

The Effect of Parent Involvement on Elementary Student's Achievement

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A Special Project

Presented to

Dr. Audrian Huff

Heritage University

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Education

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Spring 2007

FACULTY APPROVAL

Approved for the Faculty

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## ABSTRACT

There has been much research concerning parent involvement. This study contains qualitative information that could increase parent involvement in any school. There are main factors that interfere and decrease parent involvement as well as research methods and strategies that promise success regarding parent involvement.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

#### Background for the Project

Parent involvement was important for student learning, not only in public schools but also in private and charter schools as well (Henderson & Mapp, 2004). Parent involvement promoted better student attendance, increased graduation rates, decreased the rate of grade retention, increased parent and student satisfaction with school, decreased discipline reports, and increased achievement scores in reading and mathematics (Hiatt-Michael & Shartrand, 2001).

The importance of parental involvement was accentuated by the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act and made the nation's schools accountable for academic achievement for all students. Parents, teachers, and teacher preparation institutions needed to know this law, the accountability provisions, and the benchmarks which set achievement standards for all students. Parents had the right to know what was happening in schools. Parents' right to know had been formalized through the new legislation (Henderson et al. 2004).

Teachers admitted to very little training, if any, for working with parents. Recently, there was limited professional development at the school or district levels that incorporated the importance of the role of parents and how classroom professionals could harness parental involvement as a means of improving and sustaining student learning (Hiatt-Michael et al. 2001).

Certain barriers to effective parent involvement had been credited to a school environment that did not value the view and participation of parents or to parent roles that went beyond the traditional roles of parent support in schools. Parents were not encouraged to participate in school activities, especially if teachers perceived parents as not experienced or knowledgeable enough to assist the teacher in the classroom or collaborate with teachers in

providing the school with a positive learning environment. Barriers were coupled with changing demographics that placed parents with economic demands that limited time parents were available to come to school. Finally, a lack of teacher preparation in regard to parent involvement in the classroom raised another barrier to effective parent involvement (Hiatt-Michael et al. 2001).

### Statement of the Problem

Teachers were pleading for parental involvement in order to further the education of students but these pleas about parent involvement appeared to be ignored by the school administrators as well as the parents. At the author's school some teachers believed parents were less willing or able to spend time with children, less involved with children's academic growth, less ethical or moral, more self-centered and less demanding. If parents were creating such a distance from children's lives, how could young people develop values to succeed in school or life? In addition, Parents were also not encouraged to participate in school activities, especially if teachers perceived the parents were not experienced or knowledgeable enough to collaborate with the teachers in becoming partners to improve student learning (Hiatt-Michael et al. 2001).

Teachers also admitted to little or no training to work with parents. Teachers needed more training in parent communication and parent involvement. Teachers had to gain strategies to bring and welcome parents into the classroom. Two of the main strategies were to make parents feel comfortable and believe that the collaboration provided as partners in the students' learning was truly valuable (Henderson et al. 2004).

### Purpose of the Project

The main goal of the study was to determine if promoted parent involvement made a difference in the students' academic achievement. Also this project was meant to analyze the

different needs applicable to the administrators to help fashion a set of tools for success for such schools, teachers and administrators.

In addition, this project brought into closer relation the home and the school. Parents and teachers cooperated intelligently in the education of children and youth and developed programs and strategies between educators and the general public with united efforts.

### Delimitations

The parent involvement study was conducted in the researcher's elementary school. The study was intended to see if parent involvement, when integrated as collaboration on students' academic success, would increase students' academic achievements. The participants were White and Hispanic. The study took place from the fall of 2006 to the spring of 2007 in a small rural community located in Eastern Washington State.

The researcher's district served over 11,500 school children. The district had eleven elementary schools, three middle schools, a four-year high school and an alternative secondary school. About 73% of students were minority including Asian or Pacific Islander (1.4%), African-American (3%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (0.4%), and Hispanic (68%). About 71% of all students came from low-income households and about 4,800 were learning English as a second language (OSPI, 2006).

The elementary school where the study took place was composed of 37 classroom teachers, 15.4 students per teacher, 10.0 average years of teacher experience, 67.6% teachers with at least a Master's Degree, 30 total number of teachers who taught core academic classes, 0.0% of teachers teaching with an emergency certificate, 0.0% of teachers teaching with a conditional certificate, 100.0% of classes taught by teachers meeting Not Child Left Behind

(NCLB) highly qualified definition, 100.0% of classes in high poverty schools taught by teachers who meet NCLB HQ definition.

The school students' ethnicity consisted of 92.8% Hispanic, 4.6% White, 2.3% Black, 0.2% Asian, and 0.2% American Indian/Alaskan Native. Free or reduced-price meals were 90.3%, 13.9% were special education, 65.05% were transitional bilingual and 34.5% were migrants (OSPI, 2006).

