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Administrators’ Perspectives of Parent Involvement in South Carolina Elementary Schools

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ADMINISTRATORS' PERSPECTIVES OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTH CAROLINA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Curriculum and Instruction

by
Paula K. Schubert
August 2010

Accepted by:
Dr. Dolores Stegelin, Committee Chair
Dr. Vivian Correa
Dr. Patricia First
Dr. Robert Knoeppel
Dr. Larry Grimes
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine administrators’ perspectives regarding parent involvement within the context of six typologies of parent involvement. A survey was sent to elementary principals in the state of South Carolina, which resulted in an overall response rate of 210 respondents. This study, which was exploratory in nature, utilized a logistic regression model with quantitative descriptive statistical analysis to understand the perceptions of administrators. The three research questions examined were: (A) what do South Carolina principals report are the parent involvement activities they implement in public elementary schools? (B) to what extent do these parent involvement practices associate with Epstein’s six types of parent involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community)? (C) which variables (type of school, years of experience, gender, community size, and family structure) influence the principals reporting of parent involvement in South Carolina public elementary schools?

Overall, the results indicated that South Carolina elementary principals in this study perceived their programs as utilizing various forms of the six types of involvement to create opportunities for parents to actively participate in their children’s education. In addition, parent involvement was associated with factors such as communication, varied times of activities, funding, available resources, transportation, and community size. In describing successful factors that promote involvement at their school, administrators emphasized the importance of open-door policies and contacting parents to come help at
school. Also, the findings indicated that schools in South Carolina face challenges in funding programs and scheduling activities to accommodate working parents.

Recommendations for practice and further research are included in this study. This study added to research demonstrating the importance of elementary principals building programs that involve parents.
DEDICATION

First, only because of God’s grace did I accomplish this goal. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and mind in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7).

I also dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Michael, who provided encouragement numerous times and gave me ample time to focus on my writing. I could not have done this without your unwavering support. My sons, Michael and David, you are and have always been such a source of joy and pride.
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I am grateful and blessed to have made so many friends at Clemson University while going through the doctoral program. Thank you very much for listening, encouraging, and supporting me.

Finally, I want to recognize Jon C. who unselfishly guided me through the quantitative analysis of my data. Jon, your humor and willingness to respond to my many questions was invaluable in this process. I am truly thankful that you were willing to assist me as I learned so much from you.
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Overlapping Spheres of Influence
Background

Although progress has been made with parent involvement over the last half century, there still remains a divide between schools and families. Research over the past three decades has demonstrated that parent involvement affects children’s educational outcomes (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Anderson & Minke, 2007; Cotton, 2003; Mattingly, Prislin, McKenzie, Rodriguez, & Kayzar, 2002; Morris & Taylor, 1998; Eccles & Harold, 1996). Despite the evidence validating that schools with strong, positive relationships with parents are successful, school administrators still struggle to find innovative ways to reach out and connect with parents (Sanders et al., 2009; Wanat, 1994). Furthermore, researchers have acknowledged that principals set the climate for parent involvement in schools (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Hiatt-Michael, 2006; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004; Pleyvak, 2003; Desimone, Finn-Stevenson, & Henrich, 2000). In addition, teachers depict school climate and principal support as important features of parent involvement (Becker & Epstein, 1982). The importance of principal leadership in developing strong partnership programs to involve families has been consistently identified in research (Westmorelan, Rosenberg, Lopez, & Weiss, 2009; Sheldon, 2005; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004; Sanders & Simon, 2002).

There is a need for school administrators to build programs that enable families to partner with schools (Sanders et al., 2009; Wanat, 1994). Research demonstrates that most parents want their children to be successful in school and want to help them achieve
success (Lareau, 2000; Mapp, 2002). Unfortunately, parents face obstacles such as work schedules, lack of time, and lack of child care, as well as schools failing to encourage involvement (Flynn & Nolan, 2008). Also, research has demonstrated that there is a disparity between administrators’ beliefs and the parent involvement practices occurring in schools (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009). Finally, results from numerous studies confirm that principals are not adequately prepared to implement parent involvement programs (Westmoreland, 2009; Johnson, Rochkind, & Doble, 2008; LaPointe, Meyerson, & Darling-Hammond, 2006; Orr, 2006).

Parent involvement comprises a broad range of behaviors including volunteering at school, providing learning support at home (Barnyak et al., 2009), attending parent-teacher conferences, and being actively involved in school decision-making opportunities such as parent and teacher organizations (PTA) (Barnyak et al., 2009; Englund, Lucker, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004). Parent involvement also includes creating a home environment to support children’s learning (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002). With the understanding that parents are an important variable in student success, defining the factors that influence involvement should be of considerable interest to school administrators (Feuerstein, 2000). Therefore, the primary emphasis of this study consists of identifying the elementary school principals’ perceptions of parent involvement in public schools in South Carolina.

In addition to lack of funding, many school districts cite lack of parent involvement as the second major obstacle to school improvement (Gonzalez, 2002). Studies indicate a positive relationship between parent involvement and children’s
educational success, especially in the elementary school years (Cotton, 2003; Catsambis, 2001; Epstein, 1995; Singh, Bickley, Trivette, Keith, Keith, & Anderson, 1995; Wanat, 1994). Because communication is one of the important components of parent involvement, schools that have organized practices to inform and encourage parents’ engagement in their children’s educations have found these practices to be beneficial (Barnyak et al., 2009; Anderson & Minke, 2007). Supporting children’s learning occurs when parents and school personnel interact to create a framework for engagement (Walker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2006). School practices that were sensitive to parents’ needs have been found to encourage parent involvement (Wanat, 1994; Epstein, 1990).

In the 1800s, parent involvement in the school was not considered a topic that required studying (Hiatt-Michael, 2006). However, in the past several decades, important changes occurred in the family structure (Epstein, 2001). The traditional family changed, and families were generally smaller with more single parents, mothers working outside the home, and an increasing amount of hours spent at the workplace (Hiatt-Michael, 2006; Weiss, Kreider, Lopez, & Chatman, 2005). Other societal changes affected the level of involvement in schools including immigration across the globe and an increased need for education to compete in today’s rapidly developing technological world (Hiatt-Michael, 2006; Swick, 2004). This transformation of the family structure changed the level of involvement of parents in schools as well as the amount of time parents had available to help children with learning at home. In addition, families had less time to participate in school activities. Increasingly, both home and school environments were affected.
Parents are so involved with staying alive and being able to keep up economically, there is little or no energy left to devote to children – much less spend time teaching, disciplining, etc. The time they have is spent being loving, lenient, and feeling guilty for not having time or energy to help their children. Parents want to be supportive and help, but they need support and encouragement. Yet without their support, schools cannot make any difference (Epstein, 2001, p.130).

This statement provides insight into the struggles families are facing today and the need for schools to take a systemic approach to encourage families to become actively involved in the education of their children.

Researchers indicated that schools struggle to engage families (Bouffard & Weiss, 2008; Lopez, Kreider, & Caspe, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, & Reed, 2002; Epstein, 2001). School leaders face challenges with time constraints and other responsibilities as they attempt to find innovative ways to build partnerships with families and sustain meaningful parent involvement. In addition, the cultural differences of families in schools today must be considered when implementing practices (Sanders et al., 2009; Sheldon, 2008; Eberly, Joshi, & Konzal, 2007). This requires school administrators to think beyond traditional methods in order to communicate and partner with families in ways that will support children and ensure success. Schools that make an effort to become positively involved with parents may have a greater understanding of the family (Berger, 2000). Studies have confirmed that schools that construct policies to encourage collaborative relationships create environments that foster communication and demonstrate cultural understanding (Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999).

One way school administrators and teachers demonstrate an awareness of the significance of parent involvement is by making an effort to learn about students’
families and reach out in a culturally responsive manner, which promotes respect, acceptance, and support (Sanders et al., 2009). Recognizing that parents are important sources of information and have a great amount of influence on their children’s development is beneficial for all involved (Walker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2006; Domina, 2005).

In order to promote family, school, and community, schools must respond to the unique needs of today’s families. Epstein (2001) surveyed 160 deans of education to determine their perceptions of the ways prepare future teachers and administrators for are prepared for building partnerships with families. The results from this study confirmed that participants believed parent involvement was an important topic that needs to be addressed. However, the deans acknowledged that graduates entering the field were not prepared to involve parents and the community in school partnerships.

Schools should actively involve parents in order to promote the success of all children. This requires learning strategies and skills to involve parents in the education of their children (Wanat, 1994). The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium’s (ISLLC) standards corroborated that school administrators had an obligation to foster relationships with parents to support students’ learning (Sanders et al., 2009). The principal is one of the keys to building relationships with parents. When the school administrator collaborates with staff, parents, and the community to respond to the diverse interests and needs of the children, positive outcomes occur (Sanders et al., 2009).
Federal and state education agencies continue to mandate that school districts engage parents in their children’s education (Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007; Chrispeels, 1996). One example is the reauthorization of The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which has put parent involvement at the forefront of national policy (Barnyak et al., 2009; Sanders et al., 2009; Cotton, 2005; Epstein, 2006). This law required schools to review and re-examine their current policies on parent involvement (Bouffard et al., 2008; Fantuzzo, Perry, & Childs, 2006; Epstein, 2005). In addition to NCLB, entire school reform efforts to restructure school curricula and alter decision-making procedures were suggested (Sanders & Harvey, 2002). Also, school principals were required to comply with policies and programs such as Title I and the NCLB Act in order to receive federal funds (Barnyak et al., 2009; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). Title I, which was once labeled Chapter I, serves children who are considered at risk of failing in school because of educational and economic difficulties (Sanders et al., 2009; Epstein, 2001). Studies have indicated that children from low-income families, immigrant children, and children with special needs were at the highest risk of poor school performance (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). The Title I program continues today, and districts are required to implement programs that include connecting with families. To meet the needs of these children, school leaders need to focus efforts on creating strong relationships with the parents. Research has continuously substantiated the theory that families play a crucial role in their children’s educational success (Sanders et al., 2009; Bouffard et al., 2008; Epstein, 1995). Schools need to implement organized policies to develop partnerships with families (Sanders et al., 2009; Wanat, 1994).
The principal may be one of the most important reasons that a school is successful in involving parents. Sheldon and Van Voorhis (2004) described the role of the principal as one of advocating and developing programs to build partnerships with families. For this to occur, school leaders should establish and sustain a supportive school and community environment. The principal has a key responsibility to involve faculty, students, and parents (Sanders et al., 2009; Varrati, Lavine, & Turner, 2009). Programs that endorse partnerships between the home and the school community can be effective if policies are developed to promote parent involvement. Furthermore, school staff is more likely to encourage parent involvement when they receive adequate professional development to learn the skills necessary to encourage partnerships. Schools can create a climate that welcomes families (Swick, 2006; Walker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2006) with the principal playing a significant role in developing this kind of participatory environment.

**Purpose of the Study**

Parent involvement programs are not new to school districts (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009; Catsambis, 2001). However, few studies have focused on the principal’s role in promoting parent involvement in schools. “Past studies have focused on the teachers’ role[s] regarding parent involvement and the reasons for an increase in such involvement, but few deal with the principal’s role in facilitating parents’ involvement” (Angelucci, 2008, p. 5). With their many responsibilities as school leaders, principals play a vital role in a school’s effectiveness (Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004; Leithwood &
Riehl, 2003). This includes responding to the increasing diversity in family characteristics and guiding schools through the multitude of challenges that exist today. In addition, parent involvement policies and practices should actively involve all stakeholders (Bouffard et al., 2008). Accordingly, principals seeking to move toward involving all families must organize their school programs in a strategic manner to address the challenges that keep parents from becoming involved. Administrators create environments that promote family involvement through their support of a variety of relevant activities that build trusting relationships (Sanders et al., 2009; Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986).

Despite existing policies endorsing partnerships between schools and parents, there is limited research on administrator’s actions to promote meaningful parent engagement (Auerbach, 2009). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand administrators’ perspectives of parent involvement. This research study will examine the parent involvement practices elementary school principals implement and how they are aligned with Epstein’s six types of family involvement (2001). This framework provides six constructs with varied activities to involve parents in their children’s education (Epstein, 2001). If schools are to develop partnerships and implement successful programs that enhance parent involvement, examining the activities that elementary school principals currently utilize to involve families is essential.

There are no specifically defined policies or published guidelines available for principals to utilize to enhance parent involvement; therefore, the researcher’s intent was to survey principals using an instrument that Epstein and staff created to measure the
types of involvement that exist in school programs. *The Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships Survey* is an instrument designed to measure the ways schools are reaching out to parents (Salinas, Epstein, Sanders, Davis, & Douglas, 1999). Even though principals play a fundamental role in setting the course for successful schools, existing knowledge on the best ways to prepare and develop highly qualified principals is sparse (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Van Voorhis et al., 2004; Leithwood et al., 2003).

The types of parent involvement practices implemented by elementary school principals in public schools in South Carolina were investigated in this study. Previous research on the implementation of the framework developed by the National Network of Partnership Schools (Epstein, 2001) was associated with increased academic success (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Epstein, 1991, 2001; Dauber & Epstein, 1993), higher rates of student attendance, and reduced chronic absenteeism (Epstein & Sheldon, 2000).

The principal is perceived as the key leader (Rallis, & Goldring, 2000) who establishes the climate of the school and incorporates policies for professional development to encourage staff to reach out to families. It is critical to create strong affiliations between the home and school community in order to engage and motivate students (Leithwood et al., 2003). Because principals are the school leaders, it is important to examine the perspectives of administrators regarding parent involvement in their school programs.
Statement of the Problem

“Family and community engagement is often seen as an add-on. There hasn’t been a whole-hearted acceptance of the fact that family involvement is an approach that must be seen as part of the instructional core and not something that’s separate” (Mapp, 2008, p 6.). On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed landmark legislation titled the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) in an effort to improve the quality of our public school systems. The passage of this act sought to raise children’s achievement scores and reduce the disparity caused by income and ethnicity (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). School districts were given mandates that included regular testing of students and increased parent involvement in children’s education. With the demands on schools to be accountable, there is a understanding that assistance and support is needed more than ever from parents, principals, teachers, and the community to support children’s learning. This concern for accountability and the limited research that exists regarding the role the principal assumes in building relationships with families is an area that needs to be studied (Van Voorhis et al., 2004; Queen-Melendez, 2004).

Research on family and community involvement in administrative training programs is limited (Hiatt-Michael, 2006). With the heightened interest to have schools build relationships with families in order to assist children in achieving success, the gap between existing preservice education for administrators and the desired education that would be beneficial needs to be studied. Even though parent involvement affects everyone in the school, it has traditionally been viewed as a relationship between the parent and the teacher. The support of district-level and school-level administrators is
crucial to the process of enhancing the school environment (Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000). “The school practices, not just the family characteristics, make a difference in whether parents become involved and feel informed about their children’s education” (Dauber & Epstein, 1993, p. 67).

The literature guides this study on the role that elementary school principals play in developing policies and practices for parent involvement. In addition, specific approaches principals utilize to enhance partnerships between the family, school, and communities were examined.

**Research Questions**

Three specific research questions will be explored in this research study.

- What do South Carolina principals report are the parent involvement activities they implement in public elementary schools?

- To what extent do these parent involvement practices associate with Epstein’s six types of parent involvement (parenting, communications, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community)?

- Which variables (type of school, gender, years of experience, community, and family structure) influence the principals reporting of parent involvement in South Carolina public elementary schools?

**Research Hypothesis**

- There are currently no existing systematic parent involvement practices in public elementary schools in South Carolina.

- Parent involvement activities implemented by South Carolina elementary school principals are not associated with Epstein’s six types of parent involvement.
There are no variables that influence parent involvement activities in South Carolina public elementary schools.

**Significance of the Study**

This study will add to the limited research on the role of the principal in building school-parent partnerships. There is a need to study school policies and practices employed by principals to develop strong home-school connections. With federal education mandates issued over the past several decades and the concern for accountability in schools, examining parent involvement practices implemented by elementary school principals in South Carolina is particularly important to consider and study.

Research demonstrates that strong parent, school, and community involvement has a positive impact on children (MacNeil & Patin, 2005). Parents come to the school with a wide range of past experiences and diverse expectations for their children’s education. The beliefs and practices of administrators and teachers affect children’s academic progress (Barnyak et al., 2009). In addition, parents may have conflicts or self-efficacy concerns that affect their relationships with the school. When school staff views parent participation as minimal, the school may become disillusioned and question the purpose of involving families (Davis, 2000).

This study examined principals’ perceptions of the types of practices they report using and how their practices align with Epstein’s six types of parent involvement. The findings of this research are useful to policy makers, superintendents, school principals,
teachers, parents, and families. The results inform school leaders on specific strategies and practices that have been reported by principals and can serve to further analyze a potential model for school districts to utilize and implement as a means toward improved student outcomes and school reform.

**Limitations of the Study**

Although the findings in this study help to broaden the current research on administrator’s perspectives on parent involvement, several limitations do exist. First, this research study does not assume that the context or participants are typical of all elementary schools. In addition, the study is limited to elementary school principals in South Carolina. Third, this study is limited to examining the relationship between certain variables and the administrator’s perspectives about parent involvement. This study is limited by the number of participants who responded to the survey. Finally, an electronic version of the survey was sent to administrators and this may affect the number of responses, as some participants may have time constraints or lack the desire or self-efficacy to complete the survey.

**Definitions of Terms**

- **Principal** – school-level leader, administrator
- **HFRP** – Harvard Family Research Project
- **No Child Left Behind (NCLB)** – 2002 reauthorization and amendment of the Elementary Secondary Education Act of 1965; expands the government’s role in the operation of public schools
• **Program Structure** – the organization of the school

• **Parent/Teacher Association** – assembled and driven mainly by parents of students; these organizations aid in the home/school cooperative by assisting the school in functions such as fundraising and volunteering

• **Parents** – Legal guardians or other persons (such as a grandparent or stepparent) with whom the child lives, and who are legally responsible for the child [Section 9101(31), ESEA]

• **Parent Involvement** – the participation of parents in regular, two-way, meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities

• **Epstein’s Six Types of Partnerships Framework** - includes six typologies used to illuminate the interactions between home and school; the typologies are: (1) parenting; (2) communicating; (3) volunteering; (4) learning at home; (5) decision-making; and (6) collaborating with the community

### Summary

The goal of this study was to investigate the specific practices employed by elementary school principals to promote parent-school involvement. The instrument utilized in this research was selected to capture relevant information, and it is a valid and reliable survey. *The Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships* (Salinas et al., 1999) is based on the Six Types of Partnerships Framework. Each of the six types of involvement contributes to a framework that describes activities to involve parents in the school.

