementary and Middle School levels; however, the High School students in Communication Arts outperform those in Mathematics by the minimal margin of one-hundredth of a percent.

Figure 13

The subsequent figure denotes the percentage of parents that completed the 4th cycle MSIP advanced questionnaire for parents and indicated that they had a conference with their child's teacher(s) in regards to the educational interest

of that particular student. The data is divided according to grade span and reported for all three building levels as percentage of parents who attended a conference at that particular school.



In regards to Figure 13, it is straightforward that parental involvement with regard to parent-teacher conferences is inferior at the high school level when compared to the counterparts at the elementary. Elementary tops all grade spans with 92.48%, while middle school conferences are at 89.42%. The high school parent conferences are at the bottom of all three grade spans with 82.85%; therefore, the overall percentage is 88.36% for all

schools. Also, stated in the limitations to the study, the parents who reported attending a parent/teacher conference on the 4th cycle MSIP advanced questionnaire did differ when compared to the percentage of parents recorded by each building level principal in building levels where student G.P.A. and parent conferences were correlated. The greatest inconsistency is at the high school level with an approximate twenty-eight percent variance, while the reported variation at the middle school level nears twelve percent. This is in comparison to the elementary which has less than a one percent divergence in reported parent/teacher conferences. Therefore, the researcher admittedly understands there is a small discrepancy in parent conferences between the data reported by the building level principals and the data reported by parents on the 4th cycle MSIP advanced questionnaire with regards to reported parent conferences.

Figure 14

Figure 14 depicts the proficient areas of Communication Arts and Mathematics for students in each grade span. The correlation of each of these areas was compared to the parental involvement stated on the advance questionnaire. The following two hypothesizes will be examined and tested with this correlation of these eight different T-tests:

(4) Is there a significant, positive correlation among districts which have completed the 4th cycle MSIP review in Missouri, parental involvement, and students who are proficient in Communication Arts according to the standardized MAP assessment?

(5) Is there a significant, positive correlation among districts which have completed the 4th cycle MSIP review in Missouri, parental involvement, and students who are proficient in Mathematics according to the standardized MAP assessment?

	N	T-test
Elementary Proficient in Communication Arts	256	.305
Elementary Proficient in Mathematics	256	.379
Middle School Proficient in Communication Arts	116	.577
Middle School Proficient in Mathematics	116	.496
High School Proficient in Communication Arts	192	.235
High School Proficient in Mathematics Arts	192	.181
All Schools Proficient in Communication Arts	564	.344
All Schools Proficient in Mathematics Arts	564	.335

The Pearson r provided a correlation between parental involvement (parent-teacher conferences) and student performance (proficient levels in Communication Arts and Mathematics). With the calculated coefficient, it was apparent that a weak relationship was established, indicating a linear relationship between the two variables. This linear relationship was initiated at each grade span of buildings, as well as in each subject area tested. With the strongest linear relationship in middle school Communication Arts, the middle school span of students in grades six through eight creates the strongest correlations, being moderate overall when compared to the counterparts in elementary and high school. Furthermore, the high school data created another weak linear relationship between student achievement and parental involvement with the correlation being the weakest of all three grade spans under observation. In addition, the high school Mathematics correlation was the lowest coefficient of all areas measured at .181.

In a comparison of subject areas, overall the Pearson r indicated that the correlation between Communication Arts and parental involvement surpasses the correlation of Mathematics with a difference of .009 as Communication Arts correlation equaled .344 and Mathematics was the equivalent

of .335. Both high school and middle school levels followed this pattern; however, the elementary level had an adverse finding in the correlation of subject areas.

CHAPTER V - SUMMARY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if parental involvement was an effective tool in raising student achievement among students in grades two through twelve. Data was gathered from the 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008 school years from selected school districts in order to present a final conclusion. Parental involvement (parent/teacher conference) was correlated to student achievement (grade-point averages and proficient MAP scores in Communication Arts and Mathematics) during these consecutive school years to present the possible linear relationship.

Summary

With the demands placed upon schools districts in Missouri by both state and federal regulations, it is essential that schools actively seek any edge in increasing student achievement. Status quo is no longer acceptable. Demands of legislations, such as No Child Left Behind, require that student performance must increase. Therefore, school districts must maximize resources as

expectations continue to rise rapidly in this era of high-stakes education.

The first null hypothesis stated that there will be no significant, positive correlation between parental involvement through parent-teacher conferences and the grade point averages of students, grades 2-12 in selected Missouri Public Schools. This hypothesis is best measured through the Pearson r correlation which is shown on figure 11 on page 111 of this correlational study. The correlation is a weak .207 for all comparative data for hypothesis one. Therefore, the first null hypothesis is accepted, as the correlation is not determined to be significant in this study.