### Assumptions

The researcher assumed that all of the participants of the school's survey held the same positions (all were teachers) but in different grade levels due to the instrument only being sent to teachers of the same institution. Most participants faced the same circumstances because each teacher in the school gave opinions and responses that were very similar but useful to the purpose of the research. At the same time only parents and students of all first grade students were asked to participate in the parent and student surveys. The study consisted of sending a survey to all 37 teachers, as well as surveying 45 first grade parents and 96 students. The staff survey was composed of nine questions concerning parent involvement in addition to demographic questions. The parents' survey contained 10 helpful questions and the students' survey contained seven questions. These two last surveys were submitted in English and Spanish. For the school staff respondents, the average age was 38 years, with thirty-one women and six men. For the 45 first grade parents 34 were females and 11 males. For the student surveys 40 were boys and 36 were girls.

### Research Question

Can parent involvement, when integrated as collaboration on students' academic success; make a difference in the students' academic achievements?

### Significance of the Project

This qualitative research study focused on the use of state government standards, strategies, methods, and activities teachers needed to know to bring more parent involvement to the schools. The researcher explained the benefits of parent involvement and found a range of volunteer opportunities when teachers recruited parent volunteers. The author wanted to learn: why parents seemed hesitant to volunteer. Some reasons parents may not have volunteered was due to lack of transportation or the lack of English language skills. Volunteers often lacked a baby-sitter or assistance to watch over the rest of the children which was another reason parents, did not attend school functions such as a school program, open house or parent-teacher conference. Lack of transportation was often a problem. Some strategies, methods and activities were found to help parents to find solutions such as clothes donations and in-kind contributions from community volunteers. Also when teachers knew any parents' situation the home visitor helped by directing parents to programs that may help with food, clothes, shoes and sometimes transportation.

### Procedure

This study was performed using data and research obtained from the researcher's school. The study consisted of sending a survey to all 37 teachers, as well as surveying 45 first grade parents and 96 students. The staff survey was composed of nine questions concerning parent involvement in addition to demographic questions. The parents' survey contained 10 questions and the students' survey contained seven questions. These two last surveys were submitted in English and Spanish.

This study was meant to apply the parent involvement surveys information to create more activities or strategies that helped to improve more parent involvement in the researcher's school.

The findings of this study were meant to help teachers, administrators and academic institutions gain a better understanding of different components of effective parent involvement.

Acronyms

PTA. Parent Teacher Association

NCPIE. National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education

AYP. Adequate Yearly Progress

ATP. Action Team for Partnerships

PST. Parent as Teacher

NCLB. No Child Left Behind

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of the Literature

#### Introduction

A positive school climate welcomed and encouraged family involvement. Family involvement brought about improved teaching by generating a positive attitude among teachers. Teacher's increased self-esteem and felt respected when parent 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, 1996).

When parents were directly involved in students' education; parents made a real change in schools. Community, business and government were 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. The outlines stated how parents, the entire school staff, and 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 achieve 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, community, business and governments strengthen the 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 school 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

In study after study, researchers discovered the importance of parents being actively involved in the school setting to become partners in the students' education. When parents were involved in the students' education at home, the students did better in school. When parents were involved in school children academic skills improved and caused the school to aided students to obtain higher test scores.

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. Talking to children about books and stories read to the children also supported reading achievement (Walling, 1997).

When children and parents talked regularly about school, children performed better academically in school. Three kinds of parental involvement at home were consistently associated with higher student achievement: parents actively organized and monitored a child's time, helped with homework and discussed school matters. The earlier that parent involvement began in a child's educational process, the more powerful the effects were. Positive results of



parental involvement included improved student achievement, reduced absenteeism, improved behavior, and restored confidence among parents in the children's schooling (Walling, 1997).

### Parent Involvement Suggestions

Some parents and families were involved in the child's education in many ways. Some parents only had time for one or two activities. Whatever the level of involvement, parents did participate consistently and followed the routine because participation made an important difference in the child's life.

Parental involvement in the child's education meant that the parent read to the child on a daily basis, checked homework every night and discussed the child's progress with teachers on a regular basis. The parent voted in school board elections, helped the child's school to set challenging academic standards with parents' participation, limited TV viewing on school nights, and became an advocate for better education in the community and state (Walling, 1997).

### Supporting School Activities

Families supported schools and children's learning in important ways. The parents volunteered as tutors, classroom aides and curriculum resources, as well as assisted with field trips and in the lunchroom, health clinic and front office. The parents organized school events, assemblies and attended student performances in activities like the talent show, Cinco de Mayo, Christmas programs, sports events, and other school-related activities (Robinson, 1999).

### Schools Environment that Welcomes Participation

Some schools created an environment that welcomed participation. Signs that greeted families warmly at the school door, the central office, and the classroom were in the languages spoken by the community. A school-based family resource center provided information and links

to social services. Opportunities for informal meetings with staff and other families also contributed to a family-friendly atmosphere (Robinson, 1999).