This study comprised five chapters. Chapter two included the literature review, which provided a historical description of the importance of parent involvement and relevant federal legislation, defined parent involvement, provided a theoretical base for the study, discussed specifics related to school-parent-community partnerships, and
described related research and the role of the principal in American public education. Chapter three described the methodology and procedures, including the research design, population, instrumentation, and data collection and analysis techniques. Chapter four summarized the research data including response rate calculations and tables, descriptive and statistical analysis of the survey data, and an analysis and presentation of the open-ended research questions. Finally, Chapter five presented a summary of the findings coupled with conclusions, recommendations for further study, and implications for the field of education.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: Families have a major influence on their children’s achievement in school and through life” (Henderson & Mapp, 2002, p.7).

Historically, schools have taught children social and basic academic skills (Morrison, 2009). With more mothers entering the workforce, children are spending significant parts of the day in childcare settings, and the increase in the number of single parents has brought about a change in the role of the school and family in children’s education (Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris, 1997). However, school practices today are often based on yesterday’s idealized images of the traditional family (Powell, 1991). With the changes that have occurred in families, such as more single parent homes and more mothers in the workforce, establishing programs that support the contemporary family is important in order for students to have improved learning outcomes (Sanders et al., 2009; MacNeil et al., 2005). For this to occur, principals need to gain knowledge about families so they can establish goals that will meet the needs of children. Parallel to the preservation of the traditional perspective toward families is the lack of systematic preparation of school leadership for involving diverse families. There continues to be unclear direction for school leadership even though much research exists to support the significant role parents play in children’s academic success (Hiatt-Michael, 2006; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004; Queen-Melendez, 2004; Cotton, 2003).

This chapter provides an overview of the historical context of parent involvement, including a definition of parent involvement, and presents Epstein’s theoretical model of
overlapping spheres of influence with the six types of school, family, and community involvement. Within this framework, the underlying principle for this study is established. Finally, a systematic review of literature is presented on the role of the elementary school principal’s leadership in enhancing parent involvement.

The strongest and most consistent predictors of parent involvement at school and at home are the specific school programs and teacher practices that encourage and guide parent involvement. When parents believe the schools are doing little to involve them, they report doing little at home. Parents who perceive the school as planning activities and events to involve them are more involved in their children’s education at home and at school. The school’s practices, not just the family characteristics, make a difference in whether parents become involved in and feel informed about their children’s education (Dauber & Epstein, 1993, p. 67).

The success of specific school programs and practices that encourage parent involvement is dependent on administrators. Research demonstrates that parents, regardless of their ethnicity, want to be involved in their children’s education and need guidance in providing enriching opportunities for their children to learn (Flynn & Nolan, 2008; Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2005; Morris & Taylor, 1998, Powell, 1991). It is recognized that parent involvement can boost student achievement, and schools that gain knowledge about the families in the school community can better facilitate parent involvement (Lumpkin, 2010; Varella, 2008; Cotton, 2003). This knowledge can then be utilized to develop programs and practices that encourage parent involvement.

**Historical Context of Parent Involvement in Recent American Education**

Before the Industrial Revolution, children received the majority of their education in the home. Mothers taught their children the basic and occupational skills necessary to
be farmers, hunters, and housekeepers. “More commonly, some well-meaning parents, who were capable, made efforts to teach their children to read and possibly write. Many children of the less affluent members of society, however, had little chance of receiving even the basic rudiments of literary training” (Urban & Waggoner, 2004, p.23).

The increase in industrialization brought many people from rural areas to urban communities where the demand for skilled labor was increasing. When families realized that their children required an education that trained them for a job in industry, schools took over the role parents had once held and provided the basic instruction for students to acquire the necessary education. This led to the establishment of federal and state policies to involve parents in their children’s education.

**Significant Legislation for American Public Schools**

The federal government continues to implement policies to increase parent involvement (Bouffard & Weiss, 2008; Mattingly, Prislin, McKenzie, Rodriguez, & Kayzar, 2002; Epstein, 2001; Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986). Federal and state funding for parent involvement programs has endured with the knowledge that these programs are an effective means of improving student success (Mattingly et al., 2002). In addition, frequent studies have demonstrated that parent involvement is correlated with improved student attendance (Sheldon, 2007), higher student academic achievement, and more positive student and parent attitudes toward education (Sanders et al., 2009; Walker & Dempsey, 2006; Griffith, 1998; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Henderson, 1987).
The 1960s brought major changes in education (Berger, 1991) as the topic of parent involvement gained importance (Epstein, 2001). The Office of Economic Opportunity recognized from research that early childhood education had an advantageous effect on children’s development and resulted in the establishment of the Head Start program in 1965 (Morrison, 2007). Head Start, a federally funded comprehensive child development program has served low-income children and their families since 1965, and was the first governmental program to mandate that schools include parents and families as part of their organizational structure. This model had a component that included a governance and management team with representatives including administrators, teachers, and parents. The Head Start program was established with the belief that educational success for young children from impoverished environments could be enhanced by including parents in their children’s education (Haynes, Comer, & Lee, 1988). This program has generated a multitude of opportunities for parents to contribute to and participate in their children’s education, including serving on boards within the Head Start organization. Parent participation continues to be an integral part of the Head Start program with the acknowledgment that all families are important in their children’s education (Epstein, 2001). Facilitating parent involvement by implementing activities similar to those advocated through the Head Start program may provide elementary school principals with models that emphasize the value of parent engagement in children’s education.

In addition to the Head Start program, another government-sponsored program that has emphasized parent involvement is Title I (Barnyak et al., 2009; Epstein, 2001).
This program was created in the 1960s and requires that schools receiving Title I funds include a family involvement component in their school policy (Sanders et al., 2009; Chrispeels, 1996). The Title I program supplies financial assistance to school districts to develop policies and practices that create a framework for parent involvement in schools with high percentages of children from low-income neighborhoods (Kesslar-Sklar et al., 2000). Title I focuses on several different objectives in order to ensure that children receive a quality education (Barnyak et al., 2009; Morrison, 2007; Epstein, 2001). Providing meaningful opportunities for parents to participate in the education of their children is one of the important objectives of this program; for example, parent advisory committees are one way to engage parents in Title I school programs. Furthermore, schools encourage active participation and improve home school relationships with welcoming school climates (Flynn et al., 2008; Desimone, Finn-Stevenson, & Henrich, 2000; Griffith, 1998). Parent involvement also increases in programs such as Title I when creative approaches are established to acknowledge the multiplicity of factors that affect involvement.

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) was part of Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty program. In the last several decades, the ESEA has endeavored to reduce the impact of poverty (Perry, 2006; Kesslar-Sklar et al., 2000). The reauthorization of this act in 2001 provided schools with financial assistance towards the development of educational programs designed to ensure that children meet challenging state academic requirements (Morrison, 2007; Epstein, 2001). In addition,
all schools receiving Title I funds must implement programs that engage parents in ways that support student success.

Another recent major legislation, the \textit{Goals 2000: Educate America Act}, endorsed performance standards for the fundamental components of the educational process and made children’s education a national priority (Fantuzzo, Perry, & Childs, 2006; Sanders & Harvey, 2002; Broussard, 2000; Mitchell, 2000; NCES, 1998). In an effort to encourage and increase the participation of parents in their children’s schooling, the National Education Goals authorized schools to develop policies and practices that encouraged parents and schools to partner to support children’s educational success both at home and at school (Carey, Lewis, Farris, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, 1996). Research identified the home and community as one of the primary contexts in which children learn (Resto & Alston, 2006; Epstein, 1992), and positive outcomes for student success increased with involvement (Smith, 2006; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004).

\textbf{National PTA}

Since the publication of a \textit{Nation at Risk} in 1983, there has been a focus on raising the level of academic achievement of students (National PTA, 2009). Since 1930, PTA membership has grown from 190,000 to almost 1,500,000 (Berger, 1991). This organization issued its own standards in 1997 for parent involvement (National PTA, 2009). The PTA recognizes the importance of setting expectations for children to achieve at even higher levels. Using the most recent research and working with national experts, PTA updated its national standards in 2007. These six standards identified what
parents, schools, and communities can do to support student success. The following standards are the revised National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs:

- Standard 1 – Welcoming all families into the school community
- Standard 2 – Communicating effectively
- Standard 3 – Supporting student success
- Standard 4 – Speaking up for every child
- Standard 5 – Sharing power
- Standard 6 – Collaborating with community

The National PTA developed the standards utilizing Epstein’s model of the six types of family involvement. The strategies provided by the National PTA focus on initiating them at the local school level since alteration of school policies must begin within the school building.

A report by the U. S. Department of Education (National Association of State Coordinators of Compensatory Education, 1996) confirmed that schools that are the highest performing and serve economically disadvantaged children distinguish themselves by finding creative ways to unite with parents (Sanders et al., 2002). Organizations such as the PTA strive to create meaningful partnerships with families to improve student outcomes. This recent transformation of parent involvement has progressed with the government mandating schools develop programs to build partnerships with families. These mandates reaffirmed the importance of examining the role of the principal in developing and implementing policies and practices to involve families.
The No Child Left Behind Act

More recently, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) mandated schools to establish policies and programs for parent involvement (Fantuzzo et al., 2006; Epstein, 2005a). Schools are responsible for developing academic programs (Epstein, 2006) that meet the specific needs of children. One of the essential components identified in the NCLB act is school improvement (Epstein, 2006). Section 1118 of the NCLB recognizes standards that are necessary to achieve this goal; these standards include communicating with parents regarding their children’s progress on a regular basis and providing professional development opportunities for staff to assist in building partnerships with families (Barnyk et al., 2009; Sanders et al., 2009; Epstein, 2005a, 2004). Also, parents whose children are attending under-performing schools have the choice to either relocate to a more successful school or select supplemental services (Epstein, 2005a). With the NCLB act focusing on change throughout the entire school, the principal, as the school leader, has a crucial responsibility to create opportunities for families to be involved (Epstein, 2004; Desimone, 2002). However, as Epstein (2005b) notes, these conditions can only be met when school districts organize the necessary resources.

In her research synthesis on effective school practices, Cotton (1995) listed the responsibilities of teachers and administrators to involve families. These include:

- Developing policies that legitimize the importance of parent involvement and providing ongoing support in efforts to involve families
- Clearly communicating the procedures for involvement to parents
- Engaging parent and community participation on school-based management teams
• Conducting vigorous outreach activities, especially in culturally diverse school settings, to involve parent and community representatives from all cultural groups in the community

• Making special efforts to involve the parents of disadvantaged, racial-minority, and language-minority students, who are often underrepresented among parents involved in the schools

• Involving parents and community members in decision making regarding school governance and school improvement efforts (Cotton, 1995, p.33)

These practices describe the role of the school in building partnerships with families. Research has confirmed that communicating frequently with parents enhances children’s school performance. In addition, offering different options for parents to participate in activities helps to establish and maintain regular home-school relationships (Cotton, 1995). Understanding the particular needs of the families in the school is crucial to plan and develop programs (Smith, 2006). School-based management includes a broad representation with a supportive administrator, teachers, and parents who work together to promote the attainment of goals for students. Administrators who strive to improve their relationships with families through their work with school governance teams can be effective in increasing school performance.

The mandates the federal government instituted for school districts in the last 50 years (e.g., NCLB and Title 1) required schools across the United States to unite with families to ensure that children received the educational support they needed to be successful. With the emphasis on whole school reform efforts, restructuring school curriculum and decision-making procedures was one means for principals to engage parents in the planning and improvement of school programs (Sanders & Harvey, 2002).
The principal has an opportunity to establish systemic processes to connect with parents (Caspe, Lopez & Wolos, 2006).

Desimone (2001) analyzed data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS) on linking parent involvement to student achievement. From the analysis, students’ ethnicities and family income affected their learning. Results from the study confirmed that the relationship between child development and family functioning needs to be further studied to understand how family relationships affect learning.

School reform had a goal of improving students’ educational success. The United States made multiple attempts to reform the nation’s schools (Desimone, 2002). The continuous policies that the federal government mandated for schools helped to support the rationale for encouraging active participation of all stakeholders in the education of children. Knowledge of effective parent involvement practices that promoted student success in diverse family contexts provided educators with necessary information to develop policies and plan activities for parents and families.

We believe that strengthening the connection between families and schools is so important that we have made it one of America's National Education Goals. The goal declares that by the year 2000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase parent involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children (Richard Riley, U.S. Secretary of Education, 1998).

**Defining Parent Involvement**

Even though parent involvement has been measured in many ways (Grolnick et al., 1997), ambiguous descriptions of what defines parent involvement remain (Broussard, 2000). Involvement includes parents spending time engaged in learning
activities with their child, volunteering at school (Feuerstein, 2000), attending conferences, and assisting their child with assignments (Fantuzzo et al., 2006; Baker & Soden, 1997; Epstein, 1995). Other researchers have defined involvement as learning activities parents provide in the home, classroom support (e.g., reading mothers), parent nights, helping-hand services at school (e.g., parents assisting with celebrations), and formal participation on school boards or councils (Driessen, Smit, & Sleegers, 2005).

While numerous studies have correlated parent involvement with higher academic achievement and more positive parent and student attitudes (Walker et al., 2006; Mattingly, 2002; Griffith, 1998; Henderson, 1987; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991), there still remains a need to understand parent involvement in order to implement programs that intentionally involve parents (Smith, 2006).

It is necessary to define parent involvement in school to discover the factors that influence their involvement. Caspe and Lopez (2006), in their evaluation of family strengthening programs, defined family involvement as parents’ efforts to support children’s learning and development in the home and the amount of participation parents provide within the school environment. Epstein (2001) defines parent involvement as the programs and policies that schools initiate to facilitate parents and families as partners in the educational process at home or in school. In addition, involvement can also include a broad range of home and school support behavior from discussions with a child about homework to attendance at school functions (Feuerstein, 2000).

The various strategies that schools utilize to reach out to parents are important, and they depend upon many factors including the motivation parents have to become
involved. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) explored the reasons why parents choose to be involved. They defined parent involvement as: (1) home-based activities such as helping with homework and discussing the child’s school day and (2) school-based activities such as volunteering in the classroom, attending conferences, participating in field trips, and providing enrichment activities such as reading aloud to groups of students. From their research, they found several factors that influence parents’ decisions to be involved. First is the belief that they have the skills necessary to assist their child. Second is the perception that the school wants them to be involved (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1997). The school’s willingness to reach out and welcome families can determine how much involvement occurs. The principal can support parents with necessary materials and supplies to help their children at home as well as opportunities to receive training to improve parenting skills. In addition, providing administrative support to staff is important.

In their study on parents’ involvement in children’s school, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) described parents’ multidimensional conceptualizations of parent involvement as the alignment of schools’ resources to the child’s school experiences. For example, parents who participate in school activities and attend conferences relay the message to the child that school is important. In addition, the ways in which parents get involved in their children's school experiences vary according to their background and skills (Grolnick et al., 1994). Schools that aligned their resources to meet the needs of parents strengthened the relationship between home and school.
Generally, involvement is viewed from a school-centered idea (Waanders, Mendez, & Downer, 2007) where volunteering at school or attending parent-teacher conferences are familiar methods of parent participation.

Parents are so involved with staying alive and being able to keep up economically, there is little or no energy left to devote to children, much less spend time teaching, disciplining, etc. The time they have is spent being loving, lenient, and feeling guilty for not having the time or energy to help their children. Parents want to be supportive and help, but they can’t. Yet without their support, schools cannot make a difference (Epstein, 2001, p.130).

It is evident that families struggle to balance the stressors in their life. There is a need for schools to develop policies and practices that encourage families to take an active role in their children’s education.

A review of empirical work on why parents choose to be involved focused on role construction and invitations from school (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Overall, the literature reviewed suggested that life context variables affect parents’ decisions to be involved in their children’s education. These variables included time, energy, skills, and knowledge. The time that parents had available was dependent upon work schedules. Often, long hours at work and employment schedules with inflexibility affect parents’ time and energy and left minimal time for parents to actively engage in their children’s education. Skills and knowledge also affected motivation, as parents with less education felt they did not have adequate skills to assist their children with learning activities. If parents believed they had the necessary skills to help their children, they had a tendency to be more positive about participating in schoolwork (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1997).
It is significant to note that the responsiveness of the school to variables such as less education, low-income status, and demands of work schedules affected the amount of parent involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Family characteristics such as educational level and employment status also influence the types of involvement (Turney & Kao, 2009; Epstein, 2001). Families from lower socio-economic situations are often less involved than more educated, higher-income, and married parents (Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Griffith, 1998; Grolnick, 1997; Epstein, 1995). Parents who have attained more education are generally more involved at school and at home than those who are less educated. Parents who are employed are significantly less likely to participate in school activities because of time constraints (Epstein, 2001). With the demands of a job, there is less flexibility to become involved in other activities such as school programs (Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986).

In addition, family structure affects parents’ choices of involvement. Living in a home with two parents has been identified as a strong predictor of increased parent involvement (Crosnoe, 2001). Also, multigenerational families with grandparents residing in the home influence the level of involvement as grandparents can provide additional resources such as child care assistance (Turney et al., 2009). Studies have indicated that single parents and fathers are less involved in their children’s school activities (Sheldon, 2009). With more children living in single parent homes and more mothers in the workforce, children have less support available from family members (Barbour, Barbour, & Scully, 2009; Kellegan et al., 1993). Principals and school staff need to ensure that outreach to single parents and fathers occurs. Being responsive
includes planning activities and communicating in a manner that encourages involvement and participation.

Over the past several decades, researchers have studied specific methods low-income parents utilize to influence their children’s educational outcomes (Amatea, 2009; Eccles & Harold 1996). Domina (2005) studied whether parent involvement varied by socioeconomic backgrounds. More than 1,400 children enrolled in an elementary school in 1996 were studied to determine the influence of parents’ socioeconomic status (SES) on children’s educational development. The effects of parent involvement activities were reviewed to ascertain the relationship between different kinds of involvement and children’s educational outcomes. The results indicated that low-SES children may have more beneficial cognitive and behavioral outcomes than higher-SES children. This study confirmed that parents can have a positive effect on children’s educational outcomes when they volunteer at school, check homework regularly, and provide assistance with homework (Barbour et al., 2009; Domina, 2005; Noddings, 2005). Clearly expressed opinions on the value of school, discussions regarding school, and positive encouragement from parents impacts children’s outcomes (Deslandes & Bertrande, 2005; Henderson et al., 1986).

Research indicated that there were multiple definitions of family involvement (Grolnick et al., 1997). Studies continue to support the belief that family involvement is multifaceted, influenced by culture, class, and school supports (Weiss, 2005). Even though the practice of family involvement has been instituted in many schools, there is still a lack of consistent organization for building home-school relationships (Lopez,
Kreider, & Caspe, 2004; Grolnick et al., 1997). Because of this, the efforts schools are making to build effective policies and practices need to be studied. Research has indicated that students are more motivated to learn and develop attitudes that are more positive when their parents are involved (Barbour et al., 2009; Caspe, Lopez, & Wolos, 2006). Furthermore, children considered good students have parents who are more involved (Epstein, 2001).

Moreover, it is important to include home-based as well as school-based elements when determining what types of variables affect parents’ decisions to be involved in their children’s education (Anderson et al., 2007, Grolnick et al., 1997). Creating key opportunities for parents to participate in their children’s learning is beneficial for schools as well as families. Sustaining consistent family participation occurs when schools define exactly what involvement means and then demonstrate through practiced responsiveness to the needs and interests of the families they serve. Finally, an examination of the practices utilized in schools will provide additional information to assist educators in building successful partnerships between home and school.

