1-28-2022

Parental Involvement and the Academic Achievement of Third and Fourth Grade Students During the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 School Years

Rise' D. Black

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by

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A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

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This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

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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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Acknowledgements

As I look back on my journey in the completion of my dissertation, I am eternally grateful to the individuals that guided and supported me along the way. I am thankful for my parents, William and Armathae Hunt- Doom for instilling in me the importance of education. To my daughters Brooke and Lauren thank you for listening and offering to assist with anything I needed. Dr. Bernadette White, thank you for your suggestions, encouragement, and constant checking on me to offer your assistance through this process. Your input has been invaluable. I'd like to thank committee member, Dr. Sherrie Wisdom, for her support. A special thank you to Dr. Robyne Elder my chair, for your guidance, support, suggestions, and anything else that I needed to complete this project. I appreciated your "You can do this attitude!" when writing got difficult. I am forever grateful for your navigation through the writing of this dissertation.

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to find out if parental involvement in the study school helped to increase student academic achievement. Previous studies have shown that when parents are involved in the educational process of children, parents can expect a gain in academic achievement. This mixed method study examined the relationship between parental involvement and academic gains in reading at one suburban public school. The researcher examined how often parents met with teachers at their child's school, conversations parents had with teachers about what they were learning in school, how often parents were involved with a parent group, how confident parents were in their ability to make choices about school for their child, efforts their child put in school-related tasks, designated times to do school assignments, and parental involvement activities.

For this study approximately 18 parents were surveyed. They electronically completed a *Qualtrics* survey. This mixed methods study determined that most parents believed that parental involvement increased student academic achievement. The surveys submitted indicated that the students were comfortable in asking for help from adults. Parents were also comfortable in asking for assistance from school personnel. Surveyed parents reported that the MAP Preparation Packets helped their child/children prepare for the MAP assessment by gaining more practice at home, focusing on learning, becoming familiar with content of the test, providing a similar experience, and helping the students better understand the MAP skills. The survey results indicated that parental involvement that includes parents actively participating in consistent two-way meaningful communication involving student academic achievement and school activities produces

positive academic results. All surveyed parents agreed that the MAP Preparation Packets were contributory in increasing their child's academic achievement and assisted them in preparing for the MAP. This implies that parent involvement is indeed a valuable resource in student academic achievement.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background of the Study

Parent Involvement in a child's early education is consistently found to be positively associated with a child's academic performance (Hara & Burke, 1998; Hill & Craft, 2003; Marcon, 1999; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). The importance of parental involvement in their children's education is not a new issue. Parents began to become involved in nursey schools at the beginning of the 20th century in the United States. Parent cooperative nursery schools blossomed from the 1920s to the 1960s. Most of these educational centers were located in college or suburban towns and welcomed primarily stay-at-home mothers who served as paraprofessionals in the classrooms, assisting a teacher and taking physical care of the facility (Gestwicki, 2007). These parental involvement activities unfortunately were limited to middle class families. Involving parents from a lower socio-economic and culturally and ethnically diverse background began during the depression and grew during the World War II through programs that supported parental involvement in activities, such as parental self-development training and learning.

The perception that parental involvement has positive effects on students' academic achievement has led to a voluminous body of literature about parental involvement (Jeynes, 2003; Hill & Tyson, 2009). Parental Involvement (PI) first occurred in nursery schools in the United States from the 1920s to the 1960s. Mothers worked as teacher assistants in the classroom and provided other support for the staff. Middle-class families were the first to be involved in this action. More than 50 years later, scholars have continued to show an interest in the topic of Parental Involvement (PI) because

researchers have consistently established a direct association of PI with positive student academic outcomes (Ryan et al., 2010). Even though No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) and other federal initiatives have been implemented to increase parental involvement in our public education systems, the reality is that some educators are discouraged about the rate of parental involvement in the schools. Some educators find it difficult to nurture a productive school-to-home environment that is conducive to parental involvement. Many educators find it difficult to develop an environment that is conducive to parental involvement. An ever-growing body of research indicates that parental involvement is a key factor in the success of children in school (Aronson, 1996; Ballantine, 1999; Brown, 1999; Chen & Chandler, 2001; Columbo, 1995; Gonzalez, 2002; Huss-Keeler, 1997: Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Norton & Neufeld, 2002; Vincent, 1996; Zellman & Waterman, 1998). Studies have shown that when parents take an active interest in their child's educational process their education benefits in a positive way. These children generally have higher academic achievement (Becher, 1984; Henderson et al., 1986), better attendance (Haynes et al., 1989), a sense of well-being (Cochran, 1987), a readiness to do homework (Rich, 1988), and better self-regulatory skills (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002). These positive effects are not confined to elementary school but continue through high school (Henderson, 1987; Hickman et al., 1995).

Children from socioeconomically disadvantaged families tend to enter school behind their peers in terms of pre-academic and self-regulatory skills (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Noble et al., 2005). This lack of early prevention for school leads to an academic achievement gap that widens over time (Reardon, 2011; West et al., 2001),

putting children from disadvantaged families at risk for school failure, dropout, and markedly fewer professional opportunities in adulthood. If districts offer family-oriented early interventions that support parents' ability to promote child development, this can help to reduce the gap in school readiness. Active engagement of parents is essential to the successful implementation of such interventions (Shaw et al., 2006). However, parental participation remains a challenge for many programs (Patterson & Chamberlain, 1994).

In this study the issues were explored through the lens of Getting Ready for School (GRS). The role of the parent's involvement in school readiness is not clearly understood. Getting Ready for School is a program that is comprised of both a home and school component. The goal of the program is to improve early literacy, math, and self-regulatory skills in preschool students from socioeconomically disadvantaged families. The study first examined associations between family characteristics and different indices of parental involvement in the GRS intervention. Then, the associations between parent involvement and change in children's school readiness over time was examined. The participants were 133 preschool children attending Head Start and their parents who participated in the GRS intervention during the 2014-2015 school year. Parent involvement was operationalized as attendance to GRS events at the school, time spent at home engaging in GRS activities, and the usage of digital program materials, a set of videos to support the implementation of the parent-child activities at home. The study offered a comprehensive picture of different ways in which parents may engage in school readiness interventions. The parent's involvement was recorded at GRS events. Parents filled out surveys about the time they spent doing GRS activities, usage of materials, and

satisfaction of materials used. The Getting Ready for School survey was administered three times during the school year. The students' readiness skills were measured by using the *Woodcock-Johnson Test of Academic Achievement* (WJIII) *Bateria III Woodcock Munoz.* The students were also tested by the *Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals- Preschool-2*). The *WJIII/Bateria Woodcock-Munoz* (Woodcock et al., 2001) and the *Test of Early Mathematics Ability* were used to test math readiness skills. They also used the Spanish version of the test that was provided by the developer of the TEMA-3. Self-regulation was assessed by using the *Head-Toes-Knees-Shoulder* (McClelland et al., 2014). The *Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation Short Form* (LaFreniere & Dumas, 1996) was administered to assess anger/aggression, anxiety/withdrawal, and social competence. GRS is a novel early intervention targeting teachers and parents that supports the development of school readiness skills in preschool children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds (Marti et al., 2018; Noble et al., 2005). GRS focuses on all three of the main school readiness domains (early literacy, math, and self-regulation) and it emphasizes teachers and parents as agents of change. The home is the focus of the study. It promotes how parents utilize the activities that support the development of literacy, math, and self-regulation skills.

The results of the study indicated that few family characteristics were significantly associated with parent involvement in GRS. However, there was a tendency for markers of relatively higher social economic status (SES) to be linked with greater parental involvement in GRS. The findings also indicated that greater parent involvement in GRS may lead to more positive gains in children's school readiness skills. Two-thirds of the parents attended at least one GRS event at school, this suggests that family-

oriented readiness interventions like GRS may be feasible for low-income families. Another important finding was that greater parental involvement in GRS was linked with more positive gains in children's early literacy, math, and self-regulatory skills across the preschool year, even after controlling for family characteristics. Children whose parents attended more GRS events showed more gains in preliteracy, language, and delay of gratification skills across the preschool year. When parents spent more time doing GRS activities at home, this was associated with greater gains in children's early literacy and math skills. These findings suggest the importance of identifying families with the greatest economic need who may benefit from extra support to overcome any barriers to parental participation in early interventions (Cooper et al., 2010; Dawson-McClure et al., 2015).

This study demonstrates the importance of parental involvement even at the preschool level. Higher levels of parent involvement with the GRS intervention showed greater gains in early literacy, math, and self-regulatory skills among preschool students from socioeconomically disadvantaged families. Therefore, by enhancing parental involvement in early school readiness interventions may lead to increased and improved developmental gains for socioeconomically disadvantaged children. Parental involvement is seen as an effective strategy to ensure student success, as evidenced by several correlational studies, with the overarching benefit of parental involvement being increased academic performance (Barnard, 2004; Desimone, 1999; Hill & Craft, 2003; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Zellman & Waterman, 1998).

Research has been done to document the effects of parental involvement within economically disadvantaged, ethnically diverse samples. For example, Reynolds (1992)

compared the impact of parental at-home involvement (similar to cognitive-intellectual involvement; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994) within a sample of low-income African American parents of second graders. Reynolds (1992) found that parental school involvement was more strongly related to children's academic outcomes than at-home involvement. It was also noted that second-grade teacher ratings of parental involvement were predictive of children's achievement in the third grade. Marcon (1999) also documented the importance of family-school contact within a sample of 708 predominately low-income African American parents of preschoolers. Specifically, it is quite clear that increased parental school involvement was associated with greater mastery of basic skills in all subject areas

Parent school involvement may lead to more positive academic outcomes in children by fostering a sense of shared responsibility for children's education (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 1999). Such family-school connections may be particularly beneficial for children from economically disadvantaged environments due to their risks of experiencing discontinuities between home and school (Lareau, 1996; Marcon, 1999; Moles, 1993; Raffaele & Knoff, 1999).

Parental involvement in children's schooling has been associated with children's school success, including better achievement and behavior, lower absenteeism, and more positive attitudes toward school (Cole-Henderson, 2000; Grolnick et al., 1997; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Reynolds, 1992). Families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds expend considerable effort, including more informal conversations and unscheduled visits, to demonstrate their involvement to teachers and the school at large (Freeman-Smith, 2010); however, these less structured approaches are often viewed as obtrusive by

schools and teachers (Fields-Smith, 2007). Families in poverty are further alienated by middle-class families who see the lack of traditional involvement as a lack of caring or concern about their children (Kroeger, 2007). Because of the limitations of some parent involvement policies, there is a need to incorporate culturally relevant strategies to get parents more involved. Based on the literature, such practices should include components of relationship building, advocacy, and parental efficacy, as these have been shown to be effective in working with African Americans, Latino, and low-income populations (Desimone, 1999; Martinez-Cosio, 2010). Children from socioeconomically disadvantaged families tend to enter school behind their peers in terms of pre-academic and self-regulatory skills (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Noble et al., 2005). This lack of early preparation for school leads to an academic achievement gap that widens over time (Reardon, 2011), putting children from disadvantaged families at risk for school failure, dropout, and markedly fewer professional opportunities in adulthood. The various activities may include support for learning activities in the classroom (e.g., reading mothers), parent's night, PTO, school volunteer (help with various school-wide activities), school council, and community outreach programs. Since research has demonstrated differences in parental involvement among African Americans, Latino, and White families, parental involvement strategies should consider race. African American families tend to spend more time in home-based activities with their children than their White counterparts (Barbarin et al., 2005); however home-based involvement is difficult for schools to measure and is often overlooked, and families are not recognized for their efforts. It is established that parental involvement has a positive influence on school-related outcomes for children. Consistently, cross-sectional (e.g., Grolnick & Slowiaczek,

1994) and longitudinal (e.g., Miedel & Reynolds, 2000) studies have demonstrated an association between higher levels of parental involvement and greater academic success. For younger children, parental involvement is associated with early school success, including academic and language skills and social competence (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Hill, 2001; Hill & Craft, 2003). The nation's largest intervention program for at-risk children has emphasized the importance of parental involvement as a critical piece of children's early academic development. Early parental involvement promotes positive academic experiences for children and also has positive effects on parents' self - development and improves their parenting skills. Most of the literature focuses on parental school involvement in elementary schools. Parental school involvement is thought to decrease as children move to middle and high school, in part because parents may believe that they cannot assist with more challenging high school subjects and because adolescents are becoming autonomous (Eccles & Harold, 1996).

Activities that have been considered to represent parent involvement (Hill & Tyson, 2009) include involvement at school (e.g., parent-teacher communication, attending school events, and volunteering at school), involvement at home (e. g., structured homework time and educational opportunities, monitoring schoolwork and academic progress), and academic socialization (e.g., communicating parents' expectations regarding schoolwork, encouraging educational and career goals, and preparation for future goals).

The differences in parental involvement can be related to family characteristics. Financial stability, parents' education attainment, parents' mental health, secure housing, healthcare, and access to nutritious foods have been identified as predictors of children's

school readiness and success (United States Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2016).

In promoting achievement across elementary and secondary school levels, theories, research, and polices have identified the significant roles of families, family-school relations, and parental involvement in education (Fen & Chen, 2001; Hill & Chao, 2009; Seginer, 2006). Indeed, family-school relations and parental involvement in education have been identified as a way to close demographic gaps in achievement and maximize student's potential (Dearing et al., 2006; Hampton et al., 1998; Hara & Burke, 1998). The need for parental involvement brought about the need for federal policies like The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) that mandated parental involvement in education and family-school relations across elementary and secondary school levels.

The goals of this study (Correlates of Parental Involvement in Student's Learning: Examination of a National Data Set) were to construct a measure of parental involvement in students' learning, using data from an existing national educational-related survey, and to investigate which child, family, and school characteristics were associated with variation in parent involvement. Increased parental involvement is associated with gains in cognition and language and social-emotional development (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2016), as well as children's self- esteem, emotional self-regulation, and self-perceptions of academic competence (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). The National Household Education Survey (NHES:2012) was a two-phase survey conducted by mail. The first phase survey was the administration of a short household screener questionnaire used to identify households of children under 20 years-of-age. The second phase of the survey was the collection of topical survey data from households of

eligible children. The main primary target of this study was school-age children. The NHES:2012 survey program was designed to provide national representative data, usable for research that would be able to inform public policy. Households for the study were randomly selected from 50 states and the District of Columbia. The survey was conducted from January through August 2012. Only one child per household was included in the sample.