### *Every Minute Counts*

An elementary school participated in a program entitled *Every Minute Counts* created by the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) which was the school's parent group. The objective of the program was to bring parent involvement into the school. The parent involvement activity counted every minute parents spent visiting the school. . Parents were invited to attend school anytime during the day. The school kept track of how long parents visited, rewarding the class that accumulated the most parent minutes with a pizza party. Parents in the school spent 25,534 minutes in just 17 days in January. The 25,534 minutes totaled 425 hours and 34 minutes (Hopkins, 2006).

As the school counted the minutes, parents attended many classes where the parents signed in and noted the time of parents' arrival and departure. Teachers continued with normal classroom instruction while parents entered into the classrooms. Parents and other family members were able to join students for lunch, recess and other activities.

The Action Team for Partnerships at the researcher's school worked to create a welcoming environment. Team and staff members met families at the school entrance and presented buttons to parents which read, "Parents are helping to make every minute count", this happened in the researcher's school. Students enjoyed learning when parents were present and students were proud to demonstrate and apply knowledge in the classroom. According with the information found, the researcher's institution before the start of the Every Minute Counts program saw limited parent involvement (Hopkins, 2006).

During the program Every Minute Counts parents were able to observe how the children were making academic progress. Parent became more familiar with the school's academic expectations. The researcher's school strived to fulfill the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements for Washington State.

### Parent Involvement in Schools of Bilingual Families

In 1997, Hover-Dempsey and Sandler conducted a study of urban family involvement in Chicago's inner-city neighborhoods. Hover-Dempsey and Sadler found three reasons why urban, diverse families made a deliberate, intentional choice of not becoming involved in the education of children. Family members lacked of confidence in the knowledge to help students because the skills possessed were limited. The family did not believe capable of making a difference in the education of children. Second, parents perceived the school's climate as hierarchical. Some school staff did not treat school visitors cordially. Families did not feel liked, respected or valued. Third, families' perception of the role-played and responsibility in the education of children varied due to different cultural and/or socio-economic factors. All parents, regardless of country of origin wanted the best for children and wanted academic success as well.

In other countries, parents left the task of educating children to the professionals in schools. Parenting practices and family dynamics from all cultures surveyed differed from general American norms. All cultural groups indicated that parents and teachers in other countries expected students to behave well, memorize academic materials and pass tests in order to be promoted to the next grade. Volunteering in schools did not mean the same in other countries (Hover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997).

Fundraising was unknown in many other countries. In many foreign countries "volunteer" meant to build, clean or repair the school or prepare meals for the students. Parents

were never asked to help in the classroom. In some foreign countries of the Middle East because of war the educational system had ceased to exist and schools had to be closed (Stewart, 2000).

### Understanding Bilingual Families and Families participation in Schools

Some teachers agreed that the researcher's school acknowledged the involvement of bilingual parents as the district hired culturally competent principals, teachers and staff members that were trained to understand and address bilingual parents' issues in an appropriate way. The school lacked cultural knowledge and friendly staff members, which caused lack of parental involvement in the researcher's school (Hopkins, 2006).

Parents expressed the need for schools that had a consistent school-home communication system including regularly translated materials, and interpreters for parent-teacher conferences and extra family meetings. Parents also wanted to hear directly from teachers when children were falling behind academically; as soon as possible not some time later (Robinson, 1999).

Parents across all cultural groups indicated schools provided bilingual parents with learning opportunities to understand the concept of parent involvement in America, understand the school system, and understand skills to support education at home such as reading, mathematics, study skills and homework assistance. Many participants suggested a key strategy for schools to successfully involve parents was to let parents know the school's expectations of parents and how parents could become partners in students' education. The concept of parent involvement was foreign to many bilingual parents (Hover-Dempsey et al. 1997).

### U.S Department of Education

The U.S Department of Education launched Goals 2000 directly to involve parents in standards-setting and bottom-up reform. The legislation encouraged collaborations across education and community services to assist families in supporting children's education.

Standards-based reform was centered on three basic principles: first, students learned best when teachers, administrators, and the community shared clear and common expectations for education. States, districts, and schools needed to agree on challenging content and performance standards that defined what children knew and were able to do. Second, student achievement improved in environments that supported high expectations. Third, the instructional system supported fulfillment of the expectations that were to improve by focusing on accountability for results, flexibility for states and communities, proven education methods, and choices for parents. School improvement efforts needed to include broad parental and community involvement. The U. S Department of Education had that responsibility to coordinate and align resources--including educational technology, teacher preparation and professional development, curriculum and instruction, and assessments--all aligned to agree upon standards. The education system was design to focus and report on progress in meeting that set standards. Education reform needed to be results oriented through reliable and curriculum alignments to answer the critical, bottom-line question: to what extent were students and schools meeting the standards? Continuous improvement required carefully developed accountability systems for interpreting and responding to results and supporting improved student performance for *all* children (US Department of Education, 2000).