The second null hypothesis examined the mean of student performance as measured by grade point averages, and that the mean would not significantly differ according to gender with equivalent parental involvement. This null hypothesis was also rejected, as the following data and correlations were weak and were not significant enough to reject the aforementioned null hypothesis. Overall, male students, when correlating G.P.A. to parent involvement, had a linear correlation of .204, while the female students had a slightly stronger relationship of .209. This overall

Pearson r correlation can be reviewed on figure 11. A breakdown of gender by grade span can be examined on figure 5 for high school (.369 for males and .392 for females), figure 7 for middle school (.233 for males and .343 for females), and figure 9 for elementary students (.118 for males and .063 for females).

The third null hypothesis stated that the mean of student performance measured by grade point average in grades two through twelve will not significantly vary among students with equivalent parental involvement. The following figures account for the acceptance of the third null hypothesis. Figure 5 indicates that a correlation of .374 is found at the high school level when compared to the data on figure 7 stating a correlation of .287 at the middle grade level and a .091 correlation at the elementary level. This indicates weak correlations at all grade levels, but also represents a .283 difference from the high school to the elementary with decreasing correlations in sequential order beginning with the upper level students.

The fourth null hypothesis examined the assumption that there will be no significant, positive correlation among districts which have completed the 4th cycle MSIP review in Missouri, parental involvement, and students who

are proficient in Communication Arts according to the standardized MAP assessment. Figure 14 depicts the evidence that the overall correlation of students in grades three through eleven is a weak correlation of .344. Data supports the evidence that the fourth null hypothesis will be accepted in this study. Furthermore, each grade level is listed on figure 14 with only the middle school having a moderate correlation of .577. Both the high school and elementary had weak correlations between parent involvement and student performance, .235 and .305 respectively.

The final null hypothesis states that there will be no significant, positive correlation among districts which have completed the 4th cycle MSIP review in Missouri, parental involvement, and students who are proficient in Mathematics, according to the standardized MAP assessment. Additionally, figure 14 is exploited in scrutinizing the data between proficient scores in Mathematics and parental involvement. The strongest of the weak correlations is the middle school level with .496 as this grade level is closest to moderate in strength of correlation. The middle school is followed by the elementary with a correlation of .379, and the high ended the Pearson r with a low .181 correlation. The total data for Mathematics allowed for an

overall correlation of .335, which is defined as a weak correlation and allowed the researcher to accept the null hypothesis.

After analysis of data, the researcher accepted each of the five null hypothesizes in this study. All correlations through the Pearson r were weak and under the .50 threshold for moderate correlation, except the comparison of proficient students in middle school Communication Arts and parental involvement. Therefore, the linear comparisons created correlations; however, these positive correlations were too weak to be considered significant by the researcher.

Conclusion

The purpose of this correlational study was to determine the linear relationship between parental involvement (parent/teacher conferences) and student achievement (G.P.A. and proficient MAP scores) in grades two through twelve during the 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008 in selected public school districts in Missouri. Each null hypothesis was accepted due to the weak relationship through the Pearson r correlation of data.

The data utilized for this correlational study allowed the researcher to offer the following conclusions:

1. According to the evidence presented in this study, the relationship between parent/teacher conferences and grade points averages of students in grades two through twelve was trivial.
2. The data exhibited gender was an insignificant factor in determining a strong relationship between parental involvement and the students' achievement.
3. Data supported evidence that the grade span or age of a student is not a strong predictor in determining a correlation between parental involvement and student performance as the positive relationship was determined to be too weak to be considered significant.
4. Additionally evidence assembled for this study exhibited the fact that the relationship between parent involvement and students proficient in Communication Arts MAP evaluation was determined to be insignificant and a weak correlation.
5. The evidence assembled for this study confirmed the fact that the relationship between parent involvement and students proficient in Mathematics MAP evaluation was determined to be insignificant and a weak correlation.

6. Evidence showed that parental involvement was deemed higher at lower grade levels when compared to the upper level counterparts. Furthermore, and overall, parents of females were more likely to attend parent/teacher conferences when compared to their male classmates.
7. Data illustrated that students in the lower grade spans outperformed students in higher grade spans when G.P.A. was analyzed.
8. Data illustrated that students with parental involvement achieved higher G.P.A. by nearly two points on an eleven point scale. Moreover, the data illustrated that females outperformed their male classmates in G.P.A. in every category in the study, regardless of parental involvement.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made as a result of distinct observations noticed in this correlative study between parental involvement and student achievement.

1. Research should be conducted to compare additional parental involvement factors other than parent/teacher conferences as parental

involvement encompasses a magnitude of categories impacting each child.

2. Further research should be conducted to examine other disaggregated data to separate students, in addition to gender and grade span.
3. Research should be performed to examine the achievement level discrepancies in G.P.A. when analyzing the disaggregated data of both grade level and gender.
4. Other studies should be conducted to determine the differences in level of parental involvement dependent on the grade span or age of the student.