Results for the Child Characteristics Model showed that the predicted level of parental involvement was greater for girls than for boys; compared to parents of White children, parents of Hispanic children had less involvement in their child's learning. Child characteristics also played a part with parent involvement. For example, Hickman et al. (1995) reported that female students had parents who were more involved in their education. Child characteristics have been found to be associated with parent involvement. The Family Demographics Model showed the marital status of the parent completing the survey was a significant predictor of PILC (Parent Involving in Children's Learning); when comparing married parents to divorced parents that responded, divorced parents had a lower response rate. Education was a significant factor. When parents without a high school diploma were compared to parents with a high school diploma all other parents that had greater parental involvement and the predicted level of PILC was greater for each successive level of parent education. Parent employment was also a predictor of PILC. When working parents and stay-at-home parents were compared, stay-at-home parents had greater parent involvement. In comparing the School Characteristics Model, it showed that compared to parents of children in schools of less than 300 students, parents of students in schools with over 1000 students were less involved. When

comparing private schools to public schools, parents of children in public school had lower parent involvement. The Child's School Experience Model results showed that parents of children thought to be enjoying school, children with higher grades, children with fewer absences, children that had not repeated any grades, and children who had not had an in-school suspension were more likely to be involved in their child's learning. The results of the Parent Satisfaction Model demonstrated that greater parent involvement with their child's learning was associated with being more satisfied with the child's current teacher, and being satisfied with how the school staff interacts with parents. Some nonsignificant predictors associated with the parent satisfaction variables were: parent satisfaction with the school the child attends this year, parent satisfaction with the academic standards of the school, and parent satisfaction with order and discipline at the school. In the Final Model the predicted level of parental involvement was greater for girls than boys; compared to parents of White children, parents of children in the Other race/ethnicity category had less involvement in their child's learning. Parents of kindergarten students through fourth grade did not differ in the level of parent involvement; but, when compared to parents of kindergarten students, parents of children in grades 5 through 12 had lower parent involvement. Parents had more involvement if their child's health was better and less if their child had a disability. The education of the parent played an important role in the predictor of PILC. When parents without a high school diploma were compared with parents that had successive levels of education, the parents with more education had a higher level of parental involvement. Parent employment was a significant predictor of PICL; when comparing the parents that responded to the survey, it was noted that compared to parents that were employed,

parents who were self- employed or stay-at-home parents had greater parent involvement. School choice was a significant predictor. When comparing parents to schools with less than 600 students, parents of students educated in schools with over 600 students were less involved. In comparing private schools to public schools, parents of children in public school had lower parent involvement. Parents of children that did not attend their regularly assigned school had greater parent involvement, compared to parents of students who did attend their regularly assigned school. Children that enjoyed school were more likely to have parents that were involved in their schools. Greater parent involvement with their child's learning was associated with being more satisfied with how school staff interacts with parents. Parent type and marital status were not significant in the final model. Student absences, grades, repeating grade levels, in-school suspension, satisfaction with the child's teacher does not predict parent involvement. Henderson and Mapp (2002) reported that school factors, specifically those that are relational in nature, have a major impact on parents' involvement.

The study found that parent involvement was related to a range of family demographic characteristics was consistent with existing literature; for example, Pena (2000) also found parent involvement was influenced by, among other factors, parent educational level. Parents that are less educated may not have the same level of knowledge and confidence related to their child's education. Parents without a high school diploma may not feel comfortable with the material that their child is learning. Hickman et al. (1995) reported that female students had parents who were more involved in their education. This relationship appears to be culturally driven and reflects the current values and expectations in the United States.

The finding that parental involvement is higher for students in the lower grades is unsurprising but has not been consistently reported; Hickman et al. (1995) reported that involvement was greater for students in grades 9 and up. However, these parents generally have fewer opportunities to be committed to volunteering in classroom activities and are highly unlikely to support their children in the completion of academic tasks. Older children want to be more independent and may discourage their parents to refrain from involvement in their schools.

In the literature, the notions of parental involvement and parent participation are often not clearly operational (Feuerstein, 2000). Desforges (2003) for example, distinguishes two forms of involvement/participation, namely “spontaneous” versus “planned.” The first form is bottom up. The second form is more top-down and typically involves interventions or programs aimed to solve the problem of insufficient or no parental involvement.

Driessen and Smit (2005) stated that various terms are used to refer to the cooperation between parents, teachers, and schools. One can speak, for example, of parental involvement, parental participation, and school-family relations, educational partnerships, and so forth. Such a partnership is then construed as the process in which those involved mutually support each other and attune their contributions with the objective of promoting the learning, motivation. and development of pupils (Epstein, 1995). The Epstein Model (2009) is one of the most widely referenced frameworks for parental involvement. The Epstein Model outlines six concrete types of family behaviors; positive home conditions, communication, involvement at school, home learning activities, shared decision making within the school, and community partnerships

(Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein et al., 2009). Epstein shifts some of the tasks from the parents to the school by recognizing communication as a bidirectional endeavor and encouraging schools to create a place for parent ownership within the school through shared decision making.

Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein & Sanders, 2000) combined psychological, educational, and sociological perspectives on social institutions to describe and explain the relationships between parents, schools and local environments in an integrated manner. This theory suggested that there are three important contexts or social institutions which can influence the education and socialization of children: family, school, and local community. It is assumed that some of these objectives can be reached by communicating and cooperating. Epstein saw these contexts as spheres of influence that can overlap to a greater or lesser degree. The Framework of six types of Parent Involvement was created by Epstein and overviewed in Table 1. The framework helps educators to develop more comprehensive programs of school-family and community partnerships.

Table 1

Epstein's Six Types of Parental Involvement

1. Parenting. Schools must help parents with the creation of positive conditions to promote the development of children. Parents must prepare their children for school, guide them and raise them.
2. Communicating. Schools must inform parents about the school program and the progress of children's school careers. Schools must also present such information in a manner which is comprehensible to all parents, and parents must be open to such communication.
3. Volunteering. The contribution and help of parents during school activities (e.g., reading mothers, organization of celebrations).
4. Learning at home. Activities aimed at the support, help and monitoring of the learning and development activities of one's school-going children at home (e.g., help with homework).
5. Decision making. The involvement of parents in the policy and management of the school and the establishment of formal parental representation (e.g., school board or parent council memberships).
6. Collaborating with the community. The identification and integration of community resources and services with existing school programs, family child-rearing practices and pupil learning.

Besides types of parental involvement, Epstein, with the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA), also created National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement. They are overviewed in Table 2.

Table 2

National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs

Standard I: Communicating- Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.

Standard II: Parenting- Parenting skills are promoted and supported.

Standard III: Student Learning- Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.

Standard IV: Volunteering- Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.

Standard V: School Decision Making and Advocacy- Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.

Standard VI: Collaborating with Community- Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

Note. Sources: Michigan Department of Education, National Network of Partnership Schools, PTA.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate if the MAP Preparation Packets along with parental involvement helped the students improve academic achievement. The researcher chose this study because of the low parental support in the school. Parental involvement has been a concern in this school for several years. This study took place in a suburban school district. All of the students qualified for free meals. Twenty-five parents were asked to participate in the study and 18 parents responded to the survey electronically.

Limitations

The parental involvement study was conducted in a public elementary school. One limitation of the study was that parents self-reported the MAP scores. Therefore, the MAP data reported may be unreliable. The researcher also worked at the study school as an Instructional Coach. This may be seen as a bias, but will not be a concern in this research. The researchers' relationship with the parents is strictly professional. The study was also limited to one school in one district.

Importance of Study

The United States is a nation at risk. If a solution is not found, the nation is at risk of losing a generation of children to many outside negative forces. Parental involvement has been found to be beneficial to students' academic success (Epstein, 1994; Hiatt-Michael, 2001). When parents display high levels of involvement it is associated with better student attendance, higher reading and math scores, higher graduation rates, and less retention. It has also been associated with nonacademic outcomes, such as parent and student satisfaction with school and fewer discipline problems (Hiatt-Michael, 2001), as well as positive attitudes and more effective programs and schools (Lewis, 1993). This study was important, because it aimed to show the importance of parents getting involved in their child's educational progress at an early age. This involvement can begin as early as preschool. This study was also important due to the lack of steady academic achievement in the study school. In an effort to increase reading levels, the school wants to promote parental involvement. Therefore, the leadership team at the school has been charged with the task of increasing parental involvement at school. This study will

benefit other schools that are struggling academically and need to increase standardized test scores.

Research showed connections between parental involvement and student academic achievement. According to National Education Association (NEA) Today, "Ongoing research shows that family engagement in schools improves achievement, reduces absenteeism, and restores parents' confidence in their children's education. Students with involved parents or other caregivers earn higher grades and test scores, have better social skills, and show improved behavior" (Garcia & Thornton, 2014, p. 1).

Hypothesis and Research Questions

Hypothesis 1: There will be an increase in students' Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) scores in Reading after working with the MAP preparation packets at home with parents. The researcher compared the 2014-2015 MAP scores in Reading to the 2015-2016 MAP Reading scores (pre-MAP Preparation Packets to post-MAP Preparation Packets).

Research Question 1: How does parental involvement increase student academic achievement?

Research Question 2: What is the impact of the MAP Preparation Packets on student achievement?

Research Question 3: What are the parents' perceptions of their children's learning?

Research Question 4: What is the level of school involvement and communication for parents?

Parental involvement was measured by the amount of time per week parents spend helping their child with homework and projects, attending parent conferences, PTO meetings, field trips, and programs held during and after school. The researcher examined test data for third and fourth grade students at one elementary school, which was the study school for this research. The researcher analyzed the data from this group of students for two grade levels. The study school is located in a suburban school district

List of Terms

***Parent Teacher Organization* (PTO)**

A parent-teacher organization is a formal organization composed of parents, teachers, and staff that is intended to facilitate parental participation in a school.

***Missouri Assessment Program* (MAP)**

The Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) is an annual set of mandatory standardized tests taken by students in the U.S. state of Missouri. The MAP is designed to measure how well students acquire the skills and knowledge described in Missouri's Learning Standards (MLS). The assessments yield information on academic achievement at the student, class, school, district, and state levels. This information is used to diagnose student strengths and weaknesses in relation to the instruction of the (MLS), and to gauge the overall quality of education throughout Missouri.

***No Child Left Behind* (NCLB)**

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was a U. S. Act of Congress that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; it included Title I provisions applying to disadvantaged students. It supported standards-based education reform based on the premise that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals could

improve individual outcomes in education. The Act required states to develop assessments in basic skills. To receive federal school funding, states had to give these assessments to all students at select grade levels.

Parental Involvement

The researcher defined parental involvement as the amount of participation a parent has in the growth, and academic development of their child. This involvement can be at home and through events and volunteer opportunities at school. This involvement also includes: attending school meetings, parent-teacher conference, attending a class or school event or serving on a committee. Most schools promote parental involvement through events and volunteer opportunities, but it is up to parents to involve themselves in their children's educational process.

Elementary School

A school that is defined as an elementary school has grades kindergarten through the fifth grade only on campus.

Summary

In Chapter One, key concepts and background information was provided to understand the importance of parental involvement in schools. The power that parents have in affecting the academic achievement, better behavior, increased confidence, and higher grades of the children cannot be underestimated. Research has shown that regardless of a parents' income and educational background, their involvement in their child's education helps the child be more productive in school.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Introduction

Positive impacts of parental involvement on student achievement outcomes have not only been recognized by school administrators and teachers, but also by policy-makers who have interwoven different aspects of parental involvement in new educational initiatives and reforms (Graves & Wright 2011; Larocque et al., 2011; Toper et al., 2010). “The idea that parents can change their children’s trajectories by engaging with their children’s schooling has inspired a generation of school reform policies” (Domina, 2005, pp. 233-249). The significance of parental involvement was clearly emphasized and delineated in the No Child Left Behind Act (Title I, Part A). Among the main tasks of the NCLB (2002) is accountability; the accountability of students, teachers, and schools. Students’ data from scores and grades were used for the accountability reports. Students, teachers, and schools were issued a report card documenting the scores students earned on the tests. The test was designed to assess subject matter competence of the students. The thinking behind this was having an accountability system. According to Darling-Hammond and Rustique-Forrester (2005), as students, teachers, and schools are held accountable for the results on the annual state-wide standardized tests, “the “expectations for students will rise, teaching will improve, and learning will increase” (p. 289). Due to the pressure from administration applied by partially tying funding of schools to successful parental involvement programs (Gonzales-DeHass et al., 2005) and adoption of multiple reforms that incorporate parental involvement as one of their integral parts, schools across the United States have been working on designing and

implementing various parental involvement initiatives in the hope of improving student academic performance.

A positive school climate welcomed and encouraged family involvement. Family involvement brought about improved teaching by generating a positive attitude among teachers. Teachers increased self-esteem and they felt respected when parents were involved. Improved teaching led to greater academic achievement by students.

When parents were directly involved in students' education, parents made a change in schools. Community, business, and government were a part of the real school change. An established learning compact encouraged families and teachers compacts, defined goals, expectations, and shared responsibilities of school and parents as equal partners in student success. A compact was a written document jointly developed by the school and parents. They outline stated how parents, the entire school staff, and the student shared the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school and parents built and developed a partnership to help children reach the state's high standards. Agreement was simply written in English or native language of the parents, where feasible. Compacts used in conjunction with other school strategies, communities, businesses and governments strengthened ties between families, students, and teachers, and established stronger environment for teaching and learning (Smith, 1996).

In developing a partnership, school improvement training was necessary for principals, teachers, and other staff, as well as parents. Collaborators acquired the skills needed to sustain the partnership job. Parents were involved in decisions regarding children's schooling. Schools opened options for parents and became involved

individually and collectively when necessary. Parents made decisions about goals and standards for children and schools (Brown, 1999).

The Importance of Parental Involvement

There is no doubt about the importance and value of parental involvement in a child's schooling. Research has shown in study after study that when parents are actively involved, children not only succeed in school, but they also succeed in life. The cultivation of a strong family/school relationship is an essential component of the strategies used to improve students' academic success.

There are several factors that we know are true about parental involvement:

- Parents often want to be more involved in their children's education but are not sure how to do so.
- Parent involvement plays an important role in improving students' academic achievement.
- Teachers want to involve parents in schools but need guidance and support in promoting this collaboration.
- Community organizations and groups, which may have already established a union in helping children and families outside schools, have a weak link with the schools.
- What schools do to promote parental involvement is important in determining whether, which, and how, parents will participate in their child's education, and how the students will benefit.