The U.S Department of Education moved forward and utilized campaigns in several ways. The U.S Department of Education created better relations between home and school and scheduled meetings with PTA, teachers and principals associations, and the Chamber of Commerce. The U.S Department of Education found out what had been done and what was currently done and how theses next coordinated activities were brought under a broader umbrella. Televised town meetings, printed media coverage, national talk shows, periodic

national surveys, and formal programs were just a few of the means to be used to convey the parent involvement message to the American public. The Department connected with other agencies for the campaign. The Department called upon other government agencies and addressed issues of family involvement (US Department of Education, 2000).

Research and practice had shown that parent involvement in education was a critical factor for raising student achievement. Title IV of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act provided grants to local nonprofit organizations to increase parental involvement in children's learning. Parent Information and Resource Centers--in collaboration with schools, school districts, social service agencies, and other nonprofit groups--were working to increase parents' knowledge of, and confidence in, child-rearing activities, strengthen partnerships between parents and professionals in meeting the educational needs of children from birth through high school graduation, and enhance the developmental progress of the children assisted under the program. Each center served an entire state or a region within a state, and targeted both urban and rural areas with large concentrations of low income, minority, or limited English proficient parents though services and information were offered to all interested parents. The numbers of Parent Centers have grown as increased appropriations have been made available since the initial funding in fiscal year 1995 of \$10,000,000. The FY 1998 appropriation of \$25,000,000 enabled the Department to achieve the statutory goal of funding one center in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the outlying areas. The Parent Centers used a variety of strategies for outreach and information sharing including web sites, mass mailings, toll-free phone numbers, and audio and video broadcasts. However, each center designed the core programs and services to emphasize local priorities and conditions and existing service structures in the State (US Department of Education, 2000).

## Parent Teacher Association

The Parent Teacher Association programs were created to organize and support parent involvement in children's education. The programs were created with leading expert organizations on topics of importance to members, at members' requests. Within each of the programs offered were found fun activities, helpful evaluation tools, and tips to involve all the key players in a school community. No other parent group offered the credible, complete, and all-inclusive programs to successfully engage families and communities all year round. The Parent Teacher Association in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Labor helped to connect and explore the valuable resources for employment, training and career information for parents. Based on the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs, the Parent Teacher Association was building successful partnerships prepared to attend and to speak to schools and communities about strengthening parent involvement and implementing parent involvement programs, plans, and policies in the local schools. The Mission of the Parent Teacher Association was to support and speak on behalf of children and youth in the schools, in the community, and before governmental bodies and other organizations that made decisions affecting the children. Also Parent Teacher Association assisted parents in developing the skills needed to raise and protect the children and encouraged parent and public involvement in the public schools of this nation (PTA, 2000).

## Action Team for Partnership

The researcher's school was pleased to be participating in the School-Family Partnership initiative. The first goal consisted for the Action Team for Partnership consisted of working together parents, community and business people. The second goal was for staff members to develop and to spearhead a number of activities designed to increase parent involvement in

school and to create a welcoming environment for all. The third goal was the school learning improvement goals in Literacy, Mathematics and Collaboration to parental activities related with parent involvement. A fourth goal creating a welcoming environment had also been added to the action plan. Parent involvement in sub-committees was desired to improve students' achievements (PTA, 2000).

### National Coalition of Parent Involvement in Education

The National Coalition of Parent Involvement in Education was founded in 1980 at the initiative of what was then the National School Volunteer Program (now National Association for Partners in Education), with funding from the Ford Foundation and Union Carbide. From the outset, the participating organizations included parent organizations and advocacy groups as well as national education organizations representing teachers and administrators. The local group has been meeting monthly to monitor legislation, initiate projects, and share information and ideas about research, programs, and policies (US Department of Education, 2000).

### Summary

When parents were involved in the children's education, students had better academic performance and behavior. The students' self-esteem was increased and education was taken seriously since the students knew parents were aware of the teacher's expectations. According with the new data the researcher found that the basic obligation of parents was to help the students with homework or any academic assignments on a daily basis. The basic obligation of the school was to communicate to parents the school and classroom expectations, students' evaluations, activities, and events via newsletter and/or phone calls. Teachers communicated frequently with parents in different ways such as phone calls, notes, mini-conferences, trimester conferences and home visits. Teachers created a good relationship with parents when parents



came to visit the classroom. The instructors made parents feel comfortable and appreciated every time when parents came to the school.

Teachers appreciated the contributions parents made to the school. By working together parents and teachers brought fruitful outcomes to the best possible educational experience for children and a positive school experience for families. Teachers who worked with parents understood the students better and generated unique, rather than routine, solutions to classroom problems. The research stated parents involved in the academic success of the students and participated in school activities developed a greater appreciation of the parental role. The Parents as Teacher (PAT) association created training and educated parents about educationally appropriate materials, games, parenting skills, tips for helping with homework, and identified community resources as appropriate to meet parents' needs. The purpose was for the researcher's elementary school to have an environment where positive learning happened, memories were created and children received a productive education where all participants harvested a fruitful education.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology and Treatment of Data

#### Introduction

The author found 3 different types of parent involvement strategies in this research. The obligations of parents were to help children in simple activities such as daily home reading and assisting students with homework. Second, the parents' basic obligation was to assist in conferences during the two consecutive trimesters of school. Third, the basic obligation as a teacher was to communicate with parents about programs, expectations and evaluations, which the researcher was able to carry out without much difficulty.