**Theoretical Framework**

In this section, three parallel theories of parent involvement are described. They are the Social Ecology Theory, the Ecological Systems Theory, and the Theory of Overlapping Spheres. Considering theory from an ecological perspective can be beneficial to recognize that parent involvement is not an isolated event. Promoting enhanced learning for students depends upon parent involvement becoming meaningful
and useful, not just an add-on. The three theories and approaches are connected as they describe the influence of families, schools, and communities on the development of children. Parents provide the support for children at home to develop emotionally, socially, and cognitively, and schools must provide children with positive experiences that will enhance their learning opportunities.

The Social Ecology Theory focuses on the interactions of individuals in a group within a social system, such as a school (Comer & Haynes, 1991). The goal is to promote a sense of community and “cultivate a partnership between schools and families to support the healthy development of children” (Comer et al., 1991, 271). The Ecological Systems Theory describes the family as embedded in many systems and the environment highly influences a child’s development (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). The Theory of Overlapping Spheres represents the connection that the school, family, and community have with children’s educational success and suggests that the experiences children have in their environment affects their overall development (Epstein, 2001).

**Social Ecology Theory**

The first theory, the Social Ecology Theory, was built on theoretical concepts from child development in order to advance an effective approach to promoting parent involvement (Comer et al., 1991). The importance of building a social structure is emphasized in this theory with the understanding that relationships between people are complex. Comer discovered that, when school staff and students had difficult interactions, school climate and parent involvement were affected. Comer, with a team
of researchers from Yale, desired to transform the ecology of two schools (Barbour et al., 2009; Comer, 1991). The School Development Program, (SDP), was developed to change school climate to support children’s educational success (Desimone, 2009; Kesslar-Sklar et al., 2000; Haynes, Comer, & Lee, 1988). This program was instituted in elementary schools and included a component that enabled parents and staff “to aid the social development of students and to motivate them to achieve well both socially and academically” (Comer et al., 1991, p. 272). The parents who chose to participate on the school planning and management team were provided with information from teachers and principals regarding both their children and the community in which they lived. One of the components of this model included the recognition that a governance and management team would represent all adults involved in the school, including the school principal, teachers, and parents. School personnel and parents collaborated to make decisions about the school. To improve the academic climate of the school, governance teams consisting of the administrator, teachers, and parents established policies (Haynes et al., 1988). Realizing that meaningful involvement of parents can enhance the educational process, the School Development Program advocated for innovative practices that would actively encourage parent participation in daily activities at all levels in the school environment (Comer & Haynes, 1991).

Comer consistently advocated for parent involvement in the decision-making process as part of any reform project occurring in the schools (Comer & Haynes, 1991). Families provide support emotionally, socially, and culturally in order for children to be successful in school (Comer et al., 1991). Involving parents in all aspects of school
programs can result in an enhanced school atmosphere in which staff, parents, and children create a goal to be academically successful (Kesslar et al., 2000). The Social Ecology Theory, based on interactions between individuals, provides a view that parents and schools are important sources of influence.

**Ecological Systems Theory**

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory moves forward from the Social Ecology Theory to describe the many systems, including school organization and community resources that influence parent involvement. This developmental-ecological perspective provides a conceptual framework and identifies the family system as the most influential and proximal system in children's early learning (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). The ecological systems theory, developed by Bronfenbrenner (1995), describes the child and family as embedded in many systems of influence. The environment becomes an essential component of children’s development and affects decisions parents make regarding their children’s education. Empowering families requires understanding their strong points as well as their weaknesses (Swick & Williams, 2006; Smith, 2005). Families from deprived environments, which lack necessary economic resources, are less able to provide children with a variety of learning experiences. The home and community environment has a significant effect on children’s educational success and this adds another dimension to the role of administrators. Children from low-income households may experience less academic benefits than children from middle and upper income families because of the environment (Smith, 2005); school administrators who establish
two-way channels of communication with parents are more likely to learn about children’s backgrounds, which in turn assist teachers in planning effective instruction.

Bronfenbrenner’s theory describes the microsystem as face-to-face relations with family and peers. Within this system, the family is the most influential in children’s interactive ecological systems (Berger, 2000). Bronfenbrenner proposed to researchers that they consider the physical environment when studying the social processes that influence human development (1997). A family’s ability to nurture children is contingent upon the resources available in their immediate environment, including the home, school, neighborhood, and child care center (Powell, 1991). In addition, the lack of economic resources in a neighborhood does influence child development (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Kato Klevanov, 1994). Middle-class families generally have more supportive social connections and the financial ability to allow participation in extracurricular activities (Harris & Goodall, 2008) than those from impoverished homes. Also, the exposure to verbal language is higher in homes where parents provide literacy and language enrichment from birth (Hart & Risely, 1995). Identifying the primary contexts where children develop facilitates the provision of appropriate learning opportunities, which is essential for children to have successful outcomes (Sanders & Harvey, 2002).

Bronfenbrenner’s theory states that individuals are active contributors in the different settings in which they exist (1997). According to this theory, children’s development is influenced by direct and indirect factors. Direct factors, such as after school programs, are affected by indirect factors, such as parent work schedules. Also, an interconnection between all ecological systems is evident as people within each level
reciprocally influence people in other systems. An example of this is the parent’s workplace, which can have a direct effect on schools. When parents are unable to attend conferences because of work schedules, schools must be flexible and arrange times that are convenient to accommodate work schedules. Similar to the Social Ecology Theory, the Ecological Systems Theory is based on interactions and social relationships. Both theories encourage parent involvement as “families of successful students interact with their children to prepare them to be successful in school” (Amatea, 2009, p. 90).

Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence

Epstein created the third theory, the Theory of Overlapping Spheres, in the 1980s as the National Network of Partnership Schools was being formed. The Theory of Overlapping Spheres includes the concept of external and internal influences (Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004; Epstein, 2001, 1995, 1987; Epstein & Sanders, 2000). Backgrounds and practices of families, backgrounds and practices of schools and classrooms, and time are some of the external forces that influence parent involvement. This theory argues that children’s learning is influenced by the contexts of school, family, and community (Sheldon et al., 2004). The programs that schools develop to improve parent involvement have the potential to increase the associations and diminish the conflict between these settings. In order to influence children’s learning, this model includes activities children, families, and communities perform alone and some that are performed jointly. This graphic illustrates the overlap in goals, responsibilities, and mutual influence of the three environments that simultaneously affect children’s learning (Epstein, 2001).
With support from other educators interested in family involvement, Epstein created the Six Types of Parent Involvement (Simon & Epstein, 2001; Epstein, 1991). This framework can assist schools in developing inclusive programs of school and family partnerships. The six types of involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community) offer a conceptual framework for involving families. The effect of families, schools, and communities on student’s learning and development is clarified by this theory (2001) and includes constructs that define the types of involvement.

Epstein’s (2001, 1992) comprehensive framework includes six types of family involvement that support partnerships between school, family and community and reflect the varied forms of cooperative relationships between parents and schools. Epstein’s (2001) Six Types of Family Involvement are described below.

- **Parenting** – helping all families establish home environments that support children as students
- **Communicating** – designing effective forms of school-to-home communications about school programs and children’s progress
- **Volunteering** – recruiting and organizing parent help and support

- **Learning at home** – providing information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning

- **Decision-making** – including parents in school decisions; developing parent leaders and representatives

- **Collaborating with community** – identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development

These six types of family involvement lead to a better understanding of the varieties of partnerships that can add to students' successful outcomes. Often, important partnerships, such as including parents in school decisions and communication between school and home, are not readily understood. In order to foster partnerships with parents, it is important to examine the types of parent involvement practices currently implemented in schools. Schools that utilize various forms of involvement have a better opportunity to build trust between administrators, teachers, and parents (Barnyak et al., 2009; Feuerstein, 2000).

According to Mattingly’s (2002) analysis of Epstein’s theory, learning at home, volunteering, and parenting are considered parent responsibilities. School responsibilities include making the effort to communicate and involving parents in decision-making. For schools to successfully implement activities centered on families, the principal, as the school leader, must recognize that parents need direction and information (Epstein et al., 1991). Organizing programs in schools that will encourage involvement takes dedicated resources, including time and money. Research continues to demonstrate that children are more successful when their parents take an active role in their education (Hoover-
Schools that welcome families and offer regular invitations to parents report increased participation.

Using Epstein’s theory as a framework to determine if the implementation of school programs was associated with student performance on criterion-referenced achievement tests, Sheldon (2003) examined school, family, and community partnerships using data gathered from 113 elementary schools in a large urban public school system. In this study, Sheldon identified eight challenges schools face in developing programs to involve parents. They are:

1. Providing parents/families information to attend workshops and meetings
2. Establishing clear communication with all families
3. Creating two-way communication channels so that families have several ways to ask questions and/or obtain information
4. Developing opportunities for volunteers to work at school or at home
5. Assisting teachers to use interactive homework so that students can share what they are learning with family members
6. Checking that all groups of families (e.g. ethnic, socioeconomic, racial groups) are represented in leadership positions on school councils and committees
7. Using community resources to help enhance student learning
8. Developing ways for school, families, and students to contribute to the community

The results of this study demonstrated an important connection between schools’ efforts to improve family involvement and students’ educational success. The findings confirmed that obstacles to family involvement should be addressed. Parents are an important source of information about their children (Walker et al., 2006). “When
parents and schools collaborate to help children adjust to the world of school, bridging the gap between the culture at home and the mainstream American school, children of all backgrounds tend to do well” (Henderson & Berla, 1994, p.11). Unfortunately, some families take the initiative and proactively become involved while others do not make the effort (Sheldon, 2003). Schools should take responsibility and actively reach out to all families, realizing the importance of parents in children’s academic success (Barnyk et al., 2009).

Research literature affirms that less involvement occurs in working-class, single-parent, and less educated families (Grolnick et al., 1997). Also, parents’ socio-economic situation (SES) is positively associated with parent involvement in school (Turney & Kao, 2009). The economic constraints that low-income families experience affect the amount of time they actively participate in their children’s education. Inadequacy of resources does disrupt involvement (Grolnick et al., 1997). Family circumstances undermined parents’ opportunities to be involved.

Summary

The three theories provided a framework for understanding the dynamics between parents, schools, and children. The Social Ecology Theory suggested that parent involvement is not an isolated event and that schools can build partnerships through interactions that promote child development and improved outcomes for students’ learning (Comer, 1991). Bronfenbrenner’s theory provided insight into relationships of the many systems that influence parents. For example, parents who lived in a community
with social disorder experienced high levels of stress, which affected relationships with their children’s teachers (Waanders et al., 2007). Also, children who lived in at-risk neighborhoods spent less time outside playing, thereby depriving them of additional opportunities for enriching educational experience. Epstein’s theory created a connection between the three overlapping spheres of influence (children, family, school, and community). The impact of children’s experiences outside of the school community is important to consider as administrators develop practices to involve parents.

**Benefits of Parent Involvement**

Research regarding the effects of parent involvement on educational outcomes revealed that parent involvement made a positive difference in children’s academic achievement, including improved school attendance, positive perceptions of school climate, better behavior, and higher graduation rates (SEDL, 2009; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002; Davis, 2000; Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2000; Baker & Soden, 1997; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Epstein, 1991). Parent involvement had many positive benefits for students including enhanced educational outcomes and valuable resources such as volunteer time (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2006; Pena, 2001). Furthermore, parents who volunteer in schools provided teachers with an additional resource to assist children who may require extra academic support to have successful outcomes.

Research connecting parent involvement and improved student achievement demonstrated that schools continue to search for ways to strengthen the relationship
between home and school as a means of improving outcomes (Van Voorhis et al., 2004). Fan (2001) performed a meta-analysis to synthesize literature on the connection between parent involvement and student’s academic achievement. From the analysis of 25 empirical studies, parents’ aspirations and expectations for children’s educational achievement emerged as the strongest relationship to students’ academic outcomes. One of the recommendations from this study was to measure different elements of parent involvement. Examining the varied components that affect involvement would provide educators with possible indicators of successful practices that encourage partnerships with parents.

There is much evidence that parent involvement impacts children’s academic success (Sheldon, 2009; Epstein, 2006; Catsambis, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 1994). Realizing the impact of parent involvement on students’ academic success, a study of students’ achievement in reading and math at Title I schools was conducted with 335 students (Shaver & Walls, 1998). In this study, children’s academic success improved with parent involvement, even when children were at risk of failure because of family background. Parents who were supported and encouraged to participate in school programs had children with increased positive attitudes, higher aspirations, and improved positive behavior (Epstein, 1992). Regardless of the educational background of the parent, children who had involved parents were more successful in school.

Research described the need for parents to be involved in a variety of roles in their children’s education (Pena, 2001). In order for this to occur, the needs and assets of families must be considered (Caspe Lopez, & Wolos, 2006). A qualitative study on the
relationship between parent involvement and high-performing Hispanic schools was conducted along the Texas-Mexico border (Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999). Data analyzed from case studies of eight schools found that Hispanic students had high achievement scores. This was attributed to relationships built by the schools that welcomed families and developed practices to encourage parents to come to the schools. The study suggested that, when school staff collaborated and valued parents, successful partnerships evolved resulting in improved outcomes for children.

In another study of at-risk children, Shaver & Walls (1998) examined the effect of parent involvement on Title I students. This study reviewed the achievement data on 335 students in West Virginia who were receiving reading and math assistance. Children were assessed using pre- and post-test scores on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) (Trotti, 2008). Parents attended workshops on parent involvement on topics such as communicating with the teacher and also presentations on developing parenting skills. Significant findings included: (a) students with the most involved parents made the largest gains in their reading and math skills; (b) income levels of families did not affect the amount of involvement; and (c) students from higher-income families made larger gains than students from lower-income families. The results indicated that parent involvement influenced students’ academic success. Children whose families were supportive and actively engaged demonstrated higher academic achievement (Jeynes, 2005). Parents who provided a place for learning activities in the home, read to their child at home, and asked children about school activities influenced children’s approaches and attitudes towards learning.
Similar results were found in a review of current research related to parents helping their children with homework (Walker et al., 2004). Parents who participated in a wide range of educational activities with their children at home and at school believed that they both should be involved and had the skills to assist their children (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002). Parental role construction influenced the type and amount of involvement parents chose (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002). Examining the specific types of involvement that parents selected may help explain why parents chose to be involved (Fan et al., 2001).

In summary, the benefits of family involvement have been reported and explained repeatedly in research studies (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Mattingly et al., 2002; Kesslar-Sklar et al., 2000; Griffith, 1998; U. S. Department of Education, 1994). In addition, parent involvement has become a key factor of federal policies (Fantuzzo et al., 2004). It is important that academic standards requiring accountability from the principal, teacher, students, and parents are included in school policies (Goldring et al., 2009). The advantages for children are copious when parents are encouraged to take an active role in their education. Through continued attention to successful practices that are utilized to connect families and schools, educators can create more opportunities to involve parents in their school programs.

**Barriers to Parent Involvement**

Ideally, parents and schools should work together to provide children with optimal opportunities to be successful. But there are major differences between the home
and school institutions, and this affects the relationship between parents and educators (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Despite research verifying the benefits of family involvement, schools still struggle to build and maintain partnerships with families. Reasons cited for lack of parent involvement include parent intimidation, language barriers, parents not understanding the significance of their role, and teachers contacting parents only when there is a problem (Flynn et al., 2009; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002).

Often, families are contacted when there are difficulties with inappropriate behaviors or incomplete assignments (Epstein, 1995). This can create a barrier instead of building a bridge to connect home to school and school to home. Research demonstrated variations in the involvement of parents according to the level of parent education, the family structure, and the child’s level of education (Sheldon, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002; Epstein, 1995; 1991; Comer et al., 1991). Barriers to involvement included personal issues, such as lack of transportation to participate in school activities, limited school accessibility due to work schedule, or lack of skills to help with learning at home (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002). Also, family absence in school was related to other complex reasons such as lack of faith in the educational system, hopelessness, and low self-esteem due to previous school experiences (Bemak & Cornely, 2002). Additionally, other barriers included insufficient teacher training related to parent involvement and parents’ lack of skills to serve as a volunteer or on a committee (Barnyak et al., 2009). Overcoming barriers that impede parent participation can be challenging for principals as they attempt to create an educational environment that will increase and sustain
involvement (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2007). Encouraging consistent involvement by all parents can often seem insurmountable, but when schools implement strategies to overcome barriers to involvement, such as providing transportation for lower income families and scheduling activities to accommodate working parents, involvement will increase.

Many parents face increasing conflicts between the demands of family and work schedules (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). Parents often encounter a lack of time with job duties and child care difficulties, especially for women who generally have the main responsibility for the organization and planning of the family schedule. In addition, work responsibilities affect the amount of time employees can be available for school activities that take place during normal work time (Harris et al., 2008). It is evident that many factors and variables can add to the amount of time parents are available to be involved.

All schools are concerned about children reaching an acceptable level of achievement (Kellagan et al., 1993). With the realization that parent involvement influences children’s educational outcomes, acquiring ways to promote partnerships is vital for administrators. “Administrators would like to involve all families but many do not know how to go about it” (Epstein, 1995, p. 703). Two major challenges that schools face as they try to develop policies and practices to involve parents in the school are: (1) organization and physical structure of the school and (2) school staff members’ beliefs towards parent involvement (Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding, & Walberg, 2005; Fantuzzo et al., 2004). Making the building accessible and welcoming is very important. Also, the more positive the staff feel about involving families in their programs, the more
parents recognize the value of taking an active part in their children’s education (Anderson et al., 2007).

Research confirmed that the levels of engagement of families “vary considerably depending on the parents and the context in which they find themselves” (Sanders & Harvey, p. 279). Dramatic demographic changes within society, included increased cultural and linguistic diversity of children, increased concerns about the safety of children in many communities, and the effects of disrupted family structures (Ramey & Ramey, 1998), affected parents’ attitudes and practices regarding family involvement in the elementary school years (Caspe et al., 2006). These powerful social factors caused barriers to involvement in school programs for parents (Harris et al., 2008; Griffith, 1998; Ramey et al., 1998).

Furthermore, in contemporary society, the issue of parent involvement was complicated by diverse family arrangements and the disparity in classroom teachers, children, and families (McDermott & Rothenburg, 2000). Studies confirmed that teachers who integrated parent involvement in their programs as an important instructional strategy were more effective teachers (Caspe et al., 2006). Teachers who learned a variety of strategies and skills to involve parents in their children's education were better equipped to create environments that were critical for student success. Unfortunately, the lack of teacher receptiveness to involving parents due to burnout (Ginsberg & Ginsberg, 2005; Sanders et al., 2002) affected home and school relationships. When teachers were reluctant to involve parents from socio-economically disadvantaged environments, this contributed to parents feeling that teachers’ perceptions
of them were not positive (Griffith, 1998). In addition, data from surveys and field studies indicated that schools located in more economically deprived neighborhoods had less positive family involvement than those in affluent communities (Epstein, 1995).