The family made critical contributions to student achievement from preschool through high school. A home environment that encouraged learning was more important

to student achievement than income, education level, or cultural background. Reading achievement was more dependent on learning activities in the home than was mathematics or science. Reading aloud to children was the most important activity that parents did to increase children's chances of reading success.

A substantial body of evidence confirms the power of the home environment-where children spend a significant portion of their waking-hours in affecting children's educational outcomes. Parent involvement in the education of children begins at home with parents providing a safe and productive environment that is conducive to learning. Parents should also provide support, a positive learning experience, and have a positive attitude about school. Several studies indicate increased academic achievement with students that have involved parents (Epstein et al., 2009; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Rumberger et al., 1990; Swap, 1993; Whitaker & Fiore, 2001). An education-friendly home environment affects not only children's achievement levels but their interest in learning and future plans, as well (Kellaghan et al., 1993). Researchers point to a number of supportive home processes that range from strong family values and routines to active involvement by parents in schoolwork. Frequently cited processes include stable family routines, parental support, and encouragement about schoolwork, discussion of ideas and events, high parental aspirations, and standards for children's achievement, quiet places to study, emphasis on family literacy, monitoring of after-school activities, tapping of community resources as needed, communicating or modeling of positive behaviors, and knowledge of school experiences (Kellaghan et al., 1993; Henderson & Berla, 1997; U. S. Department of Education, 1994).

Researchers have found that parent-child discussion about school helps improve academic achievement and reduce problematic behavior (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). The level of parent-school involvement is a better predictor of grades than are standardized test scores (Desimone, 1999). This suggests that parent involvement is an invaluable tool of a child's education.

Several researchers observe that the availability of reading material in the home is directly associated with children's achievement in reading comprehension (Becher, 1984; Hannon, 1995; Lee & Croninger 1994). Several studies link frequent, open discussions between parents and their older children to academic success (Barton & Coley, 1992; U.S. Department of Education, 1994).

For students with the most serious and persistent academic and behavior problems, parent involvement is essential to avert their expected long-term negative outcomes (Wagner et al., 2005). Although the pathway to serious antisocial behavior and academic failure is often set in motion by coercive parent-child interactions, the transition to elementary school represents a crucial developmental opportunity for interrupting the negative cascade of social and academic outcomes that typically occurs for these children (Patterson & Chamberlain, 1994). Children at high risk for antisocial behavior often develop poor relationships with teachers and receive less support and instruction and more criticism in the classroom (Arnold et al., 1998). In turn these students are often rejected by their teachers and well-adjusted peers over the course of elementary school and fail to develop the survival skills necessary for academic and social success (Kellam et al., 1994).

A positive school climate welcomed and encouraged family involvement. Family involvement brings about improved teaching by generating a positive attitude among teachers. Teachers' increased self-esteem and they felt respected when parents were involved. Improved teaching led to greater academic achievement by students. Academic achievement and student success were directed to a positive school climate, all formed a circular, reciprocal relationship (Smith, 2002).

Compacts used in conjunction with other school strategies, communities, businesses, and governments strengthened ties between families, students, and teachers; and established stronger environment for teaching and learning (Smith, 2002).

In developing a partnership, school improvement training was necessary for principals, teachers, and other staff, as well as parents. Collaborators acquired the skills needed to sustain the partnership job. Parents were involved in decisions regarding children's schooling. Schools opened options for parents and became involved individually and collectively, when necessary. Parents made decisions about goals and standards for children and schools (Brown, 1999).

Praise of parent involvement in the schools has been seen to be extremely beneficial over the years. Greenwood and Hickman (1991) cited numerous studies, primarily focusing on elementary school years, found that relationships between parent involvement and such student variables as: academic achievement, student sense of well-being, student attendance, student attitude, homework readiness, grades, and educational aspirations. Role activity for involvement incorporates parents' beliefs about what they should do in relation to their children's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Studies on programs in early childhood, elementary,

middle, and high schools indicate that efforts to improve student outcomes are more effective when the family is actively involved (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Parent involvement is an important factor in a student's educational success all the way to the high school level (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Henderson, 1987).

M. Levels & Types of Parental Involvement

When parents are involved in schools, they are participating in many different ways, including classroom volunteering, helping with homework, communicating through meetings or phone calls, and attending school programs in which their children perform (Baker, 1997). Research indicates that there are benefits: parents feel more connected to the school and are more likely to evaluate teachers more highly, while teachers feel more comfortable asking them to participate with their children in at-home activities (Epstein, 1991).

Research showed that there is a decline in parental involvement once the child reaches the middle and high school levels. There are not many studies of parental involvement at this level; however, they do reinforce the value of parental involvement at this stage in students' educational careers. Rumberger and colleagues show that dropout rates are higher for children whose families are less involved in their education (Rumberger et al., as cited in Henderson & Berla, 1997).

Flaxman and Inger (1992) have identified three ways in which parents can become involved in schooling: through direct involvement in school management and choice and by being present in the schools; through participation in special parenting training programs; and through family resource and support programs. Table 3 provides examples.

There are various ways that parents can volunteer at their child's school.

Table 3

Examples of Parent Involvement

At the Preschool and Elementary Levels

- Tell stories.
- Listen to children read; read to them.
- Help contact parents about school or classroom activities.
- Reproduce materials for teachers.
- Help at outdoor playtimes/recesses.
- Prepare bulletin boards.
- Assist with arts/ crafts projects.
- Visit with children; show adults care.
- Dramatize a story.
- Help non-English-speaking students.
- Share information about occupations.
- Help with special programs/events.
- Help with field trips.
- Teach a skill.
- Gather resource materials.

Elementary Ideas

- Lead flashcard drills.
- Reinforce spelling/vocabulary cards.
- Help in the library.
- Help with handwriting/motor skills.
- Give one-on-one assistance.
- Work with gifted children.

Working Parents

- Participate in Saturday field trips.
- Participate in Saturday work parties.
- Serve as an after-school resource.
- Work on the school newsletter.
- Help with weekend fundraising projects.
- Make educational games at home to be used at school.
- Collect materials needed for arts and crafts projects.
- Place a school volunteer poster at work.
- Find others who can help at school.

- Take students on a tour of the parent's place of employment.
- Help with a potluck dinner.
- Type materials for school or classroom.

Note. Source: Stein & Thorkildsen (1999, pp. 54-55)

Researchers have many different themes defining parental involvement. The best-known theme is Epstein's (1995) six types of parental involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community.

Davies (1991) has identified three themes for parental involvement: providing success for all children, serving the whole child, and sharing responsibility

The National PTA Board of Directors (1993) has endorsed three types of parental involvement:

- parents as the first educators in the home,
- parents as partners with the schools, and,
- parents as advocates for all children and youth in society.

Research on parental involvement can be categorized in four ways: viewing parents as teachers, parents as partners, parents as decision makers, and parents as advocates.

Types of parent involvement are fundamentally dependent on how parent involvement is defined. As Fen and Chen (2001) pointed out, various definitions abound in relevant literature, including parental behaviors and parenting practices. If the diverse definitions of parental involvement in literature are considered, Pomerantz et al.'s (2007) definition is, by far, the most clear and inclusive, as it posits two distinct categories of parental involvement: school- based parent involvement and home-based parent involvement.

According to Pomerantz et al. (2007), school-based parent involvement "represents practices on the part of parents that require their actually making contact with

schools," which may include participating in school meetings and events, volunteering in school, and communicating with teachers (p. 374). Home- based parent involvement "represents parents' practices related to school that often take place outside of school" (p. 374), which may include helping children with school-related work (e.g., homework, course selection), communicating about school or academic matters with their children, and involving children in cognitive/intellectual activities (e.g., reading books, touring a library or museum).

Parent involvement appears to decrease as children move from elementary to the middle and high school levels. Parents are more involved in their daughters' schools than their sons' schools (Carter & Wojkiewicz, 2000) and become less involved as their children age (Crosnoe, 2001; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Eccles & Harold 1996; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). DePlanty et al. (2007) found, for example, that junior high school students reported school-based parent involvement was not as important to their learning as home-based involvement. Their teachers also believed that parent involvement at home, such as emphasizing the importance of education, was more important than parental involvement in school (DePlanty et al., 2007). School-based parent involvement fades as students move up through the grades and gives parents the opportunity and room to get involved at home in various ways.

Parents may increase their involvement in their adolescent child's education by giving advice on other appropriate academic issues, such as what courses to take and how to prepare for college. Parents are more likely to take this form of involvement when their adolescent children ask for opinions on various issues, including academic matters (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005). Inspired by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995)

model of the parent-involvement process, the authors examined four psychological constructs of parent involvement - parent's role construction, self-efficacy, perceived teacher invitations, and perceived student invitations predict parent involvement in their adolescents' schooling. The survey results indicated that parents of seventh graders were more likely to be involved at home when they perceived a student invitation in an academic domain, like being asked to read something that their adolescent had written, and involved at school when parents felt it was part of their parenting responsibilities, when they perceived a teacher invitation, and when they perceived a student invitation. The parents of eighth grade students were most likely to be involved in school work at home when they perceived a student invitation in an academic or social domain, such as talking about current events and when parents felt confident that they could help the student, and involved at school when they perceived the teacher invitation to be involved and when they perceived student invitation in a social domain. The results further indicated that the parents of ninth grade students were more likely to be involved at home when they perceived a student request in an academic domain and involved at school when parents felt it was part of their parenting responsibilities. The participants in this study were 770 parents of secondary-level students in grades seven through twelve who were enrolled in five public schools in both rural and urban areas. The majority of the participants were mothers who worked outside of the home. This study suggested that different strategies to encourage parental involvement should be undertaken, depending on the ultimate goal of increased involvement at home or at school.

Another type of parental involvement is Communicating. The purpose of effective communication is to design forms of school-to-home communications about school

programs. Teachers should have a conference with every parent at least once a year, with follow-ups as needed. Schools need to have translators available for the parents of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students, as needed. Teachers should send home weekly or monthly folders of student work for review and comments. Student report cards should be picked up by the parent/student, with conferences held to discuss ways to improve grades. The school and the teachers should have a regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, programs, and activities in the school. Parents should also be provided with clear information on all school policies, programs, reforms, and transitions. Some challenges in communicating may be to review the readability, clarity, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and non-print communications. Parents need to be able to clearly understand the communications from the school. Considerations should be given to parents that do not speak English well, do not read well, or need large print. Schools should review the quality of communications (newsletters, report cards, conference schedules, etc.) In order to improve communication between school and home, a clear two-way channel of communication from home to school and from school to home, needs to be established.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) has been a very controversial legislation since its inception. Critics charge that NCLB has led educators to shift resources away from important non tested subjects, such as social studies, art, and music, and to focus instruction within mathematics and reading on the relatively narrow set of topics that are most heavily represented on the high-stakes tests (Koretz, 2008; Rothstein et al., 2008). In the extreme, some suggest that high-stakes may lead school personnel to intentionally manipulate test scores (Jacob & Levin, 2003). No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has caused

the various states to take a greater role and responsibility in the monitoring and maintaining of academic standards. School districts and communities are more aware and watchful of the increase of funds needed to educate children. There is limited funding, a lack of high-quality teachers, discontinuation of related services, and crowded classrooms. No Child Left Behind requires all public schools receiving federal funds to administer a state-wide standardized test annually to all students. All students are to take the same test under the same conditions. The schools that receive Title I funding through the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 must make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in test scores (e.g., each year, fifth graders must do better on standardized tests than the previous year's fifth graders).

NCLB is intended to increase the quality of education for students attending public schools. The quality of education will be increased by:

- Requiring schools to improve their performance
- Improve quality of instruction by requiring schools to implement "scientifically based research" practices in the classroom, parent involvement programs, and professional development activities for those students that are not encouraged or expected to attend college
- Supports early literacy through the Early Reading First Initiative
- Emphasizes reading, language arts, mathematics, and science achievement as "core academic subjects"

When first examining the NCLB Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002), it gives the impression that the government is assuring us of equity for children whose educational needs have not been met. The legislation requires schools to produce proof that each

school's students and each subgroup of students within a school are making annual achievement gains - measured as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) - toward full proficiency in math and reading. There are penalties for failure to achieve AYP that apply to every subgroup, including (but not limited to) students with identified exceptionalities, children who are English Language Learners, and children who identify as African American. If any subgroup in a school fails to meet AYP, the school will be considered "in need of improvement," and each subsequent year the school fails to show evidence of meeting AYP, there will be increased penalties and punishments imposed. Many parents and members of the popular media, therefore hail NCLB as a way to counter racism and discrimination they have observed in the schools of our poorest children and our children of Color (Duffy et al., 2008).

After the enactment of the No Child left Behind Act in 2001, the U.S. Department of Education reported higher involvement in children's education among parents with children enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade. The department's subgroup analysis of rates of parents' participation also showed that more parents of kindergarten-through-12th-grade girls (90%) attended general meetings in 2007 than did parents of boys (89%), more parents with graduate levels of education (96%) attended than did parents with less than a high school education (70%), more parents with more than $75,000 in family income (95%) attended than did parents with $5,000 or less in income (76%), and more Caucasian parents (91%) attended than did Hispanic parents (87%) (U. S. Department of Education, 2007). The statistics from this research on parents' school involvement indicates a positive trend and suggest that there are great benefits to be

gained from parents' involvement in their children's learning progress and academic achievement.

Parent involvement was important for student learning, not only in public schools, but also in private and charter schools, as well (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Parent involvement promoted better student attendance, increased graduation rates, decreased discipline reports, and increased achievement scores in reading and mathematics (Hiatt-Michael, 2001).

Most parents are involved when their children are in preschool or elementary school; then, parent involvement tends to wane as children move up through the grades (Crosnoe, 2001; Downs, 2001; Drummond & Stipek, 2004). As children move from elementary to secondary school, they shift their interests outward to peer groups and outside-family groups, leaving parents to take a more covert form of school-related involvement, such as advising at home (Crosnoe, 2001; Downs, 2001; Drummond & Stipek, 2004). Parent involvement may become more subtle, and the effects of parental involvement are revealed slowly, as parental involvement takes a long time to come to fruition (Keith et al., 1993). Parent involvement as a connector between home and school can be extended to adolescents as a group, where there is little empirical research with regard to it serving as a "protective factor, facilitating academic success" (Izzo et al., 1999, p. 820).

Communication is one of the vital forms of parental involvement. This form of parental involvement can easily be improved by using multiple means: a school policy handbook, telephone numbers for key personnel, a school-year calendar, regular newsletters (sent by mail to make sure all parents receive it), a voice-mail system that

includes all teachers, and having a website for the school and classrooms. Two-way communication can be encouraged by giving parents the opportunity to contribute information in various ways: allow them to complete forms about their children; responding to surveys to help in identifying their needs, interests, and attitudes about the school; providing their perspectives on personnel decisions; and helping to develop plans for school improvement.