#### Methodology

The author used an experimental design with one condition. The purpose of this study was to gather information concerning parent involvement in the school where the author worked. The typology helped the researcher to view parent involvement mainly from the perspective of classroom needs and helped to conduct studies concerned with what the school and classroom teacher did to stimulate more active parent involvement. The author demonstrated the active parent involvement through a created graph of parent participation in the classroom at the time of conferences, parents who helped students with homework, and parents who attended school activities such as *Every Minute Count*, Cinco de Mayo and the school's talent show. All of these school and classroom activities helped teachers and administrators to understand, value, and appreciate parents as individuals which therefore increased parent participation in children's education.

## Participants

This study was performed using data used at the researcher's academic institution. The study consisted of sending a survey to all 37 teachers, as well as surveying 45 first grade parents and 96 students. The staff survey was composed of nine questions concerning parent involvement in addition to demographic questions. The parents' survey contained 10 questions and the students' survey contained 7 questions. These two last surveys were submitted in English and Spanish.

The school staff respondents and the average age was 38 years with 31 women and 6 men. For the 45 first grade parents 34 were females and 11 males. The average age for parents was 32. For the students surveys 40 were boys and 36 were girls. All the students were 7 years old.

## Instrument

The instrument for the staff was a survey consisting of six quantitative questions, three qualitative, and five demographic questions. The survey was given to participants in the researcher's school. The surveys (see the Appendix, page 33) were handed out along with a cover letter (see the Appendix, page 38). This study used every question as a useful source of information. The six questions were based on a five point Likert scale, with 1 being strongly agree, 2 being agree, 3 being neutral, 4 being disagree, and 5 being strongly disagree. The author wrote the qualitative questions from past experience, a review of current parent involvement research, and from communication with the staff of Heritage University.

The parents' survey consisted of six demographic questions and was located on page 35. The most important quantitative question was about the minutes parents spent with the student

reading or doing homework. The last question was about if parents were considered migrant workers and 38% agreed to be.

The student's survey was seven quantitative questions and one demographic. This survey asked for the students' opinions about school, teacher and parents' participation at school. This survey's questions were based on smiles and frowns that meant agree or disagree. This survey was found on page 37. These surveys' information was developed to measure many different facets of parent involvement.

### Design

The author used school staff, first grade parents and students. Three different groups of participants composed this design. This design was used because data of the three groups were essential to accomplish this study.

### Procedure

The researcher assumed that the participants of the school's survey all held the same positions but in different grade levels due to the instrument only being sent to teachers of the same institution. Most participants faced the same circumstances because each teacher in the school gave opinions and responses very similar but useful to the purpose of the research. At the same time only parents and students of the first grade were asked to participate in this study.

### Treatment of Data

The results of the surveys were then analyzed by comparing the means and standard deviations from the first six questions and qualitatively analyzing questions seven through fourteen through classification. The author created descriptive statistics for the quantitative questions. The results of the surveys were then analyzed by comparing the means and standard

deviation from the first seven questions and classifying information from question eight through thirteen.

### Summary

The study consisted of sending a survey to all 37 teachers, as well as surveying 45 first grade parents and 96 first grade students. The school staff respondents and the average age was 38 years with thirty-one women and six men. For the 45 first grade parents 34 were females and 11 males. The average age for parents was 32. For the students surveys 40 were boys and 36 were girls. All the students were seven years old. The researcher analyzed the results using descriptive statistics.

## CHAPTER 4

### Introduction

Useful quantitative and qualitative data was gathered after giving the surveys to all participants. The 37 staff, 45 first grade parents and 96 first grade students surveys received from the participants were analyzed using descriptive statistics. All the staff surveys distributed were returned as well as the 96 first grade students. The exception was when 96 first grade parents' surveys were distributed and only 46 were returned.

### Description of the Environment

The data interpretation was limited because this study was only given to a small number of participants but the population being surveyed imposed the limitation. The limited population consisted only of the school staff, 1<sup>st</sup> grade parents and 1<sup>st</sup> grade students. The researcher had the opportunity to collect the school staff surveys during a meeting. In addition the author asked the 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers to survey all the students during class and some of the parents during conferences. All parents were present during conferences and some were not interested to fill out the survey. This survey was optional and not required for parents. The limited population of this survey was chosen to easily gather all the information. Consideration to other grade levels was not needed or desired because the author was teaching first grade. The goal of this research was to have more first grade parent involvement in the researcher's school.

### Research Question

Can parent involvement when integrated as collaboration on students' academic success make a difference in the students' academic achievements?