Another concern in addressing the needs of families from varied backgrounds was the lack of research available to guide school leaders on what best practices supported family involvement. Research has shown that school and classroom activities influence the level of family involvement (Griffith, 1998; Henderson et al., 1990) and school leaders give higher ratings to teachers who involve families. Even though school practices were found to be a greater predictor than parents’ education levels on whether parents became involved (Sanders et al., 2009; Fantuzzo et al., 2004), research seldom linked practice knowledge to designing effective and sustainable programs (Weiss, 2005). The best practices may not always involve having parents participate in school activities (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, and Holbein, 2005). For example, parenting programs aimed at teaching parents skills to help their children at home have demonstrated improvements in overall achievement of students (Anderson et al., 2007). With evidence that schools highly influence parent involvement, systematic attention to sound educational practices needs further research (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002).

Garbarino and Sherman (1980) conducted an empirical study to test their hypothesis that parents experience elevated levels of stress in high-risk neighborhoods and to determine the effect this has on families. Interviews were held with elementary school principals and other stakeholders in the neighborhood. The families in these neighborhoods struggled financially and socially with minimal interactions with others in
This study emphasized the significance of relationship building within neighborhoods to support families and children. Even though strong supports are important for families who live in neighborhoods considered at risk, often the supports are non-existent or minimal. The effect of students’ out-of-school learning experiences in at-risk neighborhoods can account for a major part of the variance in student success (Garbarino, 1980).

Not all literature on parent involvement is consistently positive (Anderson et al., 2007). Some parents can be very challenging and create stress for teachers. Inconsistent communication between home and school as well as parents feeling unappreciated can also affect school-home relationships (Anderson et al., 2007). Additionally, there is evidence that parents and educators define involvement differently (Anderson et al., 2007; Epstein et al., 1991). Whereas parents view involvement as ensuring that their children attend school and keeping their children safe, teachers view involvement as parents attending school conferences, providing assistance with homework, and parents being present at school. Part of the variation in defining types of involvement is due to the fact that schools vary in how well they communicate and inform parents of their policies and practices around involvement (Epstein et al., 1991). This miscommunication can lead to teachers blaming parents for difficulties with children and parents feeling unappreciated.
State Survey on Barriers

Since 2002, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) has administered a parent survey to parents of children who attend public schools in South Carolina. The South Carolina Parent Involvement in Their Children’s Education Act requires the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) to survey parents and determine if efforts to involve parents are effectively increasing parent involvement (SCDE, 2008). The table below lists obstacles to parent involvement, as reported by parents in South Carolina.

Table 2.1

South Carolina Education Oversight Committee Survey Results, 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents Report Obstacles to Parent Involvement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Schedule</td>
<td>56.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of timely notification of volunteer opportunities</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School does not encourage involvement</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of child or adult care services</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and health problems</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement not appreciated</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above-listed obstacles confirm the challenges schools need to overcome to increase parent involvement. In addition, families with limited resources may respond differently to schools invitations because of time constraints, transportation issues, and employment schedules. Parents’ schedules may cause conflicts with school functions. It may be necessary to plan activities during evenings and weekends to allow parents
opportunities for involvement. From the above table, it is obvious that there are many challenges that exist between parents and schools in South Carolina. Thus, it is very important that schools have a general understanding of how they might provide specific assistance to encourage involvement.

A study conducted by Clemson University in the summer of 2009 surveyed parents, business persons, and educators to refine and revise the state’s educational assessment and accountability systems (EOC, 2009). The participants included 6,500 residents of South Carolina, and phone interview surveys yielded 1,250 responses. Four themes emerged from this study: (1) there are high expectations for student success in school and beyond; (2) stakeholders differ in views about achieving expectations; (3) there is a lack of awareness of national trends in education; and (4) there is a lack of understanding of the degree and extent of achievement gaps. The results from this study indicated that South Carolinians are concerned about their schools and have a lack of awareness regarding regional and national trends in education. South Carolinians who participated in the survey gave higher grades to schools in the nation than to schools statewide. Another finding from the study stated that parents were unaware of the gaps in achievement that currently exist in schools in South Carolina. With research supporting parent involvement as one means to decrease the gaps in areas of social development and achievement (Bouffard et al., 2008; Lopez et al., 2004; Davis, 2000), it is important to examine practices being implemented by school principals.

In summary, research findings have shown that educational success for children occurs when a positive relationship exists between the school and home (Caspé, Lopez,
& Wolos, 2006; Catsambis, 2001). With the changing demographics and growing diversity among student populations (Sanders et al., 2002), it is important that the significant impact environment played on children’s learning was recognized. The gap existing between education and income in America continued to grow (Desimone, 2001). If connections between parents and schools are to be established, schools need to be aware of family systems that are important components for children’s development (Fantuzzo et al., 2004). Increasing effective forms of parent involvement for all families is a key to identifying common barriers and encouraging family interactions with various school and district staff (Resto et al., 2006). The barriers that often kept families from participating in their children’s education must be removed. School personnel should target the obstacles that are preventing partnerships with families (Fantuzzo et al., 2004). Principals who examine and adapt school practices to encourage and welcome families from diverse backgrounds may possibly remove barriers.

**The Role of Principal Leadership**

Family involvement predicts children’s future success in school (Lopez et al., 2005). For that reason, establishing policies and procedures to welcome families is a necessary part principals’ (Sanders et al., 2009). Therefore, schools “must realize the importance that families play in children’s school success and take responsibility for bridging the home and school environments” (Barnyak et al., 2009). The commitment of school administrators is critical if opportunities for children and families are to be
expanded (Auerbach, 2009). School leaders need to lead their staff by reaching out to parents and working together to ensure positive outcomes for children.

Effective school leaders created a productive school culture when organizational structures were altered in order to create connections with parents (Davis et al., 2005). The ability to recognize and change the environment in schools to support families from diverse backgrounds may be an essential attribute required for elementary school principals to be effective leaders. “The United States cannot have excellent schools without excellent leaders” (National Commission for the Principalship, 1990, p.9). For schools to improve and maintain strong connections with parents, it is vital to recognize the principal as a critical force (Van Voorhis et al., 2004).

Having an all-inclusive approach to partnerships between schools, families, and communities allows schools to build on their strengths. A comprehensive approach fosters positive attitudes about the school and about families and community members because it respects the varying capacities of the school population as a whole. Research from the field indicated that strong parent, family, and community involvement did not just happen and was not limited to certain types of schools (Westmoreland et al., 2009; Davis, 2000, p.3). However, practices such as creating school teams to facilitate home-school connections and developing communication strategies were not always evident. Through principal leadership, educators learned to reach out to families in meaningful ways to develop strong programs of school and family partnerships (Sanders et al., 2009; Van Voorhis et al., 2004; Purkey et al., 1983).
The literature suggested that principal and teacher practices affected the amount of parent involvement more than parent characteristics such as poverty level, minority status, and level of education (Knopf & Swick, 2007; Fantuzzo et al., 2006; McDermott et al., 1998). Research demonstrated that parents wanted to be involved and looked to administrators for guidance on how to help their children (Epstein, 2006). School administrators have the opportunity to foster parent involvement by implementing strategies to promote successful outcomes for all students (Van Voorhis et al., 2004; Riehl, 2000).

The practices that principals utilize to respond to the varied needs of students (Riehl, 2000) and make parent involvement a priority have required a change with a more diverse student population (Sanders et al., 2009; McDermott et al., 1998). “Public schools in the United States are serving a more heterogeneous student population than ever before” (Riehl, 2000, p.55). Thus, principals who have a well-established framework for parent involvement promote the acceptance of cultural and economic differences that exist in schools today. With the growing literature describing how schools can be more successful in meeting the needs of diverse student populations (Riehl), school leaders should examine the activities in their programs to ensure that schools engage all families (Auerbach, 2009; Sanders et al., 2009; Sanders & Harvey, 2002). A recent study of the associations between changes in the involvement of families and the literacy achievement of children in kindergarten through fifth grade was conducted with 300 low-income families (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006). There were two important findings from this study: (1) an increase in family
involvement predicted increased literacy achievement and (2) family involvement in school significantly impacted children who are at greatest risk of failure. Children from diverse populations, including low socio-economic backgrounds, benefit when schools foster effective educational programs for students.

The National Education Goals Panel (1995) reported that schools that create a welcoming climate and provide organized opportunities for parents/guardians to volunteer were more likely to support parent organizations and parent representatives on decision-making committees (Carey, Lewis, Farris, 1998). The U.S. Department of Education (1994) conducted a research study designed to provide information describing the ways parents are engaged in their children’s learning and determine the extent to which parents answer the request to become involved. The survey was given to principals at 900 public schools. The following issues were addressed: communication, types of school-sponsored activities, volunteer activities made available to families, and the extent to which parents are included in decision-making. Over 80 percent of the schools indicated that they regularly communicated with parents. Also, schools with parents who had limited English skills provided interpreters at conferences or meetings 85 percent of the time. Schools with high levels of minority students reflected lower levels of parent involvement. Results from this survey suggest that schools should be creating opportunities to accommodate parents.

Many schools develop programs to involve parents. However, the majority of schools did not have sustainable and well-organized programs (Epstein, 2006). Sustainable programs required school leaders to implement activities that engaged and
connected with a wide range of parents. A case study of principal leadership for school and community collaboration was conducted in one urban elementary school in a high-reform district (Sanders et al., 2002). The school consisted of 360 African American students. The school had fewer than 50 percent of its students meeting the state’s satisfactory standard of 70 percent and was attempting to improve student outcomes with family and community partners. Data from interviews and field observations was examined to identify factors that influenced school partnerships. Four factors emerged as central to schools being successful in building connections with community partners. They were: (1) the schools’ commitment to learning, (2) the principal’s support and vision for involvement, (3) the school’s receptiveness and sincere desire for involvement, and (4) the school’s willingness to engage in two-way communication. These findings were significant as all four highlighted the relationship between the school principal and a supportive learning environment. “Scratch the surface of an excellent school and you are likely to find an excellent school principal. Peer into a failing school and you will find weak leadership” (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 1). The principal’s willingness to build partnerships was important for the development of successful collaborations between home and school. It is crucial for principals to develop a vision and implement a plan for building relationships with families and the communities.

The time and energy required to build a school program and develop policies to increase practices that impact the level of involvement of parents can be challenging to any principal. Caspe and Lopez (2006) examined program strategies containing a family component to promote children’s academic achievement. From this study, several
strategies were discovered that were most effective for strengthening family involvement. One strategy that was considered a constructive approach to increasing family involvement was training staff to implement activities for families. Providing staff with opportunities to confront their sometimes misguided assumptions about families, review research on family involvement, and time to process new information helped them to better understand the benefits of effective home and school collaborations. One implication from this study was the need to create a culture of complementary learning within the school environment through training of staff to actively engage parents in their school programs.

Studies showed that the practices school principals implemented to develop a positive school climate were important (Sanders et al., 2009; Van Voorhis et al., 2004; Griffith, 2001, 1998; Desimone, Finn-Stevenson, & Henrich, 2000). Parents who viewed their school as having a positive climate were more involved in school activities (Griffith, 1998). In addition, schools that welcomed parents experienced increased academic achievement on standardized math tests (Sanders et al., 2009).

Additionally, the climate of the school is influenced by the management practices principals utilize to involve parents (Auerbach, 2009; Sanders et al., 2009; Van Voorhis et al., 2004). Griffith (1998) investigated elementary schools and found that parent involvement could be enhanced by the school climate. If parents perceived the school climate as not welcoming or encouraging, a barrier formed (Sheldon, 2005). Efforts made by principals to welcome and support families can make a difference especially in schools with lower socio-economic circumstances that serve families with children who
are at risk for weak outcomes (Hoover et al., 2005). For example, being visible and accessible was important for school administrators. When school principals recognized and greeted parents who came to the school, parents felt valued and respected. With assistance from colleagues, school leaders can create school environments that promote and support collaboration between parents and schools (Sanders et al., 2002).

The principal as the leader of the school sets the tone for the building with a climate of trust and collaboration between the school and home. Building trust and collaboration with parents is important for involvement programs to be effective (Mohajeran & Ghalee, 2008; MacNeil & Patin, 2005). Overall, the literature suggested that the more committed and active principals were in supporting parent-teacher relationships, the more schools were likely to develop strong programs of parent and community involvement (Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). The principal’s ability to develop policies and practices that invited parents to be involved influenced the level of participation by parents.

Successful school leaders guide their schools to create a shared purpose and provide direction to achieve school goals (Leithwood et al., 2003). School leaders are challenged to create schools that build program models for parents and educators to work together to ensure successful student outcomes (Hart, 1995). Many studies that reviewed high-performing schools substantiated the hypothesis that effective leadership was a major reason for high academic achievement (Auerbach, 2009; Gieselmann, 2009; Sanders et al., 2009; Henderson et al., 2002). A recent study conducted to determine the impact of parent involvement components in the school organizational structure found
that principals’ perceptions of their roles in relation to others impacted school decision-making processes (Mohajeran et al., 2008). Using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, researchers found that the principals’ perceptions of their roles to establish partnerships with parents had the largest impact on school governance. The principal who made the effort to institute practices that encouraged parent participation had the greatest degree of school success. Another important finding from this study was the influence that the principal had in the management of decision-making. When principals offered key roles to parents in the decision making process, parents were more likely to accept and embrace school policies (Davies, 2000).

Thus, the principal’s ability to promote learning for all students was a central task for building effective schools (Davis et al., 2005; Sanders et al., 2002). Purkey & Smith (1983) reviewed literature on school effectiveness to critically examine the assumption that differences of parent involvement among schools have little effect on student academic achievement. From this review, agreement on the purpose for reaching out to parents and responsiveness to parents, staff, and all involved in the educational process were prerequisites of an effective school. Recommendations for further research included identifying characteristics that are conducive to student success in school cultures (Purkey et al., 1983).

In summary, the need for school administrators to establish practices that included a broad approach for building partnerships with parents was evident. The principal, as the school leader, must guide the school in developing policies that respond to the increasingly diverse student characteristics that exist in schools today (Sanders et al.,
Promoting school equity and fairness for all students included establishing school climates that created opportunities for families to visit the school, communicate with staff, and participate in volunteer programs (Riehl, 2000). When families had resources available, they were more likely to provide guidance and support to influence their children’s educational learning outcomes. The success of students depends upon both the school and the families working together.

**Principal Leadership to Enhance Parent Involvement**

Research has demonstrated that school systems could be effective in educating children when teachers and administrators promoted parent involvement. Cotton (2003) compared research findings regarding the differences in leadership skills between male and female principals. While males had the tendency to delegate responsibilities, females were more inclined to be direct instructional leaders and more inclined to take on supervisory roles (Cotton, 2003; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988). Furthermore, females created school environments that were more person oriented and participative (Shakeshaft, 1989).

In addition, years of experience of principals influenced differences in leadership style. With the demand for public school administrators to be effective leaders (MacNeil et al., 2008), it is appropriate to explore the effect of experience in decision making. Northhouse (2010) describes experiences as relevant to skill development. “Career experiences help leaders to improve their skills and knowledge over time” (Northhouse, 2010, p.51). Bista & Glasman (1997) studied the relationship between years of experience and the leadership style of principals. Data from California school principals
was analyzed to determine relationships among four approaches to leadership. Results from this study indicated that the more teaching experience a principal had, the more flexible the leadership style. Women generally have had more teaching experience and this may be an advantage as a school leader (Cotton, 2003).

Furthermore, a critical component of school success entailed school leaders utilizing resources to develop parent involvement programs that were goal oriented, sustainable and effective (Sanders et al, 2009). An elementary principal can develop specific strategies to assist children in realizing the goal of achieving success (Witzer, Bosker, & Krueger, 2003). Berger (2000) described the principal’s role in parent involvement as one of restructuring schools to meet the needs of families. Providing clear information about the curriculum, scheduling conferences that accommodated parents work schedules, and providing written communication in the language of the parents were examples of strategies to encourage cooperation and collaboration with families. When school administrators implemented practices that built relationships with families, children were supported both in the home and at school.

Davis (2005) reviewed a major research study on the essential elements of good leadership. The study examined program models in eight states and followed up with graduates from higher educational leadership programs to find out their perceptions about how prepared they were to be school leaders. One finding from this study was that successful principals influenced student achievement as they developed programs to ensure that all children had diverse and numerous opportunities to be successful.
Nurturing cultures that exist in schools enhances learning and supports families (Leithwood et al., 2003). For example, administrators who were prepared to understand the values of cultural groups reached out to learn as much as possible about the language, culture, educational expectations, and concerns of the population. This was a key strategy to engage greater numbers of diverse families in students’ education. (Sanders et al, 2009).

Flynn and Nolan (2008) developed a questionnaire to investigate school principals’ perceptions about current relationships between the school and family. The questionnaires were sent to 346 principals in two New York counties. A total of 144 principals completed the questionnaire, and based upon their feedback, three areas of concern emerged. Principals perceived that parents were disengaged from their children’s schooling, and they attributed this to the following: (1) there was not enough time to become involved, (2) parents did not understand the importance of school, and (3) parents had previous poor experiences with schooling. By implementing proposed recommendations, such as inviting parents to be involved in school activities, providing parent support, and training in-service teachers, alliances between parents and schools could be strengthened (Flynn et al., 2008).

School structure also affected level of parent involvement. Griffith (1998) studied the relationship between school environment, socio-demographic makeup of the student population, and parent involvement. The study included a sample of 122 elementary schools in a district serving 130,000 students. Participants were surveyed in groups regarding concerns with school organization and structure. Results of the study
suggested that positive outcomes occur when school staff provided opportunities for parent involvement such as arranging activities and informing parents of ways to become involved. This study substantiated the importance of school staff creating an atmosphere of cooperation and concern for parents. Training school staff to engage in participatory activities reinforced parent engagement. Making necessary adjustments to ensure that schools were accessible and appealing to parents was an important step in supporting partnerships with families and the community (Sanders et al., 2009).

To further understand the role principals acquired to strengthen parent involvement programs, five focus groups comprised of school principals met in 2007. The purpose of the focus groups was to discuss the group members’ perceptions of an effective school leader (Johnson et al., 2008). From this qualitative research study, a majority of principals believed that parents played a central role in children’s educational success. During the interviews, the school leaders discussed the special challenges facing low-income parents and parents with limited education. One principal described the difficulty communicating with parents struggling with personal and work-related issues. The study supported current research demonstrating that there were many obstacles principals needed to recognize and address if school efforts to improve parent involvement were to be successful.