Epstein (1987) reported that schools which favor parental involvement outperform schools with little parental involvement (Pena, 2000). Parental involvement is a valuable underestimated resource for schools that is left untapped. By utilizing parental involvement, we can provide interest in school, increase student achievement, instill a sense of pride, and bring about a sense of community and togetherness.

The traditional definition of parental involvement includes activities in the school and home. Parent involvement can take many forms, such as volunteering at the school, communicating with teachers, assisting with homework, and attending school events, such as performances or parent-teacher conferences (Epstein et al., 2009; Hill & Taylor, 2004). However, viewed through this lens, African American and Latino families demonstrate low rates of parental involvement (Simoni & Adelman, 1993).

Family Involvement

Family involvement can be defined as the parents' or caregivers' investment in the education of their children. Family involvement can be defined as participating in activities such as:

- Volunteering at school
- Helping children with their homework

- Attending school functions
- Visiting the child's classroom
- Sharing expertise or experience with the class through guest speaking; and
- Taking on leadership roles in the school and participating in the decision-making process.

These types of involvement are often chosen by different types of parents. Factors that affect the ways in which families are involved (ways in which they demonstrate their investment) differ and are often based on the number of sociopolitical factors. The sociopolitical factors may include socioeconomic status, parents' own past experience with schools and schooling, and so forth. Regardless of how they are able to demonstrate their investment, the notion that families play a very important role in creating a school that provides a nurturing and safe environment for their children is becoming widely accepted (LaRocque et al., 2011).

The main objective of NCLB (NCLB, 2002) has been to show substantial improvements in student achievement.

The No Child Left Behind Act has brought parental involvement to the attention of the nation. This legislation has established parents' rights to know what is happening in schools and their child's academic achievement. Schools now have to move beyond talking about parental involvement to actually actively facilitating involvement. Teachers have acknowledged that they have very little training and lack the strategies to work with parents. Teachers that have some skill in this area have admitted that they have limited skills in managing difficult parents, instead of strategies that foster more meaningful involvement. Families may want to build positive relationships with school personnel;

however, they are not always sure of how to become involved in a way that will be valued by school personnel. This ambiguity also leads to decreased involvement from parents with diverse backgrounds. Because of the uncertainty, this often leads to decreased involvement from parents with a diverse background. There are other factors that inhibit decreased involvement from parents. One of the factors is not knowing how to become involved.

Logistical barriers often prohibit effective parental involvement for some parents. Factors, such as employment issues where the parent is paid hourly with inadequate health insurance and other benefits, does not allow for them to participate in the amount and in the various ways of other parents. Some parents have salaried positions and more stable employment than lower income parents. These parents are often frustrated that they are unable to advocate for their children and participate in school activities and conferences. For these reasons these parents are often viewed as difficult (LaRocque et al., 2011). The perception of these parents was often ignored, because they were not seen as being active in their child's education, or as lacking knowledge of the day-to-day educational happenings at the school. These parents feel they are alienated, because their insights are dismissed and this tends to make them withdraw from the advocacy role. Parents need to take on the role of advocates for their children, based on their child's individual educational experiences.

Parental involvement is of great importance for children with disabilities enrolled in special education classrooms. These students are more vulnerable to their rights being violated (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). These students are in greater need for their parents to serve as advocates for their rights (LaRocque et al., 2011). There is an

overrepresentation of diverse students in special education. This includes low-income and ethnic minorities. Parental involvement is imperative for these students. Unfortunately, low-income and ethnic minority parents are the least likely to participate in school-related activities. These particular students are in great need to have their parents advocate for them. One barrier to participation may be the cultural viewpoint of some of the families who are from diverse backgrounds. An example might be that teachers are viewed as being the expert with specialized skills and questioning them might be considered disrespectful. Therefore, teachers need to develop strategies so that families are able to advocate effectively, so their child's needs can be met. To alleviate this miscommunication of varying viewpoints, ongoing communication is necessary to help build trust between parents and school personnel. When teachers are working with students with a disability or any other student in the regular educational setting, cultural considerations should be taken into account.

The differences in the roles that parents and teachers play are clearly different. It is paramount that these roles are clearly defined. Roles have been categorized as parent focused, school focused, and partnership focused (LaRocque et al., 2011). These classifications may have different meanings to parents and teachers. For parents it means that they are have the primary responsibility in the education of their children, school focused involvement puts the primary responsibility on the school, partnership focused involvement suggests that parents and teachers work together and are collectively responsible.

Changing Definitions of Parental Involvement

There are many definitions of parental involvement. Davies (1991) has defined parental involvement from a shifting perspective. As society restructures itself, as communities restructure themselves, and as schools restructure, parental involvement also is being transformed.

Table 4

Paradigms of Parental Involvement

Old Paradigm	**New Paradigm**
From:	To:
Parent Focus	Family Focus
Family	Community Agencies
School	Home/Neighborhood
Eager parents	Hard –to reach Families
Teacher/Administrator	Family
Priorities	Agendas
Deficit View of Urban Families	Emphasis on Inherent Strengths of Families

Suggestions for Being an Involved Parent

There are several activities that parents can do to become further involved in their child's educational experience. Parents can read with their children and talk with them about the books and stories you read. Parents can also help their children work on homework assignments. Parents can assist by organizing and monitoring a child's time. Students can be tutored at home by utilizing materials and instructions provided by the

classroom teacher. Attending and actively supporting school activities increases parental involvement. The Epstein Model details six types of parental involvement: positive home conditions, communication, involvement at school, home learning activities, shared decision making within in school, and community partnerships (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein et al., 2009) The Epstein Model contains many positive aspects. It encompasses the traditional definitions of parental involvement, and recognizes the role of parents in the home including supporting educational efforts and providing an environment where educational activities are supported and encouraged (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein et al., 2009)

Parents can volunteer in classrooms, on fieldtrips, or through special events to become actively engaged in the school community. This can also be accomplished by attending parent and school meetings Parental involvement should continue at the high school and middle school level. Students need that continuous support to be successful. Parents need to talk to their children about school on a daily basis and be an advocate for their child to ensure that their needs are being met. If a school-related problem arises, parents should address it quickly by requesting a meeting with the teacher. Teachers should also be advised of any issues at home that may affect the child's performance. It is imperative that parents vote in school elections, know board members, and be familiar with school and state policies. These factors affect the quality of their child's education. Parents can demonstrate the importance of education by taking a class at a community college or adult education program. Parents should encourage their child on successes and support them on poor performances. Another way parents can support their child is by participating in the PTA (Parent Teacher Organization) or other parent organizations,

school advisory councils, or committees. Research has indicated that great schools have effective partnerships with parents (Davies, 1996); therefore, school, family, and community partnerships are critical components in educating students.

Increasing the Level of Parent Involvement

There is an abundance of information available about how to increase levels of parental involvement. Cooper et al. (2010) have identified 10 factors that seem central to successful urban programs:

1) leadership,
2) accessibility,
3) time,
4) cultural awareness,
5) active teacher roles,
6) continuity,
7) public recognition,
8) broad-based support,
9) adolescent focus, and
10) recognition of parents as people.

Fredericks and Rasinski (1990) identified 14 ways to involve parents. They are:

1) flood them with information,
2) make a school-wide effort,
3) recognize students and parents,
4) involve students in recruiting parents,
5) conduct participatory projects that include the entire family,

6) recruit community members,
7) make the classrooms and the school a comfortable place,
8) use the telephone as an instrument of good news,
9) find out why parents are not involved,
10) have a variety of event scheduling plans,
11) operate a parent hotline,
12) use community members to endorse the program,
13) videotape programs for parents, and
14) provide support services like babysitting. (pp. 424-425)

Parents want to be equal partners in the education process (Lindle, 1989). Also, parents do like schools providing activities for them. They feel appreciated when the needs of working parents are recognized. Parents acknowledge the convenience of parent-teacher conferences that are arranged around work schedules, but they truly do not care for the conferences, themselves, due to the formality and limited time typically allotted (Lindle, 1989). Parents who perceive that they are receiving frequent and positive messages from teachers demonstrate a tendency to get more involved in their children's education than do parents who do not perceive that they are receiving such communication (Ames et al., 1993).

Teachers' Perceptions of Parental Involvement

Teacher perceptions of parental involvement patterns have been found to be especially important predictors of student outcomes (Bakker et al., 2007; Barnard, 2004). For instance, using a sample of 1,165 students from the Chicago Longitudinal study, Barnard (2004) found that only teacher ratings of parental involvement in elementary

school predicted student outcomes in high school. Controlling for background characteristics, elementary students of higher versus lower participating parents were less likely to drop out and more likely to graduate from high school. Specifically, students whose parents were rated by teachers as having average or better participation for three or more years were 96% more likely to graduate from high school than students of parents never rated as having average or better participation. Parents ratings of their own involvement were largely unrelated to student outcomes in high school.

Teacher ratings of parent involvement commonly focus on the amount of contact parents have with school personnel (e.g.; attending meetings, volunteering, and visiting the school). A second equally important aspect of teacher perceptions is their comfort with parents (Miller-Johnson & Maumary-Gremaud, 1995). Comfort, sometimes called "bonding" or "alliance," refers to the quality of the relationship, not just the frequency of contact. In particular, teacher comfort with parents includes how aligned the teacher perceives the parents' goals and values and values to be his or her own (Miller-Johnson & Maumary-Gremaud, 1995).

Although most studies have examined levels of contact or comfort separately as individual variables, their co-occurrence may provide even more important information about relationship patterns (McCoach et al., 2010). For example, some parents may be characterized as having low contact with schools, but still be perceived as having a comfortable relationship. In a recent study (Stormont et al., 2013) found this pattern of teacher-rated parent involvement to be associated with the most favorable student outcomes. Contrarily, some parents may have frequent contact with teachers, but are perceived as being intrusive and unhelpful. Two recent studies have found that teacher

perceptions of the combination of these two dimensions of contact and comfort are strong correlates of student success (McCoach et al., 2010; Stormant et al., 2013).

Parents' Perceptions

The importance of families playing an active role in students' education has been well documented (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). What is not defined is exactly what that role should be. Because of this, parents cannot be viewed as a homogeneous group because they do not participate in the same way. There is a need to stop thinking that parents are the same, with the same needs, and that children should be treated the same. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) brought parent involvement to the forefront. This act gave parents the right to know what is happening in their child's school. Teachers have admitted that they lack some skills that are necessary to manage difficult parents, rather than needed strategies that foster meaningful involvement. Parents have also described that it is difficult to build positive relationships with school personnel. They are not sure of how to become involved in a way that the school staff will value.

Another factor for lack of parental involvement is logistical barriers. Families have competing factors such as: employment issues, they may have jobs that pay hourly with inadequate health insurance and other benefits that do not allow them to participate in the amount and in the ways that salaried, more stable employment would allow. Their jobs often limit the ability for them to become involved during the school hours. Parents are often frustrated because they are unable to attend school conferences and activities. These parents may be seen as being difficult, due to their lack of parental involvement. Parent involvement is to allow parents to form a working relationship with the school and

teachers. Teachers often perceive parents from diverse backgrounds as uninvolved and disinterested (Carlisle et al., 2005). Such perceptions are inaccurate. In many instances, trust has been lost. Parents may be interested and committed to the education of their children; however, their roles and efforts may not be so apparent. Teachers expect more direct participation. It might be a more conducive relationship to parents if teachers request specific forms of involvement by letting parents know exactly what is expected. By doing this, logistical barriers and cultural considerations can be addressed and resolved. Studies have shown that parents more often respond to specific requests from teachers (Fields-Smith, 2007). The teacher not knowing the parents' individual circumstances may lead to fear of encouraging parents to participate in schools.

Administrators' Perceptions

In addition to the individual parent characteristics, it is important to look at the characteristics of the child, the school, community norms, and cultural beliefs. There are many different individuals that need to be engaged to form a successful parental involvement program. This makes it problematic to place all the responsibility on one individual. Research has indicated that great schools have effective partnerships with parents (Davies, 1996); therefore, school, family, and community partnerships are critical components in educating students.

The following are examples to consider:

- School administrators can facilitate the development of a parental involvement committee.
- Teachers can receive professional development in communication skills necessary to work with families.

- Colleges of education can include the teaching of how educators can successfully include parents in education.
- Support networks can provide the forum for parents to motivate each other.
- Students can play a role in getting their parents excited about school happenings.
- Businesses and community organizations can provide financial and service support so that parents, teachers and students can spend time together. Through two-way communication, the roles and expectations can become clearer.

Epstein (1995) describes communicating with parents as one of the six major types of parental involvement practices critical to establishing strong working relationships between teachers and parents. Cultivating the teacher-parent relationship is also considered vital to the development of schools as learning communities (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Effective communication is beneficial to create a viable school-home partnership and increase parental involvement. Teachers are highly skilled in the art of teaching; they also need the knowledge and skill set to effectively communicate with their parent communities.

School improvement requires the collaboration of school and home. Schools should not be afraid of nor promote parental involvement. This partnership can only help students to succeed. It is a mutual process that should allow each party to listen and understand the other's perspective. By exhibiting to parents that their voices matter, the schools empower them. Communicating with parents enables teachers to develop

successful strategies for working with all students. Schools face the challenge of providing the achievement of all students. There are many factors that affect the educational achievement of children. Some researchers suggested that the missing link in educational equity, in terms of educational achievement, is parental involvement (Columbo, 1995). Schools need the active support of the community and schools. Even well intended schools cannot educate every child on its own. School improvement requires the collaboration of various interest groups, families, community groups, and educators (Epstein et al., 2009).