## Results of the Study

This paper reflected on the growing need for parents to increase the involvement with the children in the home as well as become more avid proponents of the children's education. Many parents were less willing or able to spend time with the children's academic growth. "Today's world brought to the table the fact that most homes were two-parent-working homes. In many cases students were left home alone while both parents worked." This information was obtained during a meeting where teachers discussed parent involvement in this school. (personal interview, 2007).

## Findings

The quantitative and qualitative analysis only applied for the school staff survey. This data was analyzed and shared with all the school staff.

The participants' returned surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics were calculated by the author, and are displayed in the (Appendix, page 33). The lower the mean score indicated the higher the level of agreement by the participants.

Each of the questions was analyzed by the author. The means and standard deviations of the school staff were compared to determine differences in the three different groups.

Question one (I believe that parent involvement in our school is essential) for this question there were only two different answers; 65% of the school staff strongly agreed, when only 35% only agreed. Question two (I believe in community involvement) the participants gave three different answers to this question 48% strongly agreed, 40% agreed and 12% were undecided. Question three (I always appear energetic to participate in any activity related with parent involvement) the answers for strongly agreed were 69% and 31% only for agreed. Question four (I am warm and affable when a parent comes to my classroom?) Curiously

question three and four had the same results; for strongly agreed were 69% and 31% only for agreed. Question five (I deeply care about the welfare of the students) for this question 90% strongly agreed and 10% agreed. Question six (I encourage or participate in creative types of events that involve parents?) For this question 53% strongly agreed, 42% agreed and 5% were undecided.

The three qualitative questions (questions seven through nine) on the survey were analyzed. The questions were used to better understand the staff participation in parent involvement. Question seven (What kinds of skill sets are required to bring parent involvement to our school? How do you acquire these skills?) The author included only a few skills to bring parent involvement to the school such as: “I acquired these skills by listening, speaking, paying attention to detail, thoroughness, involvement, writing, and understanding expectations. Also parents need to be connected to their child’s learning and take an interest, i.e., writing stories, and reading with the child. In addition parents have the responsibility to take the child to library and get a library card to help the child learning. In addition parents need to learn to speak English because it is vital to have communication with teacher and staff and later this will help with a child’s success. All these suggestions would help overall with the communication gap so they understand their child.” The second suggestion was from a teacher with 3 years of experience, “First I think proper language of home Spanish/English/Russian etc. will help us to communicate with parents. Second, helpful office staff and open teachers. Third, introduction of new activities are very important, but not during work hours.” The third suggestion was from a female teacher with 3 years of experience and teaching 4<sup>th</sup> grade, “We need a welcoming environment for parents and they need to feel valued. Hopefully ATP is providing a welcoming environment for parents to enjoy!” This was the response of a 2 years female teacher, “The



school needs to create an environment where the parents feel welcomed and are willing to come and participate in activities.” This was the music teacher’s skill used to bring more parent involvement to the school, “You must be willing to create opportunities for parents to come. I put on concerts and performances that bring parents into the school, and provide students the opportunity to perform.” These were the skills given by a 6 years female teacher, “Honest, friendly, easy to talk to respectful and understanding. These are basic skills that everyone knows but sometimes we forget to use them.” These were the skills given by a female teacher with eight years of experience, “The skills needed for parent involvement are: people person skills, friendly skills and open minded skills.” This was the last skill given for a male teacher with 8 years of experiences that the author incorporated to this question. “Consistency and letting the parent know what truly is needed of them without sugar coating.” These were diverse skills given from different point of views.

Question eight (How do you interact with your students’ parents?) The author included only a few suggestions of how teachers interacted with the students’ parents. This was the school librarian’s suggestion for this question. “Very little since I don’t see them: I am always happy to see those, whom I recognize or begin to recognize (if I had a reliable parent helper to type and process books with me or cut bookmarks, etc. I’d be thrilled!” The second suggestion was from a teacher with 3 years of experience, “I interact with my students’ parents by telephone, class visits, conferences, notes home.” The third suggestion was from a female 4<sup>th</sup> graded teacher with 3 years of experience, “I use a translator or speak Spanish the best I can.” This was how a 2 years female teacher interacts with students’ parents, “I always smile, say hi and ask how they are doing. I believe that making it a point to notice them when they pick up or drop off their child. I also make it a point to go to them and introduce myself if I have not met them.” This was how

the music teacher interacts with parent at the school, "I am always gracious and thank them for coming to our school and supporting them kids' efforts," This was how a 6 years female teacher interacted with the students, "I am warm, friendly, and respectful. Try to be helpful and approachable. I am direct and honest with them." This was how a female teacher with eight years of experience interacted with parents, "We communicate by phone, person, or in writing in talking about students needs or successes." This was how a male teacher with 8 years of experiences interacted with parents, "Everything is depending on the situation. I usually deal with students that have emotional and behavior problems."