Understanding that the ultimate goal of parent involvement was student success, research has shown that principals who engaged in leadership practices involving families were more likely to improve student success (Goldring, Huff, Spillane, & Barnes, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2003). Auerbach (2009) conducted a case study of
principals in the Los Angeles Unified School District, exploring leadership strategies and contextual factors that lead to meaningful family engagement. The participants included three Latino principals and one African-American assistant principal at Title I elementary schools. From the interviews and observations, school leaders demonstrated a proactive approach to engaging parents through their initiation of activities. These activities included regular communication, providing training to staff, and disseminating information to families. Several themes emerged from this qualitative study, including principals acknowledging that it was their responsibility to build partnerships with the families. In addition, these school leaders were motivated by a commitment to do the right thing, and they maintained options for reaching out to families from diverse cultures, especially non-English-speaking parents (Auerbach, 2009). Recommendations from this study included having future administrators receive hands-on experience working with families and organizing family activities that would include a majority of parents and children.

Realizing that family involvement policies were inconsistently present in many school districts, Kesslar-Sklar conducted a survey with superintendents of 200 school districts in 15 states. The purpose was to investigate what types of parent involvement policies had been adopted by the schools. The survey utilized in this study included four of the six types of parent involvement found in Epstein’s typology: decision-making, providing parenting information, links to community services, and communicating about children’s progress. In addition, Kesslar-Sklar added two more types: reaching out to
diverse families and training teachers to work with families. Neither one of these were present in Epstein’s framework for family involvement.

The four types included in the survey were chosen as they either directly or indirectly affected children’s academic success (Kesslar-Sklar et al., 2000). The study results indicated that two of the most common forms of involvement practices utilized in the 15 states surveyed were communicating with parents about school programs and children’s progress and providing parents with opportunities to be decision makers on school policies and practices. Districts that served a greater percentage of at-risk students were more likely to implement the four types of involvement strategies. Also, the results indicated that 90 percent of the districts responding to the survey had at least one parent-involvement policy implemented to support children’s education. One recommendation from this study included examining the effectiveness of the parent-involvement policies in school districts in order to build successful programs in the future.

In summary, supporting strategic and systemic family engagement requires school leaders to build school competence through policies and practices that encourage involvement (Sanders et al., 2009; Westmoreland, Rosenberg, Lopez, & Weiss, 2009). Administrators who were well prepared to work with parents developed self-efficacy (Kirschenbaum, 2001), which lead to creating successful partnerships with families.

**School-Level Factors That Influence Parent Involvement**

Parent involvement is considered an important variable in children’s success in school; therefore, the factors that increase involvement should be of significant interest to
school leaders (Feuerstein, 2000). Family structure, types of schools, and community resources are factors that influence school and family partnerships. Much of the literature on school-level factors influencing the type and amount of involvement was focused on student achievement rather than on school and family characteristics (Feuerstein). Most of the quantitative measures that have been utilized to evaluate parent activity were centered on practices such as parents helping with homework and attendance at conferences. Examining variables, such as type of community and family structure, may provide school leaders with information to build practices that meet the needs of the school and the parents.

Principals who are supportive of practices that value families in their schools create effective programs that recognize family characteristics. The prevalence of school activities that involve families influences not only parents but educators and staff as well. School administrators who view family involvement as a shared responsibility demonstrate this by utilizing practices that build ties between the home and school.

Studies have shown that the home and community environment does influence parents’ choices and levels of involvement (Grolnick, 1997). The changing demographics of families have not consistently been recognized, and this has affected the practices implemented in schools to involve parents (Hiatt-Michael, 2006). Some schools appear to have the ability to promote parent involvement while others struggle to build relationships (Kerbow & Berhardt, 1993). School-level factors need to be examined in schools that are successful in promoting parent involvement.

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Pena (2000) conducted a qualitative case study to review factors that influenced involvement in an elementary school in Texas. The data, gathered from interviews with teachers and parents, helped to identify variables that promoted parent involvement in one school in an urban setting. The study focused on involvement and communication between home and school and found that parents are often excluded because of language barriers and teachers not making an effort to build relationships. Other factors for parents included job-related difficulties such as transportation issues, child care challenges, and work schedules. Administrators in this study did not provide training or time for teachers to create activities to promote parent involvement. One recommendation from this study included administrators and school personnel developing a variety of activities to accommodate parents who have conflicts with school schedules.

The connection that the school, family, and community environments have with children’s development has been verified in this literature review. School factors that may correlate with involvement include family structure, type of school, and type of community. Family structure can include married, divorced, single, remarried, or cohabiting individuals. Eagle (1989) found that students with working mothers and students from single-parent families do more poorly in school. These differing family structures do affect children’s educational performance (Schneider, Atteberry, & Owens, 2005).

Shouse (1997) found that the nature of the school setting may also influence the amount of parent participation.Examining types of schools including Title 1, magnet schools, and public elementary schools may help to explain the differences in parent
involvement across school types. Environmental context does influence children’s outcomes (Van Voorhis et al., 2004). Jeynes (2005) describes the importance of parent involvement in urban areas because of the number of two-parent working families and unique sociological pressures on children. In the results of a study on parent involvement in urban areas, Jeynes (2005) suggests that parent involvement may effectively contribute to reducing the achievement gap between urban and non-urban areas. Recognizing school factors that affect a child’s development can help to reduce obstacles that impede children’s learning outcomes (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2001).

The research on elementary school principal’s impact on school-family-community partnerships is limited. However, recent dissertations have included research on the principal’s perspective. One example is the study by Batista (2009) on principals’ perspectives toward parent involvement in public high schools in Pennsylvania. This study surveyed principals to determine potential barriers to parent involvement from the perspective of the school administrator. Results from this study indicated that administrators believed that parent involvement could help educators be more effective with more students. However, there was a wide range of beliefs regarding the importance of collaboration with community. Overall, administrators agreed that parent involvement was vital to student success. One suggestion was that principals would benefit from educational programs focused on parent involvement. Principals who had the opportunity to work with parents would potentially develop a stronger disposition towards parent involvement.
Summary

The importance of parent involvement has been shown in relation to children’s overall development (Sheldon, 2009; Dwyer & Hecht, 1992). In addition, the need for parents to actively participate has been acknowledged in educational policy. With the changes in the family structure, federal policies such as Title I and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002), mandated schools to build partnerships with families (Gardiner, Canfield-Davis & Lemar Anderson, 2008; Cotton, 2005; Domina, 2005). Title I required schools to foster relationships with families and communities in order to receive funds to serve low-income students (Sanders et al., 2009). The NCLB act stated that schools actively involve parents. Schools receiving federal funds must inform parents on ways they can be involved (Barnyak et al., 2009; Sanders et al., 2009). Communication with families is one of the many challenges schools face as they struggle to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) and stay in compliance with federal policies. Implementing practices that will connect the home and school environments requires school districts to recognize the impact of parent involvement (Barnyak et al., 2009).

The benefits of parent involvement were highlighted in this literature review. The impact of schools involving parents in their children’s education has been demonstrated in multiple research studies. The effect of parent involvement included increased student achievement, improved student attendance, and more positive student attitudes towards education (Sheldon & Epstein, 2004). It is important for schools to conceptualize and create partnerships with families. Epstein’s (2001) six types of involvement can be
utilized to organize activities for parents and students. The six types of family involvement used as a basis for the study are:

1. Parenting
2. Communicating
3. Volunteering
4. Learning at home
5. Decision making
6. Collaborating with the community

Using these six types of involvement as a baseline, administrators’ perceptions regarding the practices utilized in their school buildings to build partnerships with families were examined.

From the literature review, it was apparent that principals must take the lead at their schools to create a climate that both welcomes families and provides directions to teachers and staff. Research on parent involvement indicated that administrators had a strong influence on the amount and type of parent involvement (Barnyak et al., 2009; Sanders et al, 2009). Responding to diverse community needs and collaborating with families were two important standards for school administrators (Auerbach, 2000).

Finally, the limited research on school leaders and families suggested that this was a topic that needed further examination. It is vital for school leaders to build partnerships with families and acknowledge the value of parents and schools working together to ensure that children experience educational success. These leaders have a
strong impact on the importance placed on parent involvement, and studying steps administrators take to promote involvement is important.

Today, communities across the country are looking to principals and superintendents to transform schools facing difficulties in achieving educational success for children (Johnson et al., 2008). Research has shown that schools do make a difference, and when administrators emphasized parent involvement, students experienced success (Anderson et al., 2007; Jeynes, 2003; Cotton, 1995). The principal plays a critical part in the success of a school and identifying practices that encourage parent involvement is important. An examination of the types of practices utilized by school-level principals and teachers to build relationships with families will be extremely valuable to the educational field, and research has indicated that further investigations regarding the mechanisms that influence the amount and type of involvement parents choose is beneficial (Feuerstein, 2000).

There is an increasing foundation of educational research that highlights the significance of parent involvement in American education. Realizing that parent involvement is multifaceted in nature, it is important to examine the factors that affect levels of involvement (Fan & Chen, 2001). The relationships that exist between the parents and schools are influential in children’s educational success. Empirical studies on the reasons why some schools have the ability to promote parent involvement while others do not is lacking (Feuerstein, 2000). The literature review provided evidence that administrators’ perceptions of parent involvement influenced school activities. For
children to have successful outcomes, a collaborative arrangement that fosters a partnership between parents and schools is necessary.

Schools are communities (Epstein et al., 2002) and principals, as school leaders, can create a learning community that encourages parents, teachers, and students to work together for positive outcomes (Smith & Piele, 2006). Evidence proposed that, second only to the influences of classroom instruction, school management powerfully affected student learning (Davis et al., 2005). “Learning is a reflection of the total context of children’s lives, not just the formal instruction that takes place during school hours” (Smith et al., 2006, p.33). Principals’ abilities were central to the task of building schools that promoted learning for all students (Davis et al., 2005).

The theory of overlapping spheres has been described in this chapter as schools, families, and communities influencing each other and having mutual interests (Epstein, 2001). Furthermore, the school environment has a significant impact on parents’ perceptions of school leadership. Schools with open-door policies and welcoming climates demonstrated to parents that principals recognized and valued their presence (Angelucci, 2008; Flynn et al., 2008; Griffith, 1998). Recognizing the overlap of goals and responsibilities between families and schools was one way to shape children’s learning and development.

This research study was beneficial because administrators’ perceptions will provide information on what practices are successfully engaging parents (Harris et al., 2008). The recognition that schools can take responsibility for increasing family and
community involvement in students’ education is an important step in supporting children to achieve academic success (Sanders et al., 2009; Sheldon, 2007).
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Principals play a vital role in developing strong, supportive partnerships with parents (Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004). Multiple studies link the role of parents to their children’s academic success (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Henderson et al., 2002; Fan et al., 1999; Grolnick et al., 1994). However, few studies focus solely on the principal’s role in promoting parent involvement. “As evidence supporting the benefits of family involvement in learning mounts, there is an increasing demand for evaluation of family involvement initiatives and for additional research to inform practice and policy” (Westmoreland, Bouffard, Carroll, Rosenberg, 2009, p.2). Much evidence exists in literature validating that most parents want to be involved in their children’s education. However, parents need clear directions on how to assist their children (Epstein & Jansorn, 2004). With research indicating that parent involvement does make a difference in students’ outcomes, understanding the practices that exist in schools to involve parents is necessary. The intent of this research is to examine the various practices principals utilize to successfully promote parent involvement in schools. Quantitative data were collected based on survey questions developed along six constructs to understand administrators’ perceptions for involving parents, community members, and students in a meaningful manner.

This chapter presents the research design and methodology used in the quantitative study. The first section describes the research design and rationale for using
quantitative research as the methodology. The second section provides a description of the participants and the procedure employed in the data collection. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the statistical analysis for this study.

**Research Questions**

Three specific research questions were used to guide this research study.

- What do South Carolina principals report are the parent involvement activities they implement in public elementary schools?

- To what extent do these parent involvement practices associate with Epstein’s six types of parent involvement (parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community)?

- Which variables (type of school, years of experience, gender, community, and family structure) influence the principals reporting of parent involvement in South Carolina public elementary schools?

**Research Design**

The primary research method was survey research. Surveys have become a common research tool used to accurately represent the perspective of the masses by using a relatively small percentage of the population (Creswell, 2008; Rea & Parker, 2005). Survey research is widely used in academic institutions and has been a central strategy specifically within the social sciences (Punch, 2003). One of the benefits of survey research is its potential for scientific rigor.

The survey, *The Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships Survey* (Appendix B), developed by Epstein and the National Network of Partnership Schools
(NNPS) is a tool that schools can utilize to examine current practices principals and teachers utilize to build partnerships with families (Salinas et al., 1999). The NNPS (2009) has been conducting research on family involvement for over twenty years. Their research team has consistently utilized the highest standards to conduct studies in order to improve school practices for parent involvement. The survey was appropriate as it embodies the six typologies of parent involvement developed by Epstein (1995). It was purchased from The John Hopkins University/NNPS Publications for $20.00. The survey includes measures for: basic obligations of schools, basic obligations of parents, volunteers at the school building, involvement in learning activities and homework, advisory roles for parents, and collaboration with communities.

The validity and reliability of the instrument was previously established by NNPS. Reliability in research is the extent that the study findings can be replicated if the study is replicated (Norusis, 2008). To ensure the internal consistency of scores on items claiming to measure the same concept, NNPS used the Cronbach alpha (α) because the survey contained many Likert-type items (Epstein, J.L. & Salinas, K.C., 1993). Additionally, NNPS verified the reliability of the instrument by employing a statistical procedure in SPSS to provide item means and variances, which were then used to make decisions about which items in the survey needed to be omitted. The reliabilities of the educator scales ranged from a modest (.44) to very high (.91), which indicated the degree to which the tests would yield similar results on several administrations (Norusis, 2008).

The original test population consisted of parents and teachers of children ages five and up in 15 elementary schools in Baltimore, Maryland (Epstein & Salinas, 1993). Permission
to utilize the survey in this study with elementary administrators was granted by Dr. Steven Sheldon, director of research at The Johns Hopkins University (personal communication, Appendix C).

The instrument utilizes Epstein’s (1995) six types of parent involvement and is comprised of two parts. Part one has 52 statements designed to quantitatively assess the perceptions of administrators. Participants responded to the survey questions utilizing a 5-point Likert scale. The scoring rubric includes five levels from 1 (not occurring) to 5 (extensively). A score of 2 indicates that rarely does this type of involvement occur and a score of 3 indicates that principals occasionally implement one or more of the six types of involvement listed on the survey. A score of 4 indicates that there is a frequent occurrence of the activity, and a score of 5 indicates that the type of involvement is extensive in the school. In addition, in part two, principals responded to two open ended questions regarding what they perceive to be major factors that either support or hinder parent involvement.

The survey addresses the following areas:

- **Parenting** – helping all families establish home environments that support children as students
- **Communicating** – designing effective forms of school-to-home communications about school programs and children’s progress
- **Volunteering** – recruiting and organizing parent help and support
- **Learning at home** – providing information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning
- **Decision-making** – including parents in school decisions; developing parent leaders and representatives
• **Collaborating with community** – identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development

The results of the survey provide information regarding principals’ perceptions of the current practices of parent involvement evident in their schools. The obtained numerical data has been analyzed to measure variables and determine if the variables are related, and what is the relationship between the variables (Punch, 2003).

**Method**

This study utilized Survey Monkey software, a well-known online survey program (surveymonkey.com, 2010). This service was chosen for its simplicity, cost, and professional appearance. The data collection and analysis tools also provided valuable information very quickly. Some of the advantages of using a web-based survey are convenience, rapid data collection, ease of sorting and coding data, and the ability to follow up through email messages (Rea & Parker, 2005). Because there is no need for stamps and paper supplies, this form of data collection is much more efficient. Another advantage of using an online survey program is the ability to continuously check the number of survey returns.

**Variables**

Measurable variables can be evaluated to determine how well parent involvement programs are being implemented (Sanders et al., 2009). The outcome (dependent) variable in this study was parent involvement. Parent involvement in the study refers to
the six types of involvement as defined by Epstein’s framework (2001). The dependent variable was a dichotomous variable, occurring or not occurring. The five independent variables were: types of school, years of experience, gender, community size, and family structure (Table 3.1). Types of schools in this study are described as Title I, Blue Ribbon, Charter, and other. Title I schools are defined as schools that receive federal funds to help children in high-poverty areas who are behind academically or at risk of falling behind. The other category of types of schools included traditional elementary schools not receiving Title I funds or having been recognized as Blue Ribbon schools. The years of experience category is classified into four categories from zero years of experience to more than 20 years of experience. This variable has been described in research as important for effective leaders because the more career experience an administrator has, the more opportunities to problem solve and build competencies (Northouse, 2010). Researchers have investigated the differences between the approaches female principals and male principals take to establish supportive climates (Pavan & Reid, 1994). Female tendencies that lead to success include instructional leadership, participatory and establishment of supportive climates (Cotton, 2003; Shakeshaft, 1989; Pavin et al., 1994).

Furthermore, research has shown that community size does affect the number of resources available to assist student learning and development (Epstein, 2001). Parent involvement was found to be greater in smaller schools than in larger schools (Meier, 1996; Walberg, 1992). Slate and Jones (2005) found that students in small schools are more likely to be involved in student activities and feel a greater sense of belonging.
The United States Census Bureau (1995) describes rural as less than 2,500 and urban as more than 50,000. In this study, community size is defined as rural (less than 2,500), town (2,500-5,000), small city (5,000-20,000), city (20,001-50,000), and urban areas (more than 50,000). Family structure is described by type of family. The four types of traditional families are two parents in the home, blended families, single parents, and alternative guardians/grandparents. Independent variables served to investigate the hypothesis that parent involvement is equal among groups of variables. This analysis also tested the hypothesis that the dependent variable (parent involvement) is related to the independent variables.

Table 3.1

*Independent Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Schools</th>
<th>Administrators’ Years of Experience</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Community size</th>
<th>Family Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Title 1</td>
<td>(1) 0-5</td>
<td>(1) Female</td>
<td>(1) Rural (less than 2,500)</td>
<td>(1) Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Blue Ribbon</td>
<td>(2) 6-10</td>
<td>(2) Male</td>
<td>(2) Town (2,500-5,000)</td>
<td>(2) Blended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Charter</td>
<td>(3) 11-20</td>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Small City (5,000-20,000)</td>
<td>(3) Single Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Other</td>
<td>(4) more than 20</td>
<td></td>
<td>(4) City (21,000-49,999)</td>
<td>(4) Alternative Guardian/Grandparent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(5) Urban (more than 50,000)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Hypothesis**

The following research hypotheses were stated about the relationships between the variables:
There are currently no existing systematic parent involvements practices in public elementary schools in South Carolina.

Parent involvement activities implemented by South Carolina elementary school principals are not associated with Epstein’s six types of parent involvement.

There are no variables that influence parent involvement activities in South Carolina public elementary schools.

The findings and conclusions for the study are based on logistic regression procedures, which reflect the relationship between the variables in the research study.

**Data Collection Protocol**

Prior to sending out the survey, Institutional Review Board approval was obtained for the study (#2010-050; Appendix E). Participants were notified that the study was approved and their participation was requested.