In the study titled, "Improving Perceptions of Parental Involvement Patterns: Findings From a Group Randomized Trial," the researchers examined the effect of the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management program (IY TCM) on the teacher's perceptions of contact and comfort with parents. IY TCM was a six-day teacher training program focused on improving teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships and increasing teacher use of effective classroom management strategies. The goal of IY TCM is to encourage teachers to examine their assumptions and biases about parents and to develop and/or repair relationships with challenging students and families. The Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Program (IY TCM) study examined the effects of the IY TCM on teacher perceptions of contact and comfort with parents. A person-centered approach was used. The researchers conducted latent profile analyses (LPA) on teacher ratings of parent contact and comfort at baseline and follow-up, to identify profiles of involvement. One hundred and five classrooms with 1,818 students were randomly assigned to an IY TCM or to a control, business as usual condition. Teacher perceptions of parent involvement patterns have been especially important

predictors of student outcomes (Bakker et al., 2007; Barnard, 2004). Key constructs measured included teacher ratings of parents and student behaviors, direct observations in the classroom, and a standardized academic achievement test. Four patterns of involvement were identified at baseline and at follow-up; parents of students with academic and behavior problems were most likely to be in classes with the least adaptive involvement patterns. Intervention classroom parents were significantly more likely to transition to more adaptive teacher-rated parenting profiles at follow-up, compared to control classroom parents. This study found that teacher training can alter teacher perceptions of parent involvement patterns. The primary outcome of this study focused on teacher perceptions of involvement only. Evidence has shown that these perceptions are a meaningful educational outcome. Prior studies have suggested that teacher perceptions of parent involvement might provide the best indicators of future student success and so are an extremely relevant target of intervention. The literature shows that longitudinal, independent links between teacher perceptions of parent involvement and educational outcomes through high school (Bakker et al., 2007; Barnard, 2004; Izzo et al., 1999; Miedel & Reynolds, 2000) suggested that IY TCM's significant impact on parental involvement profiles may lead to long-term educational benefit for students.

Parental involvement in education is a valued outcome among educators. Teacher's beliefs and perspectives toward parents are likely to affect their interactions with students. Altering these perceptions to be more positive can promote student learning, growth, and development. The findings from this study suggested that IY TCM provides one method for fostering greater parent involvement in education that may benefit students with academic and behavior problems. Parent involvement in education

is a very beneficial outcome in the education of children. What teachers believe about the attitudes of parents can affect their interactions with students. By altering these perceptions in a more favorable manner it can promote positive student learning and development. The compelling literature showing longitudinal, independent links between teacher perceptions of parent involvement and educational outcomes through high school (Bakker et al., 2007; Barnard, 2004; Izzo et al; 1999; Miedel & Reynolds, 2000) suggested that IY TCM's significant impact on parental involvement profiles may lead to long-term educational benefit for students.

New Beliefs About Parent Involvement

New beliefs are emerging about parents and families (Liontos, 1992). These beliefs include the following:

- all families have strengths,
- parents can learn new techniques,
- parents have important perspectives about their children,
- most parents really care about their children,
- cultural differences are both valid and valuable, and
- many family forms exist and are legitimate. (pp. 30-31)

According to Vandergrift and Greene (1992), parent involvement has two independent components: parents as supporters and parents as active partners. Focusing on one of these components alone is not a sufficient approach to parent involvement. Parents can be active, yet not supportive of the education process. They also can be supportive, but not active at the school. Of course, the ideal is the parent who is both

supportive and active; but this often is difficult when both parents work outside the home, or when there is only one parent in the home.

Parental Involvement and Parental Engagement

This model addresses the progression from parental involvement with schools to parental engagement with children's learning. According to Goodall and Montgomery (2014) this model is necessary, due to the increasing importance placed on, and understood about, parental engagement with children's learning, and the difficulty schools have reported in supporting this engagement.

This is a continuum model because the process is not a simple progression. Because there are different activities and different cohorts of parents, schools are often found at different points of the continuum. One reason parental engagement is never "complete," never something that can be ticked off a list and considered "done" is that each new academic year brings new cohorts of parents; children change as they age, and parental engagement with their learning needs to adapt to these changes (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). This continuum shifts from parental involvement with the school to parental engagement with children's learning. There is a shift away from the relationship between parents and schools, to a focus on the relationship between parents and their children's learning.

Barriers to Parental Involvement

Williams and Sanchez (2011) have identified four areas that are barriers to involvement: time poverty, lack of access, lack of financial resources, and lack of awareness. Barriers can originate from beliefs, perceptions and attitudes of teachers and administrators. Lack of commitment to parental involvement, confusion about the role of

teachers, concerns about territory and turf, doubts about being able to work with at-risk parents and mistaken beliefs about at-risk parents have all been found to be barriers for schools and teachers. Other barriers include low teacher expectations for at-risk children, schools assuming a passive role, schools not helping parents feel welcome and communications between parents and he school that focus on the negative (Liontos, 1992).

Barriers that have been artificially constructed by parents can exist also. Feelings of inadequacy, failure, poor self-worth, suspicion or anger at the school can create such barriers. Some parents have a “leave it to the school” attitude; others have logistical problems; and some have economic, emotional, or time constraints to handle (Liontos, 1992).

There are also cultural barriers to parental involvement (Liontos, 1992). Some Asian parents may feel that it is disrespectful, for example, to talk to because it looks like they are checking up on them (Choi et al., 2015). Minority parents also may feel intimidated and awkward when approaching school staff. Many times, minority parents are not invited to participate in involvement activities (Choi et al., 2015).

Parental preferences are not necessarily what school people think they are. Parents do not like to deal with school staff who are overly businesslike, who appear patronizing or who talk down to them (Lindle, 1989). Problems at school also can become a barrier. For example, it has been found that parents who become aware of problems or opportunities when it is too late to act upon them tend to blame the school (Columbo, 1995).

It is difficult to avoid problems between teachers and students. Lindle (1989) has found that when parents find out about these skirmishes between students and teachers with no information from the teacher, they become angry and are slow to forget. Specific behaviors on the part of the school staff may annoy or unnecessarily irritate parents. Teacher-parent disagreements have been found to increase the seniority, training, and formality of the teacher (Wagenaar, 1986, as cited in Lindle, 1989).

It is important to remember when making efforts to increase the level of parent involvement that parents should not be thought of as deficient. Parents should be pulled into the process of attaining goals related to school success. A philosophy of parent involvement should be developed and an array of activities should be designed to bring parents and teachers together. Finally, it is important to have activities designed specifically for involving hard-to-reach parents (Swap, 1990).

An important fact to keep in mind when attempting to strengthen a parent involvement program is that it may take considerable effort to get low-income parents involved (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Here are some suggestions to help overcome this barrier:

- have regular meetings to discuss homework, behavior and curriculum;
- conduct special parenting skills seminars;
- helps parents reinforce reading and math skills in children;
- teach parents how to help kids with home study;
- encourage parent volunteerism;
- encourage parents to become educated themselves;
- make opportunities for students and parents to learn together; and

- offer community education classes to get parents to come to the school. (p. 6)

The role of parenting also includes the role of educator. It routinely encompasses parents and caregivers as being a child's first and most interested teacher. This role does not end when the child enters school; families play a critical role in the education of their children. When parents, school, and caregivers work together collaboratively, it creates a partnership that supports every aspect of academic achievement at school. Increased parental involvement in their child's education has many positive implications, including increased achievement levels (Epstein, 1994). Despite the continued efforts by educators, achievement levels are not consistent across students. Students from diverse backgrounds, such as African American, Native American, and Hispanic-typically lag behind their peers in terms of achievement (Barbarin et al., 2005). Researchers have various opinions to explain this disparity. One suggestion is that the education system offers different educational opportunities for students based on race, gender, religion, social class, language and ethnicity. Since student bodies have become more diverse over the years, schools are faced with greater challenges in meeting the needs of all students.

One challenge that schools are faced with is ensuring the academic achievement of all students. There are many factors that affect the educational achievement of students. Some researchers suggested that the missing link in educational equity, in terms of educational achievement, is parental involvement (Columbo, 1995). They need the active support of community and family. School improvement requires the collaboration of various interest groups - families, community groups, and educators (Epstein et al., 2009). These various groups sometimes have concerns and issues on how things should be handled. They have different viewpoints on what is the best way to meet the needs of

the children. In order for school improvement efforts to be successful, these groups have to be able to communicate with each other effectively. Families, community groups, and educators each have a role to play in the educational achievement and success of students. It is important that each of these constituents have a clear understanding of what each other's role entails. The importance of families playing an active role in students' education has been well documented (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). What is often unclear is what the role should be. Parents do not participate the same ways; some are more visible in school than others. The idea that parents are the same, with the same needs, and that their children should be treated the same is false. Since heightened levels of parental involvement in schools and the education process of their children is positively associated with increasing educational achievement, it is imperative to develop ways to increase parental involvement.

The population of our society is becoming increasingly diverse; therefore, the student body in public schools is also becoming increasingly diverse. However, teachers in these schools remain predominately White and middle class (Choi et al., 2015). Because of these cultural differences, it presents a risk for real and perceived cultural misunderstandings. Theses cultural differences are diverse and range from something so simple as personal space to more complex issues, such as perceptions of authority figures or a person's outlook on what is considered sharing behaviors. Think about the child that has been reared in a culture where the belief is that touching is frequent and welcomed, there is no personal ownership of materials, and that each person has the authority only over themselves; a teacher that unfamiliar with these cultural beliefs may see this child as a thief who has no respect for authority or lacks social boundaries. Due to these cultural

conflicts, situations are sometimes heightened when teachers interact with parents who are from a different background than their own. This can become even more challenging when we consider the critical nature and implications for positive parent-teacher interactions. These ambiguous interactions may affect the ways in which family involvement is perceived by teachers and parents.

Fredericks and Rasinski (1990, pp. 424-425) have identified 14 ways to involve parents. They are:

1. flood them with information,
2. make a school-wide effort,
3. recognize students and parents,
4. involve students in recruiting parents,
5. conduct participatory projects that include the entire family,
6. recruit community members,
7. make the classrooms and the school a comfortable place,
8. use the telephone as an instrument of good news,
9. find out why parents are not involved,
10. have a variety of event scheduling plans,
11. operate a parent hotline,
12. use community members to endorse the program,
13. videotape programs for parents, and
14. provide support services like babysitting.

According to Lindle (1989) parents want to be equal partners in the education process. Also, parents do like schools providing activities for them. They also like it when the

needs of working parents are acknowledged. Parents like it when parent-teacher conferences are arranged around work schedules, but they truly do not care for the conferences themselves, due to the formality and limited time typically allotted (Lindle, 1989). Parents who perceive that they are receiving frequent and positive messages from teachers demonstrate a tendency to get more involved in their children's education than do parents who do not perceive that they are receiving such communication (Ames et al., 1993).

Parental Involvement has been praised as an effective strategy to increase student achievement; however, schools still struggle with how to effectively involve parents of color and low in-come families. The authors of "Can the Epstein Model of Parental Involvement Work in a High-Minority, High-Poverty Elementary School? A Case Study" conducted a case study of an urban elementary school that uses parental involvement practices that are stipulated in this model. The article analyzed the outcome of a case study that looked at parental involvement strategies in a school that is high-poverty and high-minority. Parent involvement was used as an approach to increase the academic achievement of its students. The school used the Epstein Model of Parental Involvement as its guiding framework. Parental involvement is seen as an effective strategy to ensure student success, as evidenced by several correlational studies, with overarching benefit of parental involvement being increased academic performance (Barnard, 2004; Desimone, 1999; Hill & Craft, 2003; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Zellman & Waterman, 1998). There are other positive effects, as stated by the current literature. For example, increased parent involvement leads to early social competence, which ultimately leads to academic success (Hill & Craft, 2003). Similarly, parent involvement also increases social capital,

or networks designed to leverage resources (Hill & Taylor; 2006; Lee & Bowen, 2006). As online resources increase, students can access additional support and resources, such as tutoring, enrichment opportunities, or access to curriculum extensions beyond school in order to be successful academically. Furthermore, because of the increased academic success, as parents become more involved, parental involvement has been identified as a strategy to decrease the achievement gap (Jeynes, 2007; Lee & Bowen; 2006, Zellman & Waterman, 2010).

The case study school has a majority African American, Latino, and high poverty population and struggles with low student academic achievement. Parental involvement at this school includes not only working with the parents but also with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and community mentors who serve as "parents" within the school. The case study school knew the importance of parental involvement and utilized the Epstein Model. In the past the school has put into place many parental involvement strategies including meaningful homework, family workshops, meeting the collective needs of the family, and creating and implementing a comprehensive parental involvement plan, they have been disappointed with the results in terms of low parent attendance, and student achievement. As social networks are increased, students are able to access additional support or resources, such as tutoring, enrichment opportunities, or access to curriculum (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Lee & Bowen, 2006). The research question driving this study is why does parent involvement continue to remain a struggle at the study school?

The Epstein Model was used because of its popularity in the field and used by the school as the model of parental involvement. It is the methodology used for the study. In this study the researchers defined parental involvement both in terms of traditional

strategies (attending conferences, and school events and responding to request and communications from the school) and less-traditional strategies (participating in home learning activities and parental ownership of some aspects of the school). A micro - ethnography framework, which allows for a single researcher to focus explicitly on one aspect of a larger belief system of a culture (Creswell, 1998), was used in this case study to examine the definition and operationalization of parental involvement in the study school. This study occurred in the spring semester of the 2009-2010 school year. The study school is one of the smallest schools in a large urban district in the southeastern United States. The 347 school population is 60.5% African American, 33.1% Hispanic, and 6.4 % Multi-Racial and Caucasian. The study school is considered a high-poverty school, with 92.5% of its students receiving free or reduced-price lunches. On the 2009 state end-of-year tests, 37.6% of the third-through fifth-graders were at or above grade level in reading. And, 61.8% were at or above grade level in math. Two members of the administrative team and five teachers participated in the study. These participants were selected because of their involvement in standardized testing that drives many schools' accountability and reform decisions. The school does not have a full-time counselor; therefore, teachers and administrators are the main links to parents.

Each teacher participant took part in a 45-minute, semi-structured interview. Teachers were interviewed in their classrooms during their planning period. The administrator interviews were 60 minutes long, because of their flexible schedules. Their interviews took place in their offices. The guiding question was: How do you communicate with parents and encourage involvement in the school?

The lead author (Heather A. Bower, spring semester 2009-2010 school year) conducted observations at two formal parent involvement opportunities held at the school (Bower et al., 2012). The first parent opportunity was a Parent Teacher Organization meeting, and the second was an open house in which parents were able to view projects the students had completed during a six-week unit and also interact with students and teachers. Because so few parents attended, the lead author was not able to remain totally in that role. She was often asked to directly participate or share her opinions or observations about the topic or event. The lead author analyzed transcripts for emerging themes in and areas for further examination through inductive analysis, which allows for concepts and relationships among ideas to emerge throughout the research process (Bower et al., 2012; Glesne, 2006).