Question nine (If you could pass on the most important lesson of parent involvement to new teachers, would the lesson be? The author included only a few lessons to the new teachers. This was the school librarian's lesson to new teachers, "Get them involved in school early with the parents' child! Encouraging parents to help the child with homework, reading volunteering at school and in the library, this will help with a child's success." The second lesson was from a teacher with 3 years of experience, "My lesson for new teachers will be to communicate with parents clearly and often to build trust." The third lesson was from a 4<sup>th</sup> grade female teacher with 3 years of experience, "Be welcoming and make an effort to meet parents." This was the lesson of a 2 year female teacher, "Do not assume parents know what to do academically at home with their children. You are the expert and many parents welcome ideas on how to help their children with their learning. In addition you have to establish a good relationship at the beginning of the year so the parents are willing to listen to your ideas or concerns throughout the year." This was the music teacher's lesson given to new teachers, "Many parents need to be "coaxed" into helping. Have sign up sheets on hand at open house, and sign them up!" This was the lesson for new teachers given for a 6 years female teacher, "Make home visits and that will

let you know where your students come from regarding home life. You will see first hand the resources they have available.” This was how a female teacher with eight years of experience gave a lesson to new teachers about parent involvement, “Always be polite and courteous to parents. Humble yourself and communicate to the parents what they needs of the students are. Ask them to help in those needs. You will get results most of the time.” This was how a male teacher with 8 years of experiences gave a lesson to new teachers, “Be consistent and truthful; don’t let emotions play a part of it.”

### Discussion

Through the analyses performed, results were shared with the school staff where the author worked. The principal and the school staff discussed results and mentioned the different challenges the school had to face to bring more parent involvement into the school. Ethnicity, economic and social environment were some of obstacles mentioned against parent involvement. To overcome these problems, the survey results showed visionary leadership and teamwork were needed to pull in differing people for the future of the educational institutions. The focus on individuals and not just the institution was viewed as having showcased the main differences between the three groups of participants.

### Summary

Through the analysis of the results of the surveys a better understanding of this school was reached. After this study different outcomes were presented. The school staff believed that parent and community involvement was essential and there was a deep concern about the students’ welfare. According with this study where the staff had to improve was in participating in creative types of events that involved parents. The parents and students surveys demonstrated discrepancies between the outcomes. Most parents responded the time spent with the children

was between ten to thirty minutes reading or helping with homework while some students did not think parents helped during reading or homework. This understanding was useful to know the differences between the three different groups and plan more effective strategies for success about parent involvement.

## CHAPTER 5

### Introduction

The goal of this research project was to find answers and suggestions from three different groups of participants. There have been interesting findings concerning parent involvement including suggestions, ideas, participation and programs. This elementary school, like any other, faced unique advantages and disadvantages in providing parent involvement. The goal of this research project was to survey school staff, parents, and students in order to gather information to help all the participants. Different government and education departments have been working closely with school districts state wide to help districts and schools to meet the standards and progress expected about parent involvement.

### Summary

By using the qualitative analyses to compare the answers for the surveys from the same school and the data concerning parent involvement, the author noted differences and commonalities between the three groups. The differences and commonalities helped to highlight the need for parent involvement and teachers' accessibility in this school to increase students' success.

### Conclusions

When parents were involved in children's education, students had better academic performance and behavior. The students also increased self-esteem and took education seriously since students knew that parents were aware of classroom expectations and what was expected to achieve. The researcher found that the basic obligation of parents was to help the students with the homework or any academic assignment on a daily basis. The basic obligation of the school was to communicate to parents the school and classroom expectations, students' evaluations,

activities, and events via newsletter and/or phone calls. Teachers communicated frequently with parents in different ways such as phone calls, notes, mini-conferences, trimester conferences and home visits. Teachers created a good relationship with parents when parents came to visit the classroom. Teacher made parents feel comfortable and appreciated.

### Recommendations

The recommendation would be for school administrators to provide professional training to the school staff on how to approach, communicate with, and invite parents to become participants in the child's education. This would be beneficial for the teacher to be trained on how to make parents feel welcomed and appreciated as parents become helpers in the classroom.

Another idea would be to plan a celebration of thanks for all parents that volunteered at the school or in classroom activities throughout out the year. In addition, school and classroom teachers need to give particular emphasis to ensure parents understood the purposes and benefits of the activities.

Teachers must put aside sufficient time to explain the activity or to write clear instructions, or both so that parents can get the job done without interrupting the teacher's instruction time. Teachers also need to talk with or give a survey to the parents at the end of each session to receive feedback in order to improve parent involvement. In addition, to have more parent involvement in any school or classroom parents need to know the school culture. This works better when teachers kept every student in mind. A teacher has to be sensitive and must take into consideration the cultural shock that new students and parents experienced. When teachers are aware of culture differences teachers are able to better understand the student and the parents. By understanding the students' culture and the families' background one is able to bring more parent involvement to the classroom and at the same time to the school.

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## School staff survey

### Survey Instrument

Attached is a survey concerning your views of parent involvement in our school. This survey should take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Please take your time to read and answer each question as fully as possible. Thank you in advance for your time and assistance.