Creswell (2008) describes the importance of selecting as large a sample as possible in survey research to have participants with similar characteristics. Selection of the sample began with a visit to the director of the South Carolina Association of School Principals (SCASA) organization in Columbia, S.C. The director provided access to a listserv of elementary school administrators’ e-mail addresses in the state. The list included 372 administrators. After reviewing the S.C. department of Education website, 238 more administrators who were not currently members of the SCASA state organization were added.

In order to encourage a higher response rate, each administrator received an introductory letter sent through email explaining the purpose of the research and
requesting participation (Appendix D). This has been suggested as one strategy to encourage a higher response rate (Creswell, 2008; Punch, 2003). The initial email was followed with several additional emails to encourage non-responders to complete the survey in a timely manner. The administrators were asked to return the surveys within 7 days. Realizing the response rate is dependent on several factors such as adequate follow-up, respondent interest in the survey, and the use of incentives, each returned survey was assigned a number (Creswell, 2008). At the end of the data collection, a drawing was held and one administrator received free registration to the annual South Carolina Association of School Administrators summer state conference.

**Pilot Tests**

Five elementary school principals participated in the pilot test. This test provided information on the amount of time required to complete the survey and helped ensure that the participants could easily respond to the questions. Pilot testing under normal survey conditions also helps to identify the overall quality of the survey instrument (Rea et al., 2005). Surveys were sent out through different web browsers to see how each handled the responses. During the pilot study, the principals received the survey and a cover letter outlining the nature and purpose of the research. In order to ensure their anonymity, names were omitted from the survey. Respondents were asked to return the survey within five days. After the due date, respondents who had not completed the survey received a follow-up email. Additionally, a presentation of the research study was given to five graduate students currently employed in elementary schools. The population included an
assistant principal and four educators. These five professionals completed the survey and shared their responses during the presentation.

**Data Analysis**

Two common methods for analyzing categorical dependent variables are logistic regression and discriminant analysis. The more popular method at this time is logistic regression because it can handle dichotomous, categorical variables (Keith, 2006). Logistic regression is well suited for this study because it describes and test hypotheses about relationships between a categorical outcome variable and one or more categorical variables. This model is appropriate because it estimates the probability that one of two events will occur, depending on the values of a set of independent variables (Norusis, 2008). Analyses were conducted using a sequence of logistic regression in which one or more of the variables were used to predict a dichotomous outcome variable. The value of the coefficient $\beta$ determined the direction of the relationship between $x$ and the logit of $y$. Logit of $y$ refers to the simple logistic model:

$$\text{logit } (Y) = \text{natural log (odds ratio)} = \ln \frac{\pi}{1-\pi} = \alpha + \beta X.$$ 

The overall model states that the null hypothesis is that all $\beta$’s equal zero. The dependent variable is dichotomous, indicating that parent involvement either occurred or did not occur. The results are estimated in probabilities between 0 and 1. The predictors included a combination of demographic characteristics. The relationships between variables were investigated utilizing the STATA logistic program, which provided the most detailed information on parameter estimates (Peng et al., 2002). To test
the hypotheses concerning the relationships between the variables using the logistic regression procedure, the level of significance was set at alpha equal to 0.05.

In addition, SPSS logistic regression analysis computed the goodness of fit. Goodness of fit statistics in this model assessed the fit of the logistic model and provided data to determine if there was enough information using the variables or whether more complex terms needed to be added (Keith, 2006). Chi-square statistics test for lack of fit. The test is the Likelihood-ratio Chi-square test for the hypothesis that all regression parameters are zero. The analysis provided an estimate of the total covariance accounted for by the model (Keith, 2006). Every combination of the dependent variables (six types of parent involvement) was combined with each of the five independent variables. The comparison of model fit the statistics with an iterative estimation process that continued until the log-likelihood didn’t change by more than a very small relative amount. The Cox and Snell and Nagelkerke tests show $R^2$, which is the ratio of the difference to the reduced negative log-likelihood values. $R^2$ ranges from zero for no improvement to 1 for a perfect fit. The data analyses for the negative log-likelihood for error due to goodness of fit are described in Chapter four.

**Content Analysis**

To analyze the written responses from administrators, content analysis was particularly well suited for this section of the study. Content analysis is conducted in several steps to ensure objectivity and accurate reflection of the meaning of written
responses (Smith, 2000; Johnson & LaMontagne, 1993). This type of analysis provided a rich understanding of the data (Johnson et al., 1993).

Inter-rater reliability is a procedure that involves agreement among peers to establish reliability for transcript analysis. Inter-rater reliability establishes integrity as individuals who were not involved in the study develop category codes. One procedure commonly used to establish inter-rater reliability is Cohen’s Kappa (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, & Archer, 2001; Dillenbourg, Veerman, & Veldhuis-Diermanse; 2001; Peng et al., 1993). Cohen’s Kappa (1960) is a statistical measure of inter-rater agreement in qualitative research and is considered a more robust measure that simple percent agreement because it takes into account the possibility that agreement occurred due to chance (Smith, 2000). Values between +1 and -1 are obtained, with +1 indicating absolute agreement between the raters and -1 indicating absolute disagreement between the raters. A score of zero indicated that there is no agreement among the raters (other than what would be expected from chance).

The specificity of the research questions guided the coding of the data. Initially, the data was put into an excel sheet and themes were developed according to the topics in order to add additional rigor (Creswell, 2006). To develop a conceptual schema from the data, an external colleague assisted during this phase of the analysis as a coder. The external peer was presented with slides of all responses from the participants and asked to code into one of seven categories: parenting, communicating, volunteering, decision making, collaborating with community, and not otherwise categorized. The issue of validity was addressed with categories systematically developed to represent Epstein’s
six types of involvement. The Kappa calculations for meaning units were summarized in Appendix H. An acceptable reliability for this study was identified as $\kappa > 0.60$ (Landis & Koch, 1977; Viera & Garrett, 2005). The administrator’s descriptions of success factors and inhibiting factors are shown in Appendix I and J.

**Summary of the Procedures Used in the Study**

The study focused on determining the likelihood that the type of school, gender of the principal, years of experience, community size and family structure is a predictor of parent involvement in elementary schools in South Carolina. Parent involvement was defined as providing learning support at home (Barnyak et al., 2009), attending parent teacher conferences, being actively involved in school decision-making opportunities such as Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) (Barnyak et al., 2009; Englund, Lucker, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004), and creating a home environment to support children’s learning (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002).

The steps used in completing the study included:

1. Survey data obtained from administrators.
2. Data were coded and entered on the computer using STATA as statistical package.
3. Frequencies were generated from data on Survey Monkey.
4. The data were analyzed using STATA to generate binary logistic regression.
5. In addition, SPSS 17.0 was used to test for goodness of fit and generate log likelihood tables.
6. The results were interpreted and analyzed as each related to the three research questions, three hypotheses, and the literature reviewed in the study.
CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the data analyses and interpretation of the research study. The first analysis addresses what South Carolina principals reported were the parent involvement activities in their schools. The second analysis addresses to what extent the practices were associated with Epstein’s (2001) six types of parent involvement. The third analysis presents data concerning the likelihood that five independent variables (type of school, gender, years of experience, community size, and family structure) are a predictor of parent involvement in South Carolina elementary schools. In this study, parent involvement is the dependent variable. The chapter is organized in terms of three specific research questions.

- What do South Carolina principals report are the parent involvement activities they implement in public elementary schools?

- To what extent do these parent involvement practices associate with Epstein’s six types of parent involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community)?

- Which variables (type of school, gender, years of experience, community size, and family structure) influence the principals reporting of parent involvement in South Carolina public elementary schools?

Logistic regression was chosen as the best method to analyze the data. Logistic regression describes and tests hypotheses about relationships between a categorical outcome variable and one or more categorical variables. This model is appropriate because it estimates the probability that one of two events will occur, depending on the
values of a set of independent variables (Norusis, 2008). Finally, the open-ended responses were interpreted using content analysis to identify emerging themes aligned with Epstein’s (2001) six types of parent involvement. Sections in this chapter include Survey Response Rates, Summary of Quantitative Findings, and Qualitative Analyses.

**Survey Response Rates**

An electronic survey was sent to 610 principals. An invitation email message was sent to each participant outlining the intent of the survey in the introduction. The participants for this study were 210 elementary principals in South Carolina, found on either the South Carolina Department of Education database or on a list provided by the South Carolina Association of School Administrators. As stated in chapter three, an incentive was offered and one principal received a free registration to the annual South Carolina Association of State Administrators summer state conference. The overall response rate is shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

*Overall Survey Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surveys Sent</th>
<th>Surveys Returned</th>
<th>Surveys Completed</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>610</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Quantitative Findings

Research Questions One and Two

Two research hypotheses were tested: 1) there are no existing systematic parent involvement practices in public elementary schools in South Carolina and 2) the parent involvement activities implemented by South Carolina elementary school principals are not associated with Epstein’s six types of parent involvement. The first section of the quantitative findings addressed research questions one and two. Frequency tables were formulated using the data collected and are displayed in the appendices.

Research question one: What do South Carolina principals report are the parent involvement activities they implement in public elementary schools?

Research question two: To what extent do these parent involvement practices associate with Epstein’s (2001) six types of parent involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community)?

In this section, a brief description of each type of parent involvement is provided. In addition, mean responses for each type of involvement are presented. The mean responses from all respondents ranged from 3.45-4.44 on a Likert scale of 1-5. This is a calculation of the mean of all principal responses for all practices within each type of parent involvement. Additionally, included in this section is a description of the practices that principals collectively perceived as participating in most frequently and least frequently. The data for this section is summarized in Table A.1 in the appendices.
Parenting. This is the first type of involvement in Epstein’s (2001) framework and described basic responsibilities of families. Parenting was defined as practices that increased families’ understanding of their children’s growth and development by establishing home environments to support children’s learning (Epstein, 2001). This category included seven types of activities to assist families such as providing information and training on child development. The average response rate in this category was 3.45. This indicated an average Likert response for all practices between “occasionally” and “frequently”. The practice of respecting the different cultures represented in the student population received the overall highest score in the parenting category. The mean for this practice was 4.38 and indicated a Likert response of “frequently”. Sponsoring home-visitation programs or neighborhood meetings to help families understand schools and to help schools to understand families received the lowest overall Likert score. The mean for this practice was 2.92 or the equivalent of “occasionally” on the Likert scale. See Table A.2 for frequency of parenting practices and percentage of responses.

Communicating. This is the second type of involvement and described basic responsibilities of schools. The communicating category included practices that were designed to promote effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children’s progress (Epstein, 2001). This category included fourteen activities schools could utilize to successfully involve families such as conducting conferences at least once a year and training teachers, staff, and principals on the importance of parent involvement. The mean response of all individual
practices within this category was 4.44 and indicated an average Likert response of “frequently”. The practice that received the highest overall Likert average involved contacting families of students having academic or behavior problems. The mean for this practice was 4.79, indicating an average Likert response between “frequently” and “extensively” in schools. Developing communication for parents, who do not speak English well, do not read well, or need large type received the lowest score in the communicating category. The mean for this practice was 3.99, or an average Likert response of “frequently”. See Table A.3 for frequency of communication practices and percentage of responses.

**Volunteering.** This is the third type of involvement in Epstein’s (2001) framework and explained volunteering as involvement at school and for the school. The volunteering category included practices that were designed to recruit and organize parent help and support (Epstein, 2001). This category provided eight activities schools could utilize to successfully involve parents such as creating flexible volunteering opportunities and scheduling school programs to accommodate parents’ work schedules. The average response of all individual practices within this category was 3.41 and indicated an average Likert response of “occasionally”. Scheduling school events at different times during the day and evening so that all families could attend some activities throughout the year received the highest score in the volunteering category. The mean for this practice was 4.36, indicating an average Likert response of “frequently”. The practice that received the lowest overall score was recognizing volunteers for their time and efforts. The mean for this practice was 3.24, or an average Likert response of
“occasionally”. See Table A.4 for frequency of volunteering practices and percentage of responses.

**Learning at home.** This is the fourth type of involvement in Epstein’s (2001) framework. Learning at home was described as schools providing information to families to support children with their homework and other curriculum activities. The category included five activities schools could utilize to successfully involve parents such as providing information to families on how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home. The mean response of all individual practices within this category was 4.02, indicating an average Likert response of “frequently”. Making parents aware of the importance of reading at home and asking parents to listen to their children read or read aloud with their child received the highest score in this category. The mean for this practice was 4.55, indicating an average Likert response between “frequently” and “extensively.” Scheduling of regular interactive homework that required students to demonstrate and discuss what they were learning with a family member received the lowest score in this category. The mean for this practice was 3.69 or an average Likert response between “occasionally” and “frequently”. See Table A.5 for frequency of learning at home practices and the percentage of responses.

**Decision-making.** This is the fifth type of involvement. The decision-making category was defined as providing parents with the opportunity to participate in decisions about school programs (Epstein, 2001). This category included ten activities schools could implement to successfully involve parents such as having an active parent organization. The mean response of all individual practices within this category was
4.08, indicating an average Likert response of “frequently”. The practice of including parent representatives on school improvement teams, school advisory councils, or other committees received the highest score. This practice received a mean response of 4.80 or an average Likert response between “frequently” and “extensively”. Dealing with conflict openly and respectfully received the lowest score in the decision-making category. The mean response for this practice was 3.28, or an average Likert response of “occasionally”. See Table A.6 for frequency of decision making practices and percentage of responses.

**Collaborating with community.** This is the sixth type of involvement in Epstein’s (2001) framework. The collaborating with community category included activities that would enable the community to contribute to schools, students and families. This category described eight activities schools could utilize to successfully involve parents such as offering after school programs for students with support from the community. The mean response of all individual practices within this category was 3.58. This indicated an average Likert response between “occasionally” and “frequently”. The practice of utilizing community resources, such as businesses, libraries, parks, and museums to enhance the learning environment received the highest score in this category. This practice received a mean response of 3.92 or an average Likert response between “occasionally” and “frequently”. The practice that received the lowest overall score was providing “one-stop” shopping for family services through partnership of school, counseling, health, recreation, job training, and other agencies. The mean response for
this practice was 2.98, or an average Likert response of “occasionally”. See Table A.7 for frequency of collaborating with the community practices and percentage of responses.

Research Question Three

Research question three focused on which variables (type of school, gender, years of experience, community size, and family structure) influence the principals reporting of parent involvement in South Carolina public elementary schools?

In order to test the research hypothesis that there was no difference between type of school, gender, years of experience, community size, family structure, and the dependent variable, parent involvement, a two-predictor logistic model was fitted to the data. The logistic regression model utilized for this study was STATA statistical software (Stata Corp. 2009) as it provided the most detailed information on parameter estimates (Peng et al, 2002). A sequence of logistic regression analyses were conducted to determine whether five predictors – type of school, years of experience, gender, community size, and family structure – could predict parent involvement. The value of the coefficient β determined the direction of the relationship between x and the logit of y (Peng et al., 2002). Exponent β was utilized to interpret the meaning of the regression coefficients. The odds ratio suggested whether a practice was more likely than not to occur. If the value was more than 1.0, then the practice was more likely to occur. If the value was less than 1.0, then the practice was less likely to occur. Each predictor was analyzed separately with logistic regression results for the six types of parent involvement at α = .05 significance level.
Type of school. The first question on the survey asked the respondents to indicate the type of public elementary school. The four school choices were Title I, Charter, Blue Ribbon, and Other. Under this category, other schools were those not receiving Title I funds or not considered Blue Ribbon or Charter schools. Since there were no responses from administrators at Charter schools, they were excluded from the data analyses. Additionally, given that only 2.5 percent of the respondents were administrators in Blue Ribbon schools, this variable was also removed. The two remaining school types were Title I and other schools. A majority of the respondents (54.5 percent) indicated that their schools were Title I schools and 43.0 percent of the respondents indicated that their schools were in the “other” category (see Table A.8 and Figure A.1). The predicted association of type of public elementary school and school’s role in helping families establish home environments to support children as students (parenting) was examined. Three variables (P1, P3, P5) were significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level. These results suggested that other schools were more likely than Title I schools to conduct workshops or provide information for parents on child development (P1). Furthermore, other schools were more likely than Title I schools to sponsor home visitation programs or neighborhood meetings to help families understand schools and to help schools to understand families (P5). Other types of schools were significantly less likely than Title I schools to produce information for families that was clear, usable, and linked to children’s success in school (P3). See Table A.9 for description.

Next, the predicted association of type of public elementary school and school’s role in collaborating with the community through identifying and integrating resources
and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development was examined. One variable was significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (CC1). Other types of schools were less likely than Title I schools to provide community resource directories for parents and students with information on community services, programs, and agencies.

From Table 4.2, the -2 Log likelihood value indicated how well the model fit the data. Cox & Snell R-square indicated what percentage of the dependent variable of parent involvement may be accounted for by all included predictor variables. From the table, parenting could account for 11 percent of the variance in types of schools, communication 10 percent of the variance, volunteering 5 percent of the variance, learning at home 1 percent of the variance, decision-making 6 percent of the variance, and collaborating with the community 8 percent of the variance. In the analysis, the parenting category had a p-value of less than .05 which demonstrated that there was a relationship between type of school and the parenting practice. The research hypothesis that there was no difference regarding the relationship between type of school and parent involvement was rejected.
Table 4.2

Logistic Regression Analysis for Parent Involvement by Type of School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>-2 Log Likelihood</th>
<th>Cox &amp; Snell R Square</th>
<th>NagelkerkeR</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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<td>.996</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.293</td>
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<td>Collaborating with Community</td>
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<td>.055</td>
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*Demonstrated a relationship between independent variable, type of school, and a dependent variable.

Gender. In an effort to better understand the relationship between administrators’ gender and the six parent involvement categories, the following section includes data describing the principals’ perceptions associated with their gender. The analyses examined the variables predicting gender and the school’s role in implementing the six types of involvement. Of the 209 participants who responded to this question, 36.2 percent were male and 63.2 percent were female (Table A. 11, Figure A.2). One significant finding for gender and type of involvement was found in the practice of volunteering. The predicted association of principal gender and school’s function in recruiting and organizing parent help and support was examined (V8). One variable was significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level. These results suggested that male principals are less likely than female principals to encourage families and the community to be involved with the school in a variety of ways (Table A.12).
From Table 4.3, Cox & Snell R-square indicated what percentage of the dependent variable of parent involvement may be accounted for by all included predictor variables. Parenting could account for 5 percent of the variance in gender, communicating 5 percent of the variance, volunteering 6 percent of the variance, learning at home 1 percent of the variance, decision-making 4 percent of the variance, and collaborating with the community 10 percent of the variance. Collaborating with the community had a p-value of less than .05 which demonstrated a relationship between gender and collaborating with the community. The research hypothesis that there was no difference regarding the relationship between gender and parent involvement was rejected.