Three key themes and four subthemes emerged as components of parental involvement at the study school. They were Strategies Employed (subthemes include Communication and Home Learning Activities). Frustration (subthemes include Lack of Reciprocity and Low Attendance), and Engagement. Strategies Employed describes the practices implemented at the study school. Frustration describes the lack of impact of these strategies, and Engagement describes the multiple levels of engagement among teachers and parents (Bower et al., 2012). Examination of the correlation of these three themes provides a clearer picture of the current parental involvement practices. The results indicated that the strategies of parental involvement (relationship building, advocacy, and efficacy) which could characterize effective parental involvement for people of color and low-income families were missing (Bower et al., 2012). Several strategies were employed during this study. There were: weekly reports, personal phone

calls to invite parents to school events, teachers giving parents their cell phone numbers, developing multiple home learning activities to help parents meaningfully participate in their child's academic development, individual conferences, teachers picked up students for Saturday School, and establishing regular routines for communication. The teachers also made learning packets available for parents designed to help improve their child's reading skills. The teachers provided the activities and the training for the parents to help them effectively implement the home-learning activities. The teachers held individual conferences with parents in an effort to customize and clarify information for specific students and parents (Bower et al., 2012).

The Epstein Model outlines six concrete types of family involvement behaviors: positive home conditions, communication, involvement at school, home learning activities, shared decision making within the school, and community partnerships (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein et al; 2009). By the study school implementing these strategies, they worked to invite the parents into their child's learning and also provided them with tools to be successful. Despite all these efforts by school personnel, the level of parental involvement remained low. This was a constant frustration for the school staff. Teachers were frustrated that weekly reports were not returned and request for assistance were not answered. Teachers were further frustrated by parents who questioned their methodology. Parents would write back and say, what is this? Why are they doing this? Why aren't they doing this like I was taught? There was clearly a disconnect between parent's personal experiences in school and their child's school experiences. This situation created a space for contention between teachers and families. Along with communication difficulties, parent's lack of attendance at school events led to

the greatest frustration. Parents regularly attended school performances, evening lectures on academic topics, such as end-of-grade testing, reading strategies, and homework assistance. However, attendance at Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings and more informal open houses was nearly non-existent. The PTO had only three active members, not including the English as a Second Language teacher who served as the school liaison. Her presence did enable Latina mothers to become involved in the organization. The PTO was comprised of three mothers (two African American, and one Latina), the ESL teacher, and the lead author.

The results of this study indirectly answered the research question, why does parent involvement continue to remain a struggle at the study school? The authors hypothesized that schools and teachers are not building effective relationships with parents and continue to define parental involvement through more traditional methods, as described by Bower et al. (2012): using strategies geared toward inviting parents to school-based activities, or helping parents become more involved with academics. As already demonstrated in the literature, these types of involvement activities fail to adequately cover parental involvement of low socio-economic status (SES) families and families of color.

The results of this study also suggested that the school may need to develop new parental involvement activities that will better engage the population of the school. The school needs to take into consideration the myriad of cultural differences that can affect how parents demonstrate parental involvement.

The lead author (Bower, spring semester of the 2009-2010 school year) contended that the Epstein Model may not totally capture how parents actually are or want to be

involved in their children's education. This indicated that new ways of working with parents in high-minority, high poverty schools are warranted. The school may need to explore parental involvement in concurrence with families to find out their needs and what works best for them. Parental involvement is a very difficult practice. It takes time and a lot of investment and commitment on behalf of the schools, and school staff in order to build effectual, collaborative relationships with families. Teachers and administrators should realize that cultural differences and practices, individual differences, and misunderstandings that can occur between teachers and parents and among parents themselves can impede parental involvement practices (Bower et al., 2012). Schools must reconsider their beliefs about parental involvement to focus on individual families' strengths and design a more effective parental involvement plan (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Lee & Bowen, 2006).

Summary

After review of the literature, it is important for teachers and administrations to realize that cultural differences and practices, individual differences, and misunderstandings that can occur between teachers and parents and among parents themselves can impede parental involvement practices (Bower et al., 2012). Schools must reconsider their beliefs about parental involvement to focus on individual families' strengths and design a more effective parental involvement plan (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Lee & Bowen, 2006). For some schools this may mean totally revamping their parental involvement program from purely academic roles to more collaborations with other parent groups, parent teams for school events, or presenters in classroom cultural or enrichment activities. By establishing these networks, they could not only impact

academic achievement by helping parents engage more directly with the school, but also by empowering parents to serve as supporters of each other. Implementing these activities may also help with the frustration teachers may feel in addressing parental involvement. In order to foster a positive parental involvement program, schools must bridge the cultural gap among families in order to foster these relationships with a strategy not included in existing family involvement models (Malone, 2015).

Due to decreasing resources schools are under lot of pressure, increased needs of children and the demands of the 21st century. Schools cannot do the enormous job alone to prepare our most precious resource for the future. Parents have a vested interest in the children; therefore, it is imperative that we utilize their talents and expertise in new and creative ways. Each individual school has to determine what strategy works best for involving parents to fit their needs. That way more parents can be recognized for their contributions to the education of children. This has to be a group effort with all of the parties involved in order for our students to be successful.

Chapter Three: Research and Design

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine if parental involvement helps to increase student achievement. Therefore, this study aimed to determine if parents are actively involved in their child/ children's education then there is an increase in academic success. Research has shown that if parents get involved in their child's educational process at an early age the more powerful the effects will be for that child. Parental involvement is seen as an effective strategy to ensure students' success, as evidenced by several correlational studies, with the overarching benefit of parental involvement being increased academic performance (Barnard, 2004; Desimone, 1999; Hill & Craft, 2003; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Zellman & Waterman, 1998).

Questions and Null Hypothesis

Research Question 1

How does parental involvement increase student achievement?

Research Question 2

What is the impact of the MAP Preparation Packets on student achievement?

Research Question 3

What are the parents' perceptions of their child's learning?

Research Question 4

What is the level of school involvement and communication for parents?

Null Hypothesis

There will not be a significant gain in the MAP scores of students whose parents worked with them at home with the MAP Preparation Packets.

Study Site

The research took place in a public school located in an urban school district. The school district has lost accreditation. The study took place in an elementary school Pre-K through Grade 5. This is a multi-ethnic school, multi-cultural school where there are support services for regular education students, special education, and gifted students. Based on free and reduced lunch count numbers, 70% of the school's students were considered to be at risk. The school has an after-school reading tutoring program. In order to qualify for this particular program, the student has to have scored below average on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) or qualify for free lunch.

Participants

Data were gathered through a *Qualtrics* survey. Using contact information found in school records, the guardians and parents of the students were invited to participate by mail. The parents received a letter explaining the goals of the study and an invitation to take part in an online survey. Parents were also invited to participate in person at Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings at school. Parents received an explanation of the study and signed consent forms at PTO meetings and the office of the researcher. Electronic surveys were used to collect data for this study. Parents were provided with a link to *Qualtrics* to complete the parental involvement survey. Parents that were invited to participate in this study were notified in writing and orally about the goals of the study and the data collection, analysis, and storage methods to be used in the study. Prior to the survey, every participant was asked to sign a consent form stating his or her desire to be included in the study. Each participant was also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were informed about the data collection process,

security, and storage. The survey results were password protected, available only to the researcher. The survey consisted of 29 questions. The parents were also asked to provide their child's MAP Scale Score or the Performance Level they received on the MAP Test.

The researcher was the primary source for data collection. The researcher made every attempt to limit any bias that may exist. A qualitative research approach was used to conduct this study. Creswell (1998) characterized qualitative research as meanings, a concept, a definition, metaphors, symbols and a description of things. This definition shows that qualitative research has all the necessary components that can elicit recall that can assist in problem-solving. There are several instruments that can be utilized to collect data such as: observation, interviews, open-ended questions, and field notes. These methods of data collection allow the researcher to give a full description of the research with respect to the participants. The participants' observations and focused group nature of qualitative research approach create a wider understanding of behavior. Hence, qualitative research approach provides abundant data about real people and situations (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). There are not any standard procedures for conducting research. In other words, research is not a routine activity because it "suggests mystical activity" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014, p. 141). Qualitative research has no structured procedure and relies heavily on the researchers' interpretation and ingenuity, who collects, interprets and analyses the data. It is argued that it will be not possible to conduct the same research and get the same result at any other time and place. In other words, qualitative research is not replicable, as opposed to quantitative research (Bryman, 2008, p. 391).

Using quantitative research places emphasis on numbers and figures in the collection and analysis of data. The interpretation of research findings need not be seen as

a mere coincidence (Williams, 2007, pp. 1-21). A benefit from this approach is replicability. Since the research approach basically relies on hypotheses testing, the researcher need not do intelligent guesswork, rather he would follow clear guidelines and objectives (Bryman, 2008, p. 408; Creswell, 1998, p. 4).

Threat to Validity

Reasonable efforts were made to anticipate potential issues in the process of conducting this study, there are still limitations present. The research will be using a qualitative methodology with a limited number of study participants. As a result, the response of the parents and guardians who will participate cannot be applied to other parents or guardians or to a larger population of parents or guardians. The findings of this study can only be used to better explain the experience and to better understand the individuals participating in the study. Parents giving MAP data may be faulty because they may record inaccurate information.

Summary

The goal of this research was to find out if parental involvement increases student academic achievement. The essence of educational research is to improve educational programs. Perhaps, research may be seen as an honest enterprise where reasoning, interest, critical thinking, experiences, and expertise are combined with the purpose of discovering the truth, so as to find solutions to problems confronting education through investigation and analyses. There are no standard procedures of carrying out research. In other words, research is not a routine activity because it may “suggest mystical activity” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, pp. 141-190). This chapter provided the research design and the procedure for gathering data and explained how the data were going to be analyzed. The

study school was chosen due to its lack of consistent parental involvement. Parents were emailed a link to access the *Qualtrics* survey. The teachers at the study school and Instructional Coach developed the MAP Preparation packets for the students to support them in making academic gains on the MAP assessment. Chapter Four will explain how the qualitative method of study was used to obtain the survey results.

Chapter Four: Analysis

Introduction

The analysis of data in Chapter Four will examine the relationship between parental involvement and student academic achievement. The participants in this study were the parents of third and fourth grade students that attended an elementary school in a suburban school district. The participants completed an online survey through *Qualtrics*. Parents of the study school were asked to answer a 30-question survey about parental involvement via *Qualtrics*. Eighteen parents responded to the survey.

Qualitative Results

Research Question 1: How does parental involvement increase student academic achievement?

Survey Question 1

How often do you meet with teachers in your child's school?

Of the 18 parents that took the parental involvement survey, 61% stated that they met with their child's teacher often. Whereas, 39% of the parents surveyed stated that they met with their child's teacher always.

Survey Question 9

How regularly did your child read for pleasure?

Eighteen parents were given a survey via *Qualtrics* and asked, 'how regularly did your child read for pleasure?' Seven parents stated their child read three to four times per week, nine parents stated their child read one to two times per week, and two parents responded by saying their child read once a month.

Survey Question 16

Did you volunteer at your child's school (field trips, tutor, class mom, etc.)?

Eighteen parents were asked via *Qualtrics* if they volunteered at their child's school (field trips, tutor, class mom, etc.)? Fourteen parents reported that they volunteered at their child's school for field trips, tutoring, or as a class mom. Four parents reported that they did not volunteer at their child's school for field trips, tutoring, or as a class mom, etc.

Survey Question 17

Were there workshops provided for parents to learn how to assist their child in learning activities?

Eighteen parents were asked via *Qualtrics*, were there workshops for parents to learn to assist their child in learning activities. Seventeen parents reported that there were workshops for parents to learn to assist their child in learning activities. One parent reported that there were not workshops for parents to learn to assist their child in learning activities.

Common Themes for Research Question 1

Participation, Volunteering, Reading with Children

After analyzing the above survey questions for Research Question One, the following themes emerged: participation, volunteering, and reading with children. The common themes that emerged from the research questions are that 61% of the parents surveyed stated that they met with their child's teacher often. In comparison with 39% of the parents surveyed who stated they met with their child's teacher always. This data shows that parents feel welcomed at the school. The have built a viable relationship with their child's teacher and they are able to work together as a team, so that the student

is successful academically. Another common theme was participation, volunteering, and reading with children. Seven parents stated they read with their child three to four times per week, nine parents stated that they read with their child one to two times per week in comparison to two parents who responded by saying that they read once a month with their child. Fourteen parents stated that they volunteered at their child's school for field trips, compared to four parents that did not volunteer at all at their child's school. There were workshops offered at the school for parents to show them how to assist their child in learning activities at home. Out of the 18 parents that were surveyed, 17 parents reported that there were workshops offered for parents in comparison to one parent that stated the workshops were not offered to parents.

The role of parental involvement in students' academic achievement to their child has been an important topic for society in general and educational researchers. The results from Survey Question 1 showed most of the surveyed parents participated in school activities, volunteered, and read to their child. This type of participation by parents that are engaged in their child's education can only produce positive results. These survey results show that the 18 parents that were surveyed were actively engaged in their child's education. The parents ranked participation, volunteering and reading with their child at home a priority.

Research Question 2: **What is the impact of the MAP Preparation Packets on student achievement?**

Survey Question 22

Did the MAP Preparation Packets help your child on the MAP assessments?

The MAP Preparation Packets were created by the third and fourth grade teachers at the study school. The MAP Preparation Packets gave the students the opportunity to practice, progress, and improve their academic skills. With practice, the students were supposed to gain confidence and be ready for the test.

Eighteen parents were asked via *Qualtrics,* 'did the MAP Preparation Packets help your child on the MAP assessment?' All 18 parents responded that the MAP Preparation Packets helped their child on the MAP assessment. Seventeen parents gave the highest rank of 5. One parent gave this question a rank of 4. When looking at Survey Question 22, the majority of the parents felt that the MAP Preparation Packets helped their child to be successful on the MAP Test.

Survey Question 24

How much time did you spend on the MAP Preparation Packets a week?

Eighteen parents were asked via *Qualtrics,* 'how much time did you spend on the MAP Preparation Packets per week?' Four parents spent one hour or less on the MAP Preparation Packets per week, 12 parents spent one-two hours per week, one parent spent two-three hours per week, and one parent spent three or more hours per week.

Survey Question 25

Rank the following with 5 as the highest and 1 as the lowest for what prepared your child for the MAP.

Eighteen parents were asked via *Qualtrics* to rank the following with 5 as the highest and 1 as the lowest for 'what prepared your child for the MAP? The parents were asked, how did the MAP Preparation Packets prepare their child for the MAP assessment.

They were asked to rank the preparation for the assessment 1 to 5 on how well the packets helped prepare for the MAP assessment.