1. I believe that parent involvement in our school is essential

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

2. I believe in community involvement

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

3. I always appear energetic to participate in any activity related with parent involvement

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

4. I am warm and affable when a parent comes to my classroom?

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

5. I deeply care about the welfare of the students

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

6. I encourage or participate in creative types of events that involve parents?

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

For the following questions, please write or type in the responses that you feel are most appropriate.

7. What kinds of skill sets are required to bring parent involvement to our school? How do you acquire these skills?

8. How do you interact with your students' parents?

9. If you could pass on the most important lesson of parent involvement to new teachers, what would that lesson be?

Please complete the following demographic information. This data will be held in the strictest of confidence.

Gender (circle one):            Male                            Female

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Highest Level of Education Obtained: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Position Held: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of Tenure at Current Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your participation in this survey.

## Parent Survey

Please provide some background information about yourself (*mark one box for each*).

1. Gender: Male Female
2. Marital Status: Married Divorced Separated
3. Number of children in this school: 0 1 2 3 4 or more
4. Number of children under 18 living in your home: 1 2 3 4 5 or more
5. Relationship to children in the school: Parent Relative Guardian Other
6. Main language spoken at home: English Spanish
7. Frequency of visits to the school: Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often
8. Frequency of visits to your children classroom: Never Rarely Sometimes Often  
Very Often
9. Minutes spent with your child reading or doing homework: 10 20 30 40 or  
more
10. Do you consider yourself a migrant worker: Yes No

**Provide any comments below or attach them to this survey. Thank you for sharing your views with us!**

## Encuesta para padres

Por favor de proveer información acerca de usted mismo (*circular solamente una respuesta*).

1. Sexo: Masculino Femenino
2. Estado Civil: Casado/a Divorciado/a Separado/a
3. Número de hijos en esta escuela: 0 1 2 3 4 o más
4. Número de hijos viviendo en casa bajo la edad de 18: 1 2 3 4 5  
o más
5. Relación con los niños de la escuela: Padre Pariente Guardián Otro

6. Principal lenguaje hablado en casa: Inglés Español
7. Frecuencia de visitas a la escuela: Nunca Raramente Algunas veces  
Seguido Muy seguido
8. Frecuencia de visitas al salón de su hijo: Nunca Raramente Algunas veces  
Seguido Muy seguido
9. Minutos dedicados con su hijo leyendo o haciendo tarea: 10 20 30 40 o más
10. Es usted un trabajador emigrante: Sí No
11. **Proveer cualquier comentario en la parte de abajo o adherirlo a la encuesta.**

**Gracias por compartir con nosotros!**

### 1<sup>st</sup> grade students' survey

This survey asks for your opinions about your school. It will take less than 5 minutes to finish. It uses faces with “smiles” and “frowns” so you can tell us if you agree or disagree with the sentence.

1. My teacher talks to my family if I am having problems learning. 😊 ☹️
2. If I am doing a good job in school, my teacher tells my family. 😊 ☹️
3. Parents and adults often come and help at school. 😊 ☹️
4. I get help on my schoolwork at home. 😊 ☹️
5. My parents read with me every day. 😊 ☹️
6. I like my teacher. 😊 ☹️
7. I like this school. 😊 ☹️

**I am a:** Boy Girl

### Encuesta de primer grado

Esta encuesta pregunta por tu opinión acerca de tu escuela. Te va a tomar menos de 5 minutos para terminarlo. Esta encuesta tiene una carita feliz para cuando es sí y una carita triste cuando la respuesta es no.

1. Mi maestra habla con mi familia sí yo estoy teniendo problemas de aprendizaje. 😊 ☹️
2. Mi maestra se comunica con mi familia sí yo estoy haciendo bien en la escuela. 😊 ☹️
3. Padres y adultos seguido vienen y ayudan en la escuela. 😊 ☹️
4. Me ayudan en mi casa con mis tareas de la escuela. 😊 ☹️
5. Mis padres leen conmigo todos los días. 😊 ☹️
6. Me gusta la maestra que tengo. 😊 ☹️
7. Me gusta mí escuela. 😊 ☹️

**Yo soy:** Niño Niña

**Staff's survey cover letter**

November 1, 2006

Dear staff:

As part of a master's program in education, I am writing a research paper on parent involvement. In order to gather information, I am conducting a survey designed to identify characteristics of an effective parent involvement in our school. This survey is being sent only to our school.

I am asking that you complete the attached survey instrument and return to me as soon as possible in my mailbox. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Rosa Padilla

Table 1 – Mean Scores and Standard Deviations

Question	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q1: I believe that parent involvement in our school is essential	37	1.810	0.405
Q2: I believe in community involvement	37	1.891	0.357
Q3: I always appear energetic to participate in any activity related with parent involvement	37	1.864	0.853
Q4: I am warm and affable when a parent comes to my classroom?	37	1.864	0.853
Q5: I deeply care about the welfare of the students	37	1.945	0.568
Q6: I encourage or participate in creative types of events that involve parents?	37	2.189	0.951