**Table 4.3**

*Logistic Regression Analysis for Parent Involvement by Gender*

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>-2 Log Likelihood</th>
<th>Cox &amp; Snell RSquare</th>
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<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>df</th>
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<td>.011*</td>
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*Demonstrated a relationship between the independent variable, gender, and a dependent variable.
Total number of years as an elementary school principal. In an effort to understand the relationship between administrators’ years of experience and the six parent involvement categories, the predicted association of total number of years as an elementary principal and parent involvement practices was analyzed. Respondents indicated the number of years as a principal (Table A.13, Figure A.3). Of the administrators responding, more than one quarter (25.6 percent) had 5 or less years in their positions, 31.9 percent had 6-10 years of experience, 26.6 percent had 11-20 years of experience, and 15.9 percent had more than 20 years of experience.

The predicted association of principals’ experience in years and schools’ roles in helping families establish home environments to support children as students (parenting) had one variable significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (P3). These results suggested that principals with more experience were less likely than principals with less experience to ask families for information about children’s goals, strengths, and talents than less experienced principals (Table A. 14). In the volunteering practice, the predicted association of principal experience in years and school’s role in recruiting and organizing parent help and support was examined. One variable was significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (V2). These results suggested that principals with more years of experience were less likely than principals with less experience to provide a parent/family resource room for volunteers and family members to work, meet, and access resources about parenting, child care, tutoring, and other things that affect their children (Table A.15).

From Table 4.4, Cox & Snell R-square indicated what percentage of the dependent variable of parent involvement may be accounted for by all included predictor
variables. Parenting could account for 7 percent of the variance in years of experience, communicating 8 percent of the variance, volunteering 6 percent of the variance, learning at home 0.5 percent of the variance, decision-making 3 percent of the variance, and collaborating with the community 2 percent of the variance. The parenting category had a p-value of less than .05 which demonstrated that there was a relationship between years of experience and parenting. The research hypothesis that there was no difference regarding the relationship between years of experience and parent involvement was rejected.

Table 4.4

*Logistic Regression Analysis for Parent Involvement by Years of Experience*

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>-2 Log Likelihood</th>
<th>Cox &amp; Snell R Square</th>
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*Demonstrated a relationship between independent variable, years of experience, and a dependent variable.*

**Community size.** In an effort to understand the relationship between community size and the six parent involvement categories, the predicted association between community size and parent involvement practices was analyzed. Respondents indicated the size of the community (Table A.16, Figure, A. 3). Of the administrators responding,
33.3 percent of the respondents’ schools were in rural communities with less than 2,500 residents. Less than one quarter (23.8 percent) of the communities (towns) had a population of 2,500-5,000. Twenty percent described their community as a small city with 5,000-20,000 residents; 12.4 percent of the respondents indicated that their community was a city of 21,000-49,999 residents; and 10.5 percent of the respondents described their community as an urban area with 50,000 or more residents.

The predicted association of community size and school’s role in designing effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children’s progress was examined (communicating practice). One variable was significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (C6). These results suggested that schools in communities of 2,500-5,000 were more likely than larger communities to conduct an orientation for new parents (Table A.17).

The predicted association of community size and the school’s role in providing information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities was examined (learning at home practice). One variable was significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (LH3). The results suggested that schools in small towns (2,500-5,000) were more likely than schools in larger communities to make parents aware of the importance of reading at home, and were more likely to ask parents to listen to their child read or read aloud with their child (Table A.18).

In the collaborating with community category, the predicted association of community size and the school’s role in identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and
student learning was examined. Two variables were significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (CC3, CC7). The results suggested that schools in rural communities (less than 2,500) were more likely than schools in larger communities to work with local businesses, industries, and community organizations on programs to enhance student skills and learning (CC3). Additionally, the results suggested that schools in rural communities were less likely than schools in larger communities to solve turf problems of responsibilities, funds, staff, and locations for collaborative activities to occur (Table A.19).

From Table 4.5, Cox & Snell R-square indicated what percentage of the dependent variable of parent involvement may be accounted for by all included predictor variables. Parenting could account for 2 percent of the variance in community size, communicating 5 percent of the variance, volunteering 4 percent of the variance, learning at home 4 percent of the variance, decision-making 3 percent of the variance, and collaborating with the community 7 percent of the variance. All significance levels in Table 4.5 were above .05. The research hypothesis that there was no difference regarding the relationship between community size and parent involvement was accepted.
Family structure. In an effort to better understand the relationship between family structure and parent involvement activities currently implemented by principals, the following section examined the relationship between family structure in a school and parent involvement practices occurring in the school. In this study, the four family structures included in the analyses were traditional families, blended families, single parents, and alternative guardians/grandparents.

Traditional families. Respondents estimated types of family in their school buildings who were traditional families (Table A.20). Traditional family in this study was defined as a family unit with a mother and father living in the home. The majority of respondents (37.1 percent) indicated that 30 to 50 percent of families were traditional. In the more than 50 percent category, 24.3 percent of the families were traditional families.

The predicted association between number of traditional families in a school and the school’s role in helping families establish home environments to support children as
students (parenting) was examined. One variable was significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (P5). These results suggested that as the number of traditional families in a school increased, the less likely the school was to sponsor home-visitation programs or neighborhood meetings to help families understand schools and to help schools to understand families (Table A.21).

Next, the predicted association between number of traditional families in a school and the school’s role in designing effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children’s progress (communicating) was examined. Several variables were significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (C4, C7, C11). These results suggested that as the number of traditional families in a school increased, the less likely schools were to train teachers, staff, and principals on the value and utility of contributions of parents to build ties between school and home (C4). Additionally, schools with a higher percentage of traditional families were less likely than other family structures (blended families, single parents, alternative guardians) to conduct formal conferences with every parent at least once a year (C11). However, schools with a higher percentage of traditional families were more likely than other family structures to send home folders of student work weekly or monthly for parent review and comment (C7). See description in Table A.22.

In the volunteering category, the predicted association between number of traditional families in a school and the school’s role in recruiting and organizing parent help and support was examined. One variable was significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (V5). Schools with higher percentages of traditional families were more likely than schools
with other family structures to recognize volunteers for their time and efforts (Table A.23).

In the learning at home category, the predicted association between number of traditional families in a school and the school’s role in providing information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities was examined. One variable was significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (LH3). The results suggested that schools with higher percentages of traditional families were more likely than other family structures to inform parents of the importance of reading at home and to ask parents to listen to their child read or read aloud with their child (Table A.24).

In the decision-making category, the predicted association between the number of traditional families in a school and the school’s role in including parents in school decisions and the development of parent leaders and representatives was examined. Two variables were significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (DM1, DM10). Results suggested that schools with a higher percentage of traditional families were more likely than other family structures to have an active PTA, PTO, or other parent organization in the school (DM1). However, schools with a higher percentage of traditional families were less likely to ask involved parents to make contact with less-involved parents and solicit their ideas (Table A.25).

From Table 4.6, Cox & Snell R-square indicated what percentage of the dependent variable of parent involvement may be accounted for by all included predictor variables. Parenting could account for 5 percent of the variance in traditional families,
communicating 2 percent of the variance, volunteering 8 percent of the variance, learning at home 4 percent of the variance, decision-making 2 percent of the variance, and collaborating with the community 0.9 percent of the variance. Two types of involvement had p-values less than 0.05. The communicating category had a p-value of 0.007 which demonstrated a relationship between the number of traditional families in a school building and one of the six types of parent involvement, communicating. Also, decision making had a p-value of 0.00 which demonstrated a relationship between this type of parent involvement and the number of traditional families in a school. The research hypothesis that there was no difference regarding the relationship between family structure and parent involvement was rejected.

Table 4.6

Logistic Regression Analysis for Parent Involvement by Traditional Families

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>-2 Log Likelihood</th>
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*Demonstrates a relationship between independent variable, traditional family, and a dependent variable.

**Blended families.** In this study, blended family was defined as a family unit consisting of two formerly married parents and the children from former marriages. In an
effort to better understand the relationship between blended families and parent involvement activities currently implemented by principals, the following section examined the variables predicting the association between Epstein’s (2001) six types of involvement and blended families. Table A.26 described the frequency and percent of families in this category. The majority of respondents (52.2 percent) indicated that 15 to 30 percent of families in their schools were blended (Table A.26).

In the communication category, the predicted association between number of blended families in a school and the school’s role in designing effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children’s progress was examined. One variable was significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (C10). These results suggested that schools with a higher percentage of blended families were less likely than other family structures (traditional families, single parents, alternative guardians) to develop school programs for family involvement with input from educators, parents, and others (Table A.27).

In the learning at home category, the predicted association between number of blended families in a school and the school’s role in providing information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning was examined. One variable was significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (LH5). Schools with higher percentages of blended families were more likely than other family structures to schedule regular interactive homework that required students to demonstrate and discuss what they were learning with a family member (Table A.28).
In the decision making category, the predicted association between the number of blended families in a school and the school’s role in including parents in school decisions and the development of parent leaders and representatives was examined. Two variables were significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (DM1, DM2). Results suggested that schools with higher percentages of blended families were less likely than schools with other family structures to have an active PTA, PTO, or other parent organization in the school. However, these results suggested that schools with a higher percentage of blended families were more likely than other family structures to include parent representatives on school advisory councils, school improvement teams, or other committees. See Table A.29.

From Table 4.7, Cox & Snell R-square indicated what percentage of the dependent variable of parent involvement may be accounted for by all included predictor variables. Parenting could account for 2 percent of the variance in blended families, communicating 10 percent of the variance, volunteering 3 percent of the variance, learning at home 2 percent of the variance, decision-making 10 percent of the variance, and collaborating with the community 5 percent of the variance. All significance levels in Table 4.7 are above .05 except decision-making. The decision making category had a p-value less than .05. This demonstrated that there was a relationship between the number of blended families in a school building and one of the six types of parent involvement, decision making. The research hypothesis that there was no difference regarding the relationship between family structure and parent involvement was rejected.
Table 4.7

_Logistic Regression Analysis for Parent Involvement by Blended Families_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>-2 Log Likelihood</th>
<th>Cox &amp; Snell R Square</th>
<th>Nagelkerke R</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
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<td>.024</td>
<td>3.497</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating</td>
<td>312.77</td>
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<td>.115</td>
<td>16.633</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>.217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>300.283</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>5.216</td>
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<td>.634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning at home</td>
<td>193.635</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>3.712</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>339.422</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>.119</td>
<td>16.818</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.032*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with Community</td>
<td>317.541</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>7.319</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.396</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Demonstrates a relationship between independent variable, blended families, and a dependent variable.

**Single parents.** In an effort to better understand the relationship between single parents and parent involvement activities currently implemented by principals, the following section examined the variables predicting types of involvement in relation to single parents. Table A.30 described the frequency and percent of families in this category. The highest percentage (47.7 percent) indicated that 15 to 30 percent of families in their schools were single-parent families.

In the communication category, the predicted association between the number of single parents in a school and school’s role in designing effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children’s progress was examined. One variable was significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (C11). These results suggested that schools with higher percentages of single parents were more likely than other family structures (traditional families, blended families, alternative guardians).
to train teachers, staff, and principals on the value and utility of parent contributions and ways to build ties between school and home (Table A.31).

In the volunteering category, the predicted association between the number of single parents in a school and the school’s role in recruiting and organizing parent help and support was examined. One variable was significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (V5). Schools with higher percentages of single parents were less likely than other family structures to recognize volunteers for their time and efforts. See Table A.32 for results.

In the learning at home category, the predicted association between the number of single parents in a school and the school’s role in providing information and ideas to families to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning was examined. One variable was significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (LH5). Schools with higher percentages of single parents were more likely than other family structures to schedule interactive homework that required students to demonstrate and discuss what they were learning with a family member (Table A.33).

In the decision-making category, the predicted association between the number of single parents in a school and the school’s role in involving parents on school advisory councils or other committees was examined. Two variables were significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (DM1, DM0). Schools with higher percentages of single parents were less likely than other family structures to have an active PTA, PTO, or other parent organization in the school. However, schools with a higher percentage of single parents were more likely than other family structures to ask parents to make contact with less-involved parents and solicit their ideas (Table A.34).
In the collaboration with community, the predicted association between the number of single parents in a school and the school’s role in identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning was examined. One variable was significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (CC3). Schools with higher percentages of single parents were more likely than other family structures to work with local businesses, industries, and community organizations on programs to enhance student skills and learning (Table A.35).

From Table 4.8, the Cox & Snell $R$-square indicated what percentage of the dependent variable of parent involvement may be accounted for by all included predictor variables. Parenting could account for 9 percent of the variance in single parent families, communicating 11 percent of the variance, volunteering 6 percent of the variance, learning at home 4 percent of the variance, decision-making 12 percent of the variance, and collaborating with the community 6 percent of the variance. The parenting and decision making categories had a p-value less than 0.05. This demonstrated a relationship between the number of single parents in a school building and two types of parent involvement, parenting and decision making. The research hypothesis that there was no difference regarding the relationship between family structure and parent involvement was rejected.
Table 4.8

*Demonstrated a relationship between independent variable, single parents, and a dependent variable.

**Logistic Regression Analysis for Parent Involvement by Single-Parent Families**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>-2 Log Likelihood</th>
<th>Cox &amp; Snell R Square</th>
<th>Nagelkerke R</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>392.330</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.094</td>
<td>15.815</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.015*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicating</td>
<td>372.840</td>
<td>.112</td>
<td>.123</td>
<td>19.681</td>
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<td>.103</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
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<td>.068</td>
<td>10.582</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning at home</td>
<td>226.037</td>
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<td>.041</td>
<td>6.460</td>
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<td>.167</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>363.142</td>
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<td>.128</td>
<td>20.353</td>
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<td>.009*</td>
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<td>Collaborating with Community</td>
<td>389.386</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>9.123</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.244</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Alternative guardians/grandparents.* In an effort to better understand the relationship between alternative guardians and parent involvement activities currently implemented by principals, the researcher examined the variables predicting types of involvement in relation to alternative guardians. Table A.36 describes the frequency and percent of families in this category. The highest percentage (68.4 percent) indicated that 5 to 15 percent of children in their schools had alternative guardians.

In the parenting category, the predicted association between the number of alternative families in a school and the school’s role in helping families establish home environments that support children as students was examined. One variable was significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (P4). These results suggested that schools with a higher percentage of alternative families were more likely than other family structures to ask families for information about children’s goals, strengths, and talents (Table A.37).
In the collaborating with community category, the predicted association between the number of alternative families in a school and the school’s role in identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning was examined. One variable was significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (CC3). Schools with a higher percentage of alternative families were more likely than other family structures (traditional families, blended families, single parents) to work with local businesses, industries, and community organizations on programs to enhance student skills and learning (Table A.38).

From Table 4.9, the Cox & Snell R-square indicated what percentage of the dependent variable of parent involvement may be accounted for by all included predictor variables. Parenting can account for 5 percent of the variance in alternative guardian/grandparent families, communicating 12 percent of the variance, volunteering 6 percent, learning at home 7 percent of the variance, decision-making 5 percent of the variance, and collaborating with the community 4 percent of the variance. All significance levels in Table 4.9 are above .05. The research hypothesis that there was no difference regarding the relationship between schools with a higher percentage of alternative guardian/grandparents and parent involvement was accepted.
### Table 4.9

**Logistic Regression Analysis for Parent Involvement by Alternative-Guardian Families**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2 Log Likelihood</th>
<th>Cox &amp; Snell R Square</th>
<th>Nagelkerke R</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
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<td>.180</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning at home</td>
<td>135.276</td>
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<td>1.129</td>
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<td>.890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
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<td>.063</td>
<td>7.766</td>
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<td>.457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with Community</td>
<td>219.062</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>5.995</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.540</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Demonstrated a relationship between independent variable, alternative guardian, and a dependent variable.

### Qualitative Findings

**Open-ended responses.** Section eight of the survey provided participants the opportunity to qualitatively respond to two questions: (1) “What major factors have contributed to the success of your school’s family and community involvement efforts?” and (2) “What major factors have limited the success of your school’s family and community involvement efforts?”

A content analysis of common themes was conducted using each principal’s response to the open-ended questions. As recommended by Kvale and Brinkman (2009), the open ended responses were transcribed and analyzed for meaning. The first step entailed reading the responses to acquire a general perception of the narratives and to prepare the data for analysis (Johnson et al, 1993). The procedures for identifying, refining, and validating categories were methodically and carefully adhered to as the qualitative data was analyzed. The researcher defined the categories for coding utilizing
the six types of involvement in the survey. This process assisted in coding the responses using cue words from the survey. Furthermore, to establish category integrity, the participants’ responses to the two open ended questions were coded by two trained coders (one was the first author), and these coded statements were compared by inter-rater agreement using Cohen’s Kappa $\kappa$ (Cohen, 1960).

Cohen’s Kappa and percentage of agreement are two often cited measures of inter-rater reliability (Anderson et al., 2001; Dillenbourg et al. 2001; Fahy, 2001; Weinberger & Fischer, 2006). As Cohen’s Kappa is a robust measure of inter-rater reliability, it was chosen as the method in this study to analyze the qualitative responses. A cutoff was predetermined to classify the meaningful statements. This cutoff point was established at $\kappa>.60$ (Landis & Koch, 1977; Viera & Garrett, 2005). By utilizing this cutoff point, 367 significant meaning units were categorized into six themes using five of the six types of involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering, decision-making, and collaborating with the community). The additional meaning units were coded as “not otherwise categorized”. There were no meaning units that fit the learning at home category. Therefore, both coders did not include the learning at home theme in the coding, resulting in six themes (Appendix H).

Of the 210 principals who participated in this study 159 responded to the first open ended question which sought to discover what major factors contributed to the success of the school’s family and community involvement efforts. This represented a response rate of 75.7 percent.
Some respondents provided more than one response describing factors that influenced the success of school, family, and community partnerships. Of the 174 success factors coded, five of the coded categories were above the cutoff point of .60, signifying inter-rater reliability among the two coders. One category, volunteering, had a score of .51. The two coders came back together to reach an understanding of why the category did not score above .60. As the categories were framed using the six types of involvement, Coder 1 (the author) utilized information from literature on Epstein’s (2001, 2002) framework for parent involvement to determine how to code the meaning statements. This provided a context for defining volunteering as readiness to involve families in new ways.

Of the 210 participants in this study, 155 elected to respond and 57 declined to answer the qualitative question which sought to discover what factors limited the success of the school’s family and community involvement efforts. This represented a 73.8% response rate. Some respondents provided more than one factor and this affected the number of coded responses. Of the 193 Limiting Factors coded, four categories had a Kappa score of .80 or higher signifying inter-rater reliability among the two coders. One category, collaborating with the community, had a score of .40. Collaborating with the community was defined in this study as knowledge and use of community resources to enrich curriculum and instruction. This definition influenced the coding of the meaning statements for the limiting factors. Coder 1 (the author) had utilized information from the literature review to define collaboration with the community in the context of the six types of parent involvement.
As stated above, the responses from administrators to question one regarding factors that contribute to the success of school’s family and community involvement efforts were coded into six themes: (1) parenting, (2) communicating, (3) volunteering, (4) decision-making, (5) collaborating with the community, and (6) not otherwise categorized. Theme one, parenting, included responses that described parents as involved at home and wanting their children to succeed. One administrator stated the following regarding parenting activities, “Having workshops where parents and students can participate together” contributed to successful involvement efforts.