5) parents felt that/MAP Preparation Packets highly prepared their child for the MAP

4) parents felt that the communication with teachers prepared their child for the MAP

3) parents felt that involvement in the school prepared their child for the MAP

2) parents felt that/helping my child with homework prepared their child for the MAP

1) parent felt that their child reading independently and/or reading with the parent prepared the child for the MAP

Common Themes from Research Question Two

Readiness

The common theme that emerged from Research Question Two was readiness. All 18 parents responded by saying that the MAP Preparation Packets helped prepare their child for the MAP assessment. Four parents spent one hour or less on the on the MAP Preparation Packets per week, in comparison to 12 parents that spent one to two hours per week. There was one parent that spent three or more hours per week assisting their child preparing for the assessment. Test preparation is a learning tool designed to help increase the academic performance on standardized tests. By teachers designing a MAP Preparation Packet for students this gave them positive reinforcement of skills that were already taught and showed how much they have learned in key academic areas.

Communication

Another theme that emerged for Research Question One was Communication. Eighteen parents gave the highest rank of 5 for communication with teachers. When comparing what parents felt about what best prepared their child for the MAP (helping

with homework). Communication emerged as a theme, because parents need to be able to openly communicate with their child's teacher. When the school to home lines of communication are open, there is respect among all partners involved. Children and parents both feel that they are being heard and understood by the school. Open communication helps people to better understand and clear up any possible misunderstandings.

Research Question 3: **What are the parent's perceptions of their children's learning?**

Survey Question 10

How comfortable was your child in asking for help from adults at school?

Eighteen parents were asked via *Qualtrics,* how comfortable was your child in asking for help from adults at school. Eleven parents reported that their child was very comfortable in asking for help from adults at school, four parents reported that their child was moderately comfortable, and three parents reported that their child was moderately comfortable in asking for help from an adult at school.

Survey Question 11

How well did your child manage his or her emotions at home?

Eighteen parents were given a survey via *Qualtrics* and asked, 'how well did your child manage his or her emotions at home?' Three parents stated their child managed their emotions extremely well at home; 10 parents stated their child managed his or her emotions very well at home; and five parents stated that their child managed his or her emotions moderately well at home.

Survey Question 12

How often did your child give up on learning activities he or she found challenging?

Eighteen parents were given a survey via *Qualtrics* and asked, ‘how often does your child give up on learning activities he or she found challenging?’ Two parents said their child never gives up on learning activities that are challenging. One parent said their child rarely gives up on learning activities that are challenging. One parent said their child often gives up on learning activities that are challenging.

Survey Question 13

How motivated was your child to learn the topics covered in class?

Parents were given a survey via *Qualtrics* and asked, ‘how motivated was their child to learn the topics covered in class?’ Three parents said their child was sometimes motivated to learn the topics covered in class. Ten parents said their child was often motivated to learn the topics covered in class. Five parents stated that their child was always motivated to learn the topics covered in class.

Survey Question 14

In general, how well did your child learn from the feedback about his or her schoolwork?

Parents were given a survey via *Qualtrics* and asked, ‘how well did your child learn from feedback from the school?’ Three parents said their child learned sometimes from feedback from the school. Nine parents said that their child learned often from feedback from the school. Six parents said their child learned always from feedback from the school.

Survey Question 15

On average, how well did your child work independently on learning activities at home?

Parents were given a survey via *Qualtrics* and asked ‘, how well did your child work independently on learning activities at home?’ Five parents stated that their child worked very well independently at home. Ten parents stated that their child worked moderately well, independently at home. Two parents stated that their child worked slightly well, independently at home. Two parents stated that their child did not work well, independently at home.

Survey Question 21

Did you feel comfortable helping your child with his /her homework?

Eighteen parents were given a survey via *Qualtrics* and asked, if they feel comfortable helping their child with homework. Ten parents responded by saying that they were comfortable helping their child with his/her homework. Eight parents responded by saying that they were not comfortable helping their child with his/her homework.

Survey Question 30

How often did your child struggle to get organized for school?

Eighteen parents took the survey via *Qualtrics*. Ten parents stated that their child never struggled to get organized for school. Eight parents stated that their child struggled 1 to 2 times per week to get organized for school.

Common Themes for Research Question Three

Positive Relationships

One common theme that emerged from Research Question Three was the development of positive relationships. Parents that were surveyed felt comfortable in asking for help from school adults. The study school made an extra effort in providing

school activities, volunteering activities, Family Fun Night, and Field Day to promote positive relationships with parents and guardians of students. These activities were instrumental in increasing school to home communication and improving parents' perception on the school. Positive relationships were also seen between students and teachers, staff, and faculty in the school. Eleven parents reported that their child was very comfortable in asking for help from adults at school, in comparison to four parents reporting that their child was moderately comfortable. Three parents also reported that their child was slightly comfortable in asking an adult at school for help.

Perseverance and Feedback

Two congruent themes that emerged from Research Question Three were perseverance and feedback. Parents were asked how well their child managed their emotions at home. The parent's perceptions were three parents stated that their child managed their emotions extremely well at home. Ten parents reported that their child managed his or her emotions well while five parents stated that their child managed their emotions moderately well. Parents surveyed were asked, 'how often did their child give up on learning activities he or she found challenging?' Eight parents reported that their child never gave up on activities they found to be challenging. Five parents reported that their child rarely gave up and five parents reported that their child often gives up on learning activities that their child often gives up on learning activities that are difficult. The theme of Perseverance showed that three parents said that their child was sometimes motivated to learn new topics in class in comparison to 10 parents that said their child was often motivated to learn new topics covered in class. Five parents stated that their child was always motivated to learn new topics covered in class. In comparing how well

their child learned from feedback from the school, three parents reported that their child sometimes learn from feedback from the school while nine parents reported that their child learned often from feedback from the school. Six parents also reported that their child always learned from feedback from the school.

Need for Assistance

Another theme that emerged was the child's need for assistance when at home, as opposed to in the classroom. Parents were asked, how well did their child work independently on learning activities at home.' Five parents reported that their child worked very well, independently at home while ten parents reported that their child worked moderately well, independently at home. Two parents stated that their child did not work well at all independently at home. Ten parents reported that they were comfortable helping their child with homework in comparison to eight parents that reported by saying that they were not comfortable helping their child with his/her homework. When asked, how often your child struggles to get organized for school, 10 parents reported that their child never struggled to get organized for school in comparison to eight parents that reported that their child struggled 1 to 2 times per week to get organized for school.

When parents were asked how often they met with their child's teacher, four parents reported that they met with their child's teacher sometimes in comparison to eight parents reporting that they met with their child's teacher often and six parents reported that they always met with their child's teacher. The 18 parents that answered survey question 2 reported that three parents stated that they had a conversation with their child's teacher sometimes, in comparison to eight parents that reported that they had a

conversation with their child's teacher sometimes, and seven parents reported that they always have a conversation with their child's teacher about what they are learning in class. When parents were asked how often they were involved in a parent group, two parents reported that they rarely were involved in a parent group in comparison to five surveyed parents reporting that they sometimes participated in groups in their child's school, and four parents stating that they always participate. Eighteen parents were asked how confident they were in their ability to make choices about their child's school. Three parents reported that they were slightly confident in comparison to four parents reporting that they were somewhat confident, and six parents responded by saying they were moderately confident in their ability in making choices about their child's school. When 18 surveyed parents were asked how much effort they put into school-related tasks, four parents reported they put a high level of effort into school-related tasks, in comparison to 14 parents reporting that they put a moderate effort level of effort into school-related tasks. Parents were asked if they had a designated time to do homework. Eighteen parents responded by stating that they had a designated time to do homework.

Research Question 4: **What is the level of school involvement and communication for parents?**

Survey Question 1

As mentioned with Research Question One, in survey question 1, 18 parents were asked via *Qualtrics,* 'how often did they meet with their child's teacher?' Four parents reported that they met with their child's teacher sometimes. Eight parents reported that they met with their child's teacher often. Six parents reported that they always met with their child's teacher.

Survey Question 2

How often do you have a conversation with your child's teacher about what he or she is learning in class?

Eighteen parents took the survey via *Qualtrics*. Three parents that took the survey stated that they had a conversation with their child's teacher sometimes. Eight parents reported that they have a conversation with their child's teacher often. Seven parents that completed the survey stated that they always have a conversation with their child's teacher about what he or she is learning in class.

Survey Question 3

How often were you involved in a parent group (s) at your child's school?

Eighteen parents took the survey via *Qualtrics*. Two parents stated that they were rarely involved in a parent group at their child's school. Five of the surveyed parents responded by stating that they sometimes participated in groups at their child's school. Seven parents often were involved in groups at the child's school. There were four parents that always participated in parent groups at their child's school.

Survey Question 4

Eighteen parents were asked via *Qualtrics,* 'how confident were they in their ability to make choices about their child's school?' Three parents reported that they were slightly confident. Four parents reported they were somewhat confident. Six parents reported they were moderately confident. Five parents reported that they were extremely confident in their ability to make choices about their child's school.

Survey Question 6

How much effort did you put into school-related tasks?

Eighteen parents were asked via *Qualtrics,* 'how much effort did they put into school-related tasks?' Four parents reported they put a high level of effort into school-related tasks. Fourteen parents put a moderate level of effort into school-related tasks.

Survey Question 7

Eighteen parents were asked via *Qualtrics,* 'was there a designated time to do school assignments?' Eighteen parents reported that there was a designated time to do school assignments.

Survey Question 8

Eighteen parents were asked via *Qualtrics,* 'when working on school activities at home, how easily is your child distracted?' Two parents reported that their child was very distracted. Twelve parents reported that their child was somewhat distracted. Four parents reported that their child was never distracted.

Survey Question 18

Was there two-way communication that was open and accessible?

Eighteen parents were asked via *Qualtrics,* 'was there two-way communication that was open and accessible?' Eighteen parents reported that there was two-way communication that was open and accessible.

Survey Question 19

Was communication regular, consistent, and meaningful?

Eighteen parents were asked via *Qualtrics,* 'if communication was regular, consistent, and meaningful?' Seventeen parents stated yes. One parent reported that communication was not regular, consistent, and meaningful.

Survey Question 13

How motivated was your child to learn the topics covered in class?

Parents were given a survey via *Qualtrics* and asked, 'how motivated was their child to learn the topics covered in class?' Three parents said their child was sometimes motivated to learn the topics covered in class. Ten parents said their child was often motivated to learn the topics covered in class. Five parents stated that their child was always motivated to learn the topics covered in class.

Survey Question 15

On average, how well did your child work independently on learning activities at home?

Parents were given a survey via *Qualtrics* and asked, 'how well did your child work independently on learning activities at home?' Five parents stated that their child worked very well, independently at home. Ten parents stated that their child worked moderately well, independently at home. Two parents stated that their child worked slightly well, independently at home. One parent stated that their child worked not well at all, independently at home.

Survey Question 11

How well did your child manage his or her emotions at home?

Eighteen parents were given a survey via *Qualtrics* and asked, 'how well did your child manage his or her emotions at home?' Three parents stated their child managed their emotions extremely well at home. Ten parents stated their child managed his or her emotions very well at home. Five parents stated that their child managed his or her emotions moderately well at home.

Survey Question 12

How often did your child give up on learning activities he or she found challenging?

Eighteen parents were given a survey via *Qualtrics* and asked, 'how often does your child give up on learning activities he or she found challenging?' Two parents said their child never gives up on learning activities that are challenging. One parent said their child rarely gives up on learning activities that are challenging. One parent said their child often gives up on learning activities that are challenging.

Survey Question 21

Did you feel comfortable helping your child with his /her homework?

Eighteen parents were given a survey via *Qualtrics* and asked, 'if they feel comfortable helping your child with homework?' Eighteen parents responded by saying that they were comfortable in helping their child with homework.

Survey Question 15

How well did your child work independently on learning activities at home?

Five parents responded by saying, extremely well. Ten parents stated, moderately well. Two parents said, slightly well. One parent responded by stating, not well at all.

Survey Question 9

Eighteen parents were given a survey via *Qualtrics* and asked, 'how regularly did your child read for pleasure?' Seven parents stated their child read 3 to 4 times per week. Nine parents stated their child read 1 to 2 times per week. Two parents responded by saying their child read once a month.

Survey Question 39

Parental Involvement and Student Academic Achievement

The parents were asked the question, ‘how often do meet with your child’s teacher at school?’ Sixty-one percent of the parents answered by saying that they meet often with their child’s teacher, while 39% of parents stated that they met always.

Survey Question 9

When asked how regularly does their child read for pleasure, seven parents stated they read for pleasure 3 to 4 times per week. Nine parents stated that they read 1 to 2 times per week for pleasure. Two parents stated that their child read once a month for pleasure.

Common Themes for Research Question Four

School Involvement and Communication

One common theme that emerged from Research Question Four was school involvement. Eighteen parents that were surveyed reported that four parents met with their child’s teacher sometimes, in comparison to eight parents that met with their child’s teacher often, and six parents reported that they always had a conversation with their child’s teacher. When parents were asked how often they have a conversation with their child’s teacher about what their child was learning in class, three parents reported they have a conversation with their child’s teacher sometimes, in comparison to eight parents that stated they had a conversation with their child’s teacher often about what they were learning in class, and seven parents reported that they always have a conversation with their child’s teacher. Surveyed parents were asked if they were involved in a parent group at their child’s school.

Another common theme to emerge was Communication. Two parents that were surveyed stated that they were rarely involved in a in a parent group, in comparison to

five parents that stated that that they were sometimes involved in parent groups at their child's school, and four parents reported that they always participated in parent groups at their child's school. When 18 parents were surveyed about how confident they were in their ability to make choices about their child's school, three parents reported that they were slightly confident in their ability to make choices about their child's school in comparison to four parents who reported that they were somewhat confident, six parents reported that they were moderately confident, and five parents reporting that they were extremely confident in their ability to make choices about their child's school.

Another common theme that emerged was Parent Involvement. Two parents surveyed stated that they were rarely involved in a group at their child's school, in comparison to seven parents stating that they were often involved in groups at their child's school, and seven parents stating that they were that they were often involved in groups in their child's school. Four parents stated that they always participated in parent groups at their child's school.