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Appendix A

Missouri School Improvement Program

The Missouri School Improvement Program has the responsibility of reviewing and accrediting the 524 school districts in Missouri within a 5 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 resource, process and performance are developed. These reports are reviewed by a Department School Improvement Committee 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.

This section's primary responsibilities include conducting training sessions (for team leaders, team members, counselors, superintendents and others), mailing and processing materials used in the review process (advance questionnaires, team training materials, team member packets, district procedures handbook, and performance worksheets), arranging for the on-site review, overseeing the total review process, serving as team leaders or team members, coordinating school reviews mandated through other sections (i.e., vocational, special education, special state and federal programs, etc.), extracting and processing information for the resource and performance reports, and editing and correcting the three sections of the reports after the on-site review.

Staff members (including the ten Area Supervisors) provide technical assistance on the MSIP process to district personnel individually and through training sessions held throughout the state, through a variety of printed materials and through the School Improvement Plan development and review processes. Assistance in carrying out on-site reviews is provided by Department staff members from other sections, teachers and administrators from local

districts and representatives from higher education (DESE 2008).

Appendix B

Advanced Questionnaire Survey for MSIP

The Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) uses survey data obtained from students, parents, and school staff to help evaluate educational processes in a district. Specific directions for administering the MSIP advance questionnaires are provided to the Superintendent two to four weeks prior to the district receiving these questionnaires. These directions are also sent with the forms shipped to each district. Districts should review these directions carefully in order to facilitate the administration process and to provide as much confidentiality to respondents as possible. Districts also have the option of adding up to ten (10) questions to all surveys except the elementary (grades 3-4) and the elementary (grade 5) forms. All parents of students (grades K-12) enrolled in the district and all staff members are provided the opportunity to complete a survey through the MSIP advance questionnaire process. Students in grades 3-12 are also given the opportunity to complete a student survey. Individual students, parents, and staff members always have the option not to respond to any item

on the survey or not to complete a survey at all. (Districts may ask that the questionnaires be administered early; in most cases it is possible to accommodate such requests.)

Survey Deficiencies

It is important that DESE receive as many surveys back from a district as possible. Advance Questionnaire results become part of a district's MSIP Accreditation final report. Deficiencies in survey responses are based on the following return rate percentages:

staff - 60%

student- 60%

parent- 25%

If a district has a significant deficiency, our office will inform the district, as well as the district's state supervisor. The district will then be given an option as to whether or not wishes to re-administer to the specific group identified or possibly not have disaggregated results for that particular building.

If disstricts have any questions regarding the advance questionnaire survey process or the report, contact Accountability Data and Accreditation by e-mail at

webreplyimprdar@dese.mo.gov or by phone at (573) 526-4886 (DESE 2008).

Appendix C

Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) Data

MAP data results are made available to districts through the Internet. To obtain district results, go to /schooldata/ . Select a district and click on "Load Profile:" Scroll down and under "Educational Performance Data" click on a specific content area to view the district's results. To obtain building results, go to /schooldata/ . Select a district and click on "Load Profile". Under Summary Reports click on Building Data in Detail. Click on a specific building, scroll down and under "Educational Performance Data" click on a specific content area to view the building's results.

If you have any questions regarding the MAP district or building results, contact the Data Analysis and Reporting Section by e-mail at webreplyimprdar@dese.mo.gov or by phone at (573) 526-4886 (DESE 2008).

Appendix D

VITA'

The author, Brian R. Wilson was born in Springfield, Missouri. He is the son of Lee and Barbara Wilson who reside in Clever, Missouri. Brian attended school at Clever R-V High School through his senior year. Upon graduation from high school, he chose to begin his career in education and his studies of Agricultural Education at Missouri State University. His Bachelor's and Master's in Educational Administration were earned through Missouri State University. An ambition to continue in Educational Leadership directed Brian to further education with Specialist and Doctoral Degrees in Educational Leadership from Lindenwood University, the second of which should be completed by May 2009.

Brian's professional career has been consumed as an agricultural education instructor as he built the program up from the ground level, coach, high school principal and superintendent of schools in southwest Missouri. Brian began his debut in education in 1996 and has enjoyed his tenure to date at the Fordland R-III School District where

he has been superintendent of schools for the past three years. He has never regretted his decision to enter the field of education and prides himself in maintaining high expectations for the betterment of children.

Even though education consumes a majority of time for Mr. Wilson, his fulfillment in life is his family. Brian and his wife Jana were again blessed in July of 2007 with their daughter Addison Layne who is the apple of her father's eye. Family time continues with grandparents as Brian continues to farm with his father in Clever and raise registered beef cattle. Additionally, summer breaks from education are consumed by relaxing days at Table Rock Lake with Jana's parents and their lake setting as family plays the focal point for Brian and Jana.