Another emerging theme was how confident parents were in their ability to make choices about their child's school. Three parents reported that they were slightly confident in their ability to make choices about their child's school, in comparison to four parents reporting that they were somewhat confident, and six parents reporting that they were moderately confident. Five parents reported that they were extremely confident in their ability to make choices about their child's school. When parents were asked how much effort they put into school-related tasks, four parents reported that they put in a high level of effort into school-related tasks, in comparison to 14 parents stating that they put a moderate level of effort into school-related tasks. Another common theme was

Designated Homework Time. Eighteen parents stated that there was a designated time to do homework assignments. Seventeen parents reported that there was regular, consistent, and meaningful communication, in comparison to one parent reporting that there was not regular, consistent, and meaningful communication. When parents were asked how well their child independently completed work on learning activities at home, five parents reported that their child worked very well, independently at home, compared to 10 parents reporting that their child worked moderately well at home. Two parents stated that their child worked slightly well at home. One parent reported that their child did not work well at all independently at home.

Quantitative Results

MAP Preparation Packets and Help on the MAP Assessments

Eighteen parents were surveyed and asked, did the MAP Preparation Packets help your child on the MAP assessment. Eighteen parents were surveyed via *Qualtrics*. Eighteen parents stated that the MAP Preparation Packets helped their child on the MAP assessment. When asked why, or why not, the MAP Preparation Packets helped their child on the MAP assessment, one parent stated that the packet helped their child to practice and become familiar with the content of the test. Another parent stated that the MAP Preparation Packets helped their child to focus on learning. One parent surveyed stated the packets provided a similar experience. Other parent responses included: they helped my son get prepared for the MAP by getting more practice a home, it helped my child to go over concepts that he was not sure of, the packets helped my son better understand the MAP skills, and the packets helped my child learn new skills. One parent stated that they were not sure if the packets helped or not.

When parents were asked how much time children spent on the MAP Preparation packets per week, four parents stated that their child spent one hour or less on the MAP Preparation Packets. Twelve parents surveyed that they spent one to two hours per week on the MAP Preparation Packets. One parent stated that their child spent two to three hours per week on the MAP Preparation Packets. One parent surveyed stated that their child spent three hours per week on the MAP Preparation Packets.

In order to test if the MAP Preparation Packets increased student achievement, the researcher analyzed MAP scores from 2014-2015 and ran a *z*-test for difference in means with MAP scores from 2015-2016. The MAP Preparation Packets were used during the academic year of 2015-2016, therefore, increases in scores were predicted. Scores were only examined from the children of the parents surveyed, thus the parents working with their children on the MAP Preparation Packets at home. A limitation of the scores, discussed more in depth in Chapter One, was the scores were self-reported by the parents on the survey. MAP scores are presented in Table 5 and 6 and the results of Null Hypothesis 1, There will not be a significant gain in the MAP scores of students whose parents worked with them at home with the MAP Preparation Packets, are presented.

Table 5

Proficiency Levels of English Language Arts MAP Scores 2015

Advanced Proficient	3
Proficient	7
Basic	5
Below Basic	3

Table 6

Proficiency Levels of English Language Arts MAP Scores 2016

Advanced Proficient	6
Proficient	9
Basic	3
Below Basic	0

Null Hypothesis 1: There will not be an increase in students' Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) scores in Reading after working with the MAP preparation packets at home with parents. The researcher compared the 2014-2015 MAP scores in Reading to the 2015-2016 MAP Reading scores (pre-MAP Preparation Packets to post-MAP Preparation Packets). The researcher failed to reject the hypothesis on all levels of reading scores. The null hypothesis is analyzed into four sub hypotheses for more specific results.

Null Hypothesis 1a: There will not be an increase in students' Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) Advanced Proficient scores in Reading after working with the MAP preparation packets at home with parents. Since the *z*-test value is 1.115, which is smaller than the critical value of 1.96, the null hypothesis is not rejected. There is not a significant difference in proportion.

Null Hypothesis 2a: There will not be an increase in students' Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) Proficient scores in Reading after working with the MAP preparation packets at home with parents. Since the *z*-test value is 0.671, which is smaller than the critical value of 1.96, the null hypothesis is not rejected. There is not a significant difference in proportion.

Null Hypothesis 3a: There will not be an increase in students' Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) Basic scores in Reading after working with the MAP preparation packets at home with parents. Since the *z*-test value is -0.802, which is smaller than the critical value of 1.96 and larger than the critical value of -1.96, the null hypothesis is not rejected. There is not a significant difference in proportion.

Null Hypothesis 4a: There will not be an increase in students' Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) Below Basic scores in Reading after working with the MAP preparation packets at home with parents. Since the z-test value is -1.809, which is smaller than the critical value of 1.96 and larger than the critical value of -1.96, the null hypothesis is not rejected. There is not a significant difference in proportion.

Summary

This mixed methods study determined that most parents believed that parental involvement increased student academic achievement. The surveys submitted indicated that the students were comfortable in asking for help from adults at the school. Parents were also comfortable in asking for assistance from school personnel. The parents surveyed felt that the MAP Preparation Packets helped their child/children prepare for the MAP Assessment by getting more practice at home, focus on learning, become familiar with content, provided a similar experience, and helped the students better understand the MAP skills. The survey results indicated that parental involvement that includes parents actively participating in consistent two-way meaningful communication involving student academic achievement and school activities produces positive results academically. Parents play an integral part in the academic growth and development of their child. Research has shown that parental involvement is associated with successful academic

achievement for students. The one view that surveyed parents had in common was that the MAP Preparation Packets were instrumental in increasing their child's academic achievement and helping them prepare for the test.

Chapter Five: Discussion

In order for students to be academically successful they need school and home to form a partnership of support for the students. Parents, staff, and the school community need to share mutual trust and responsibility for the children's success in the educational system. When parental involvement is increased, supported, and encouraged, that partnership has a positive impact on the child and the educational system. Many researchers recognize the important role that strong, positive bonds between homes and schools play in the development and education of children (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). Studies that have been conducted on parental involvement and student academic achievement have shown and supported the idea that building a positive relationship between school and home can lead to increased academic achievement for students and reform in the education system. Research has also shown that successful students have strong academic support from their involved parents (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). Furthermore, research on effective schools, those where students are learning and achieving, has consistently shown that these schools, despite often working in low social and economic neighborhoods, have strong and positive school-home relationships (Epstein et al., 2009; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005).

The purpose of this mixed-method study was to investigate whether parents' active engagement in their child/children's education causes the child/children to have an increased level of academic achievement. This study aimed to show the importance of parents' involvement in their child's educational process at an early age. The researcher also wanted to find out if the MAP Preparation Packets the third and fourth grade teachers created, along with parental involvement would help to improve MAP scores.

This involvement can begin as early as preschool. The researcher also wanted to investigate parents' perceptions of their relationships of their own relationships with teachers, the school culture, and their child's learning, to see how it compares to increased MAP scores. Chapter Five discusses the four qualitative research questions, based on the results of a survey distributed to parents. Implications and recommendations are presented, as well as a summary of the research.

Findings

Chapter Four included a detailed description of the survey results. The next section discusses the findings as related to each qualitative research question. Recommendations for future research are discussed.

Research Question 1: How does parental involvement increase student academic achievement?

Eighteen parents completed the survey via *Qualtrics*. Of the 18 parents that completed the survey, seven parents stated that their child read 3 to 4 times per week. Fourteen parents stated that they volunteered at their child's school for field trips, tutoring, or as a class mom. Seventeen parents at the research school reported that there were workshops for parents to learn how to assist their child in learning activities. Epstein (2001) and Epstein et al. (2009) alleged that there are many reasons for developing and establishing a partnership between school, family, and community. The main reason for this partnership is to aid students in succeeding in school. Other reasons include improving school climate and programs, developing parenting skills and leadership, assisting parents and families in connecting with others in the school, and assisting teachers with their work. All of the above reasons emphasized the importance of

the need for parents to play a progressive role in their child's education and to build and maintain a strong and positive relationship with the school.

Research Question 2: What is the impact of the MAP Preparation Packets on student achievement? According to most parents MAP Preparation Packets had a positive impact on student achievement. Parents felt that the packets focused on learning and provided a similar experience as the actual assessment. Parents also reported that the MAP Preparation Packets helped their child to reinforce skills taught at school.

The study school has a history of low parental involvement. The school has had a new principal every year for the last three years. It has been a difficult transition for the parents, as well as the students. Only 18 out of 25 surveys were completed. Based on the surveys that were completed, most parents were actively engaged with their child's learning in all aspects of learning of the learning process.

Parents felt that the MAP Preparation Packets had a positive impact on student achievement. The parents felt that the MAP preparation packets provided their child an opportunity to practice with familiar content, focus on learning, provided a familiar experience, provided more practice at home, and helped students to better understand MAP skills.

Eighteen parents agreed that the MAP Preparation Packets helped their child with the assessment. Although the parents spent different amounts of times utilizing the packets, most parents agreed that the MAP Preparation Packets provided useful practice in preparation for the assessment. The 18 parents that participated in the survey felt that the MAP Preparation Packets highly prepared or very well prepared their child for the MAP assessment. Based on the survey, 11 parents reported that their child was

comfortable in asking for help from adults at school. When it came to how much time parents spent on the MAP Preparation Packets per week, four parents spent one hour or less in comparison to one parent spending two to three hours per week and one parent spending three or more hours per week. In regard to communication with teachers, the parents responded by giving a rank of 1 to 5, with five being the highest rank. Eighteen parents gave a rank of five for communication with teachers. Overall, the parents at the research school felt that the communication between school and home was adequate. Given a rank of 1 to 5, with five being the highest, 17 parents gave a rank of 5 for MAP Preparation Packet homework being a major factor in helping their child be highly prepared for the MAP assessment. One parent gave a rank of 4 stating that the packets very well prepared their child for the MAP test. Parents also felt that reading independently or reading with their child contributed to their success on the test. Readiness was a factor in preparation for the assessment. The 18 parents that took the survey all felt that the MAP Preparation packets assisted their child prepare their child for the assessment.

Research Question 3: What are the parents' perceptions of their child's learning?

Overall, the parents that submitted a survey reported that their child is comfortable in asking for help from an adult. Parents also reported that their child managed their emotions very well at home. Most parents agreed that their child did not give up on learning activities that they found challenging. Parents reported that their child was often motivated to learn new topics covered in class. The survey submitted by parents indicated that their child learned often from feedback from the school. Most of the students worked moderately well, independently on learning activities. The parents

that submitted a survey stated that they felt comfortable helping their child with homework. Most parents stated that their child never struggled to get organized for school.

Research Question 4: What is the level of school involvement and communication for parents?

Parents that submitted the survey responded by saying they met with their child's teacher often. When it came to conversations with their child's teacher, the majority of the parents stated that they met with the teacher often. Compare this to eight parents that have a conversation with their child's teacher often. These numbers show that the majority of the parents are actively engaged in school to home communication.

Based on the surveys submitted, most parents were involved in a parent group at their child's school. When it came to parents' being confident in their ability to make choices about their child's school, most were somewhat confident. This may indicate that the school needs to provide additional resources to parents to assist in this area. Parents put in a moderate effort into school-related tasks. All the parents that submitted a survey indicated that their child had a designated time to do homework assignments. This indicates that most of the parents provided a structured learning environment at home. Most of the students were somewhat distracted while working on school activities at home. Parents also reported that their child was often motivated to learn the topics covered in class.

The school community and parents play a monumental role in the educational process and is academically successful. This environment should provide support, motivation, and quality instruction. Families are often faced with many unexpected

demands, therefore, parental support in the educational process of students extends well beyond the school. Many families are faced with overwhelming and unpredictable schedules and circumstances while juggling school, sports, family situations, family time, work schedules and other responsibilities, allowing minimal time to provide support in any one given area (Swap, 1993).

Hypothesis 1

The findings from this study did not show any significant difference in MAP scores in students that utilized the MAP Preparation Packets with their parents at home. Null hypotheses 1a through 1d failed to reject, as they showed no significance of growth between levels of achievement on the MAP before and after use of the packets. However, scores did increase.

Most of the research done on parental involvement and student academic achievement show that when parents are actively involved in their child's education, there is growth in the child's learning. Parents who are involved in their children's education in ways that create or reinforce direct experiences of educational success offer verbal persuasion intended to develop attitudes, behaviors, and efforts consistent with school and success, and create emotional arousal that underscores the personal importance of doing well in school are more likely to develop a strong, positive sense of efficacy for successfully achieving in school-related tasks that students whose parents are not involved (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005, p. 315).

Findings from previous research found that parental involvement is the 'Missing Link' in school achievement. Some researchers have suggested that the missing link in educational equality, in terms of educational achievement, is parental involvement

(Columbo, 1995). Even the best schools cannot adequately educate every child on its own. Schools need the active support of parents and community.

Recommendations for Parents

When parents are involved in their child's learning it offers a high probability for success. According to Choi et al. (2015) parental involvement in their children's learning not only improves a child's morale, attitude, and academic achievement across all subject areas, but it also promotes better behavior and social adjustment. There are many benefits to a positive partnership between school and home. This partnership can prove to be a formidable alliance in improving the academic achievement of students.

Recommendations for Future Research

Additional research is needed in parental involvement and student academic achievement. The research that currently exists is dated and there has not been much research on this subject. The study site should establish a partnership between the school, home and community. This partnership will aid in the academic success of the students. Other recommendations for the study site will include improving school climate and school programs, developing parent skills, and leadership, connecting families in the school and the community. According to Arnold et al. (2008), parental involvement in education is associated with positive gains in children's academic and cognitive outcomes. These activities are not limited to helping with homework, checking homework assignments, volunteering at school and attending parent conferences and workshops.

Establishing a task force and future research with the main objective of increasing parental involvement not only at the study school but district-wide would be highly

beneficial. Teachers, parents, and administrators should work together to develop ways of getting school and home in a positive working relationship. The ultimate goal is to increase student academic achievement. The United States Department of Education (2005) concluded that children who have highly involved parents have better academic outcomes in elementary and secondary school. I would also recommend that the study school provide parents with resources to help them become better teachers. This can be done by increasing school to home communication, workshops, and providing the parents with a welcoming school environment.

Summary

In the current study the researcher examined the effects of parental involvement on student academic achievement. The researcher also looked at the impact that the MAP Preparation Packets had on student achievement. The surveyed parents reported that the MAP Preparation Packets helped their child with the MAP test. Although, there was not a significant gain in the reading scores, increases were made on each level after use of the packets. This mixed method study showed that most parents believed that being actively engaged in their child's learning helped them to improve academically. Research has shown that parental involvement increases academic gains. There is much more research needed on parental involvement and student academic achievement. It is imperative that school districts realize the importance of parental involvement. Programs need to be developed to connect school and home in a positive working relationship. Schools should also reach out to community partners to form partnerships to support parents. While much of the research and data is dated, it is still useful in determining the importance of parental involvement.

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