Theme two, communication, stressed the importance of continuous contact through newsletters, phone messages, and the internet. One success factor was the school’s commitment to communicate with parents in a variety of ways. One example provided by an administrator to explain the importance of staff’s commitment to parent involvement was the “sustained efforts by faculty and staff to improve parent communication”. The third theme, volunteering, was described as successful when hours were varied so working parents could attend activities. Schools with active PTO/PTA organizations were an example of schools having success in the decision making category. One administrator provided the following explanation:

The School Improvement Council and the Parent Teacher Organization have been very supportive and diligent in ensuring that all parents are involved in school activities and remain engaged in their child’s academic, social, and behavior school life.
Examples of successful factors in collaborating with the community included developing partnerships with community agencies and close ties with neighborhood associations. “We use the red carpet application process to improve our family and community involvement efforts”, stated one participant. Another administrator acknowledged that, “partnerships that we have formed with agencies to assist us” contributes to successful schools. The last theme, not otherwise categorized, described factors that both coders perceived as not specifically addressing Epstein’s (2001) six types of involvement. Some of the successful factors in the not otherwise category included an avid faculty and staff who insisted on parent involvement, a caring environment, enthusiasm of teachers, and Title I requirements. One principal described the following as a factor influencing parent involvement, “The efforts of the teachers and administration to involve parents and welcome them to our campus” (school climate).

Responses to question two related to factors that limited the success of the school’s family and community involvement efforts were coded into six themes: (1) parenting, (2) communicating, (3) volunteering, (4) decision-making, (5) collaborating with the community, and (6) not otherwise categorized. Under the parenting theme, lack of education and limited access to educational resources were provided as examples of limitations. “It becomes more and more frustrating from the school’s perspective for parents to be less interested in their child’s education. They have such high demands of survival in their lives; the children’s education is not a priority”.

In the communication category, factors limiting the family and community involvement efforts included: 1) parent contact information changed often; 2) limited
technology at home; 3) parents refused to take a phone calls; and 4) language barriers. Respondents stated that the large number of non-English speaking students and parents limited the school’s ability to effectively communicate with parents. “One third of our student population is Hispanic. The language barrier has somewhat limited our success.” “We have been successful with Hispanic families. Cost of hiring translators is prohibitive”. Another principal stated that contacting parents can be challenging. “A lot of contact is one on one to contact parents with no phone, when certified mail is not picked up, or when students do not take information home.”

Factors limiting volunteering included: 1) parents not having transportation to school functions; 2) the amount of time parents have to become involved; 3) conflicting responsibilities (other small children at home or elderly parents); 4) not all parents take advantage of the opportunities that are available and 5) lack of involvement from the community. “Parents are working longer hours and some that did not work in the past are now working to increase family income.” One principal described the difficulty with scheduling activities to accommodate parents’ schedules. “Parents’ schedules are not always flexible to be in the school. They are tired at night for evening meetings, have family and church responsibilities.”

The limiting factors in the decision making theme included lack of leadership and parents not placing an emphasis on PTO. Factors limiting collaboration with the community included building trust between the school and the community and type of community. “This is not a neighborhood school and proximity to the community presents a problem”. Another respondent stated, “Parents are very busy, lives are
complicated with family and financial issues. This probably limits our family and community involvement.” The limiting factors in the not otherwise category included: 1) lack of funding; 2) lack of resources; 3) budgets; and 4) socio-economic status. The administrators described the difficulty of providing a wide array of events with the limited funds available. One respondent stated, “It is difficult to host programs when you have no additional sources of income.” Another principal described the challenges with limited funds as “many of the programs require funding for food, services, and transportation”.

Within these factors, responses ranged from family life to school personnel issues that have limited the ability for schools to build school-family-community partnerships. The responses to the open-ended questions are documented in Appendices I and J.

**Summary**

In this chapter, findings from the three research questions that guided the study were presented. In addition to the principals’ perceptions of parent involvement activities, the responses to the 52 items in the six categories representing Epstein’s (2001) six types of involvement were reported and the associations were analyzed. Furthermore, the variables that influenced the principals reporting were discussed with means and standard deviations provided. With a few interesting exceptions, most principals reported that the practices were occurring in their schools “occasionally” through “frequently”. The open-ended responses suggested that principals recognized factors that contributed to the success of the school-family-community partnerships and also were aware of the
factors that limited schools from developing partnerships with families. Overall, the results suggested that South Carolina elementary principals perceived that a variety of parent involvement activities were being implemented in their schools. Additionally, parent involvement was associated with factors such as communication, varied times of activities, funding, available resources, transportation, and community size. The final chapter will include the summary, conclusions, and recommendations.
CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study was significant with the federal and state mandates issued over the past several decades related to parent involvement and the concern for accountability in schools. In this study, administrators’ perspectives of parent involvement activities in schools were examined. Chapter one provided a context for parent involvement and the importance of principal leadership in developing practices to encourage parent participation. In this study, measures of parent involvement were selected as the dependent variable. Five independent variables were chosen for the study: type of school, years of experience, gender, community size, and family structure. Three research questions and research hypotheses were presented in this chapter. Chapter two presented a review of the literature related to this study. Section one included information describing recent mandates to increase parent involvement in students’ education and section two focused on the theory of overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 2001) with emphasis on children’s development within the context of their environment. Also, benefits and barriers to building successful partnerships with families were described. The last section of chapter two focused on the role of the principal in promoting the success of students.

The research methodology utilized in the study was described in chapter three. The target population for this study included elementary school principals in the state of South Carolina. The research instrument utilized in this study was the Measure of
School, Family, and Community Partnerships (Salinas et al., 1999). This survey was based on the six types of involvement (Epstein, 2001). Data for this study were collected via an electronic survey. The researcher utilized logistic regression analyses to describe and test hypotheses about relationships between parent involvement and one or more categorical variables. In addition, a description of content analysis open-ended qualitative survey data was presented.

Chapter four focused on analysis of data. The results were presented in three sections: descriptive statistics, logistic regression, and content analysis of qualitative data. Frequency distribution tables and descriptions were presented on each of the independent variables: type of school, gender, years of experience, community size, and family structure. Ordinal logistic regression results explained the directional relationships of the dependent and independent variables. Finally, open-ended responses were coded and a content analysis of common themes was presented.

Chapter five discusses the findings of the study. The chapter includes a summary of the study, a retrospective examination of the literature review, and a discussion of the findings of the data analysis. In addition, recommendations made by researchers in earlier studies are discussed (Sanders et al., 2009; Epstein 2001; Hiatt-Michael, 2006). In the final section, the implications and suggestions for future research are presented as well as conclusions from this study.
Summary of the Study

The underlying principle of this study evolved from the research literature on parent involvement and its importance in children’s formal schooling for positive outcomes (Baker et al., 1997). As stated in chapter one, limited research exists on administrators’ practices that promote meaningful parent engagement, even though policies are present that endorse school and home partnerships (Auerbach, 2009). Research indicated that schools struggle to engage families (Bouffard & Weiss, 2008; Lopez, Kreider, & Caspe, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, & Reed, 2002; Epstein, 2001) and school leaders face challenges in sustaining meaningful parent involvement. In this study, parent involvement was defined as a broad range of behaviors including volunteering at school, providing learning support at home (Barnyak et al., 2009), attending parent teacher conferences, being actively involved in school decision-making opportunities such as Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) (Barnyak et al., 2009; Englund, Lucker, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004), and creating a home environment to support children’s learning (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002). The primary purpose of this study was to understand the administrators’ perspectives of parent involvement by examining the parent involvement practices elementary school principals report are implemented and how they are aligned with Epstein’s six types of family involvement (2001). The six types of involvement provided a conceptual framework for this study.

The following research questions guided the study:

- What do South Carolina principals report are the parent involvement activities they implement in public elementary schools?
To what extent do these parent involvement practices associate with Epstein’s six types of parent involvement (parenting, communications, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community)?

Which variables (type of school, gender, years of experience, community size, and family structure) influence the principals reporting of parent involvement in South Carolina public elementary schools?

Findings of the Study

The literature review on parent involvement emphasized the benefits of parent participation for school success and positive student outcomes. The benefits as described included improved differences in children’s academic achievement, increased school attendance, increased positive perceptions of school climate, and higher graduation rates (SEDL, 2009; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004; Fan & Chen, 2001; Davis, 2000; Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2000; Baker & Soden, 1997; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Epstein, 1991). The research literature described the various methods schools should pursue to strengthen the relationship between home and school (Van Voorhis et al., 2004; Fan, 2001).

Research Question One

What do South Carolina principals report are the parent involvement activities they implement in public elementary schools?

Using Epstein’s six types of involvement as a framework, elementary school principal respondents in this study reported on the activities in their schools. The six
types of parent involvement were: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community.

Related to the parenting category, administrators reported that families were assisted with parenting and child-rearing skills and they were provided information to support their children’s learning at home. The parenting indicator that received the highest overall score was that principals respected the different cultures represented in the student population. Research suggests that children from diverse backgrounds benefit when schools promote the acceptance of cultural differences (Auerbach, 2009; Sanders et al., 2009; Sanders & Harvey, 2002).

The two most frequently reported types of parent involvement were communicating and decision-making. Administrators indicated that they frequently involve parents in their programs through varied communication approaches. This finding adds to the research literature confirming one of the most powerful links to learning is regular, continuous communication between home and school (Henderson et al., 2002; Dwyer & Hecht, 1992). Principals’ reported that they regularly contacted families of students having academic or behavior problems. This finding aligns with Epstein’s (1995) finding that families are contacted more often when there are difficulties with inappropriate behaviors. The majority of respondents indicated that they established clear, two-way communication from home to school and school to home. With the knowledge that one of the barriers to building and maintaining home-school relationships is poor communication (Sanders et al., 2009) the principals’ perceptions that they have overcome this barrier by effectively employing strategies to communicate with parents is
important. Administrators reported that they frequently promoted practices to communicate with families. One respondent stated: “The continued effort of the faculty and staff to find ways to communicate with parents through newsletters, emails, home visits, and literacy/math nights makes our school successful.”

Wanat (1994) identified shared decision making as an important process to involve parents. Findings from this study indicated that administrators believed parents were frequently provided with opportunities to be decision makers about school policies and practices. This finding is in contrast with research reflecting that few parents can serve on decision-making committees, and most parents never have the occasion to function as a decision maker (Kesslar-Sklar et al, 2000). Including parents on advisory committees provided a structure for making decisions about school policies and programs. However, issues such as transportation and conflicting parent responsibilities were described by administrators as factors affecting successful partnerships with families.

Overall, the administrators’ responses confirmed that all 52 parent involvement practices listed in the survey were occurring in South Carolina elementary schools. These reported practices do provide a baseline of activities for improving parent involvement in school programs. Schools that implement various forms of involvement have the opportunity to build trust with parents (Barnyak, et al, 2009; Feuerstein, 2000).
Research Question Two

To what extent are these parent involvement practices aligned with Epstein’s six types of parent involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community)?

The six types of involvement were based on the theory of overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 2001). The principals in this study reported that their schools have developed a range of practices for parent involvement. From their points of view, the six types of involvement frequently transpired in their school programs. The majority of respondents in this survey stated that they regularly created flexible scheduling of school events and volunteering activities to enable parents to participate. However, when asked what limited parent involvement in their schools, the administrators listed parent work schedules as an obstacle to involvement. This adds to the research literature stating that work responsibilities affect the amount of time parents can be available for school activities (Harris, 2008).

Additionally, the results indicated that a majority of the schools had active school organizations such as a PTA or PTO. Parent teacher organizations provide parents with opportunities to participate in a variety of roles. Schools with parent organizations such as school improvement councils, PTA or PTO, and other decision making committees “ensure that parent voices are heard on important school decisions” (Epstein et al., 2002, p. 59).
Research Question Three

Which variables (type of school, gender, years of experience, community, and family structure) influenced the principals reporting of parent involvement in South Carolina public elementary schools?

Past research has established a connection between parents choosing to be involved in their children’s education and such variables as family structure and community size (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Slate, 2005; Meier, 1996; Walberg, 1992). Living in a home with two parents has been identified as a strong predictor of increased parent involvement (Crosnoe, 2001). However, other studies have found that differences in involvement are explained by school practices and not family structure (Wanat, 1994). The literature indicated a relationship between schools that used traditional methods such as fundraisers and parent-teacher organizations and the level of parent involvement. Results from this study supported previous research describing the significance of school practices on parent involvement.

Bemak & Cornely (2002) identified scheduling as one obstacle to parent involvement. Administrators in this study described difficulties they faced scheduling programs to encourage parents’ participation. Administrators perceived parents who were single parents, parents working two jobs, and parents without accessible transportation as factors limiting the success of family and community involvement efforts. One administrator stated, “We need more involvement from our parents. We have many opportunities for parents to visit and be involved”.

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Results from the analysis of parent involvement in Title I and other schools suggested that other school types are more likely to conduct workshops and organize home visitation programs or neighborhood meetings than Title I schools. Since Title I schools receive funds to serve low-income students and are expected to foster relationships with parents (Sanders et al, 2009) conducting workshops may not be required as other forms of activities are implemented to involve parents. In addition, Title I schools identify the needs of the student population and then develop programs to improved educational outcomes. Furthermore, Title I money is often used for before and after school programs.

Results from this study suggested that male principals were less likely than females to encourage families and the community to be involved with the school. Research comparing the leadership styles of males and females found that females generally adopted a more participative style (Eagly, Karau, & Johnson, 1992; Shakeshaft, 1989). Administrators who employed a participative style of leadership are more likely to involve all members when identifying goals and developing strategies. Epstein (2001) found that when principals encourage specific parent and community involvement techniques, teachers are more likely to utilize the suggestions. With research on parent involvement being positively related to parent and community outreach (Cotton, 2003), further studies on the relationship between gender and parent involvement may be warranted.

Another finding suggested that female administrators in South Carolina were more likely to involve families as volunteers. The schools’ ability to recruit, provide
training, and create flexible schedules for volunteers so that all families know that their time and talents are welcomed and valued is a challenge to parent volunteering (Epstein et al., 2002). Recruiting volunteers results from a willingness to involve all families and the flexibility to work around parents’ schedules. In describing successful factors that promoted involvement at their schools, administrators emphasized the importance of open-door policies and contacting parents to come help at school. Furthermore, a study comparing behaviors of school administrators found that principals’ interactions with others influenced the school climate (Johnson, Busch, & Slate, 2008). The findings of this study are consistent with Sanders and Sheldon (2009) who reported that effective school leaders implemented practices to develop a positive school climate that welcomed families and community partners.

There was a predicted association between administrators’ years of experience and the six types of involvement. Significance was found in two areas: parenting and volunteering. The results showed that principals with more experience were less likely to ask families for information about children’s goals, strengths, and talents than less experienced principals. Literature supported the notion that students had improved learning outcomes when parents were contacted (MacNeil & Patin, 2005). Research literature also suggested that principals look more closely at the relationships between teachers and parents to ensure that schools are utilizing varied methods to connect with parents (MacNeil et al., 2005). With research demonstrating positive relationships between more teaching experience and a flexible leadership style (Bista et al., 1997) this
finding may explain why more experienced principals were less likely to ask information from parents.

In this study, elementary school principals in rural areas were more likely to reach out to communities to enhance student learning. Wiseman (2008) studied the effect of the community on children’s school experiences and found that the conditions of a community do have a direct influence on the environment within a school. Similar research confirmed that smaller schools tend to have greater parent involvement (Slate et al., 2005; Meier, 1996; Walberg, 1992). Communities provide an important networking opportunity for schools. When schools take advantage of the resources in communities to cultivate connections to parents, positive outcomes for children are possible.

In addition, Jeynes (2005) suggested that parent involvement in urban areas was affected by the number of working families. Results from this study found similar associations between level of involvement and working families. Parents’ work schedules limited the ability to become involved. Furthermore, difficulty in scheduling activities to accommodate working parents was described as one of the many factors limiting school’s ability to build relationships with families. With the number of parents who have work conflicts, schools that utilized traditional methods to schedule programs and activities may need to rethink their concept of parent involvement (Wanat, 1994).

Previous work supports the concept that family structures can explain children’s educational outcomes (Schneider, Atteberry & Owens, 2005). In this study, as the number of blended families and single parents increased, the less likely the school was to have an active parent organization. This finding was significant as parent organizations
have been found to provide parents with opportunities to contribute to school policies and participate in the decision making process (Epstein, 2001). Also, with studies confirming that single parents and fathers are less involved (Sanders et al, 2009), “schools must consistently encourage parents to become involved in their children’s learning at all grade levels” (Barnyak et al., p. 34). The types of family structures in schools will continue to differ in the future and school administrators have a responsibility to develop partnership activities that are appropriate for the diverse families in the schools.

**Theoretical Implications**

In this study of elementary school principals in South Carolina, Epstein’s (2001) theory of overlapping spheres of influence was the central theory. This study examined the parent involvement practices elementary school principals implemented in the state of South Carolina and how they were aligned with Epstein’s six types of family involvement (2001). Additionally, the relationships between parent involvement and several categorical predictor variables (type of school, gender, years of experience, community size, and family structure) were analyzed using the logistic regression model.

The focus of this study was the perception of parent involvement practices reported by elementary school principals in South Carolina. Thus, the findings of the study contributed to the theoretical framework described by Epstein. As stated in chapter two, there are many benefits for schools that seek to match their strategies to the needs of parents (Dwyer et al., 1992). Epstein’s theory represents the family, school, and community with the degree of overlap controlled by three forces: time, experience in
families, and experience in schools. Epstein (2001) described the “maximum” overlap as frequent cooperative efforts and close communication between schools, families, and communities. Epstein argued that it is critical for schools to develop programs that create involvement across these six types of involvement (Sanders et al., 2009). The principal’s role in creating programs that embody the theory of overlapping spheres of influence were especially important because sustainable school-family-community relationships require unvarying, well-informed leadership that stresses meeting the needs of students, parents, and teachers (Griffith, 2001).

**Limitations**

There were several limitations to this study. This study was limited to school principals in South Carolina elementary schools. Overall, narrowing of the participants limited relevance of any findings to that population. The timing of the survey coincided with school districts in the state planning their future fiscal year. Many districts were facing financial difficulties and were sending out notices to superintendents to cut spending and lay off staff. Even though an incentive of a free registration to the state conference for administrators was offered to participants, more than 50 percent of the administrators in the study were not members of this organization thus limiting the value of the incentive.

The fundamental purpose of this type of sampling was to gather extensive data regarding the perceptions of the participants. The selected population included a majority of female administrators and more than 50 percent of respondents had 6-20 years of
experience. This may not be representative of the larger population of administrators in the state. This kind of bias was a possible limitation of the study.

In addition, administrators reported their perceptions of practices, and it is natural for those in leadership roles to believe they are incorporating policies and practices in programs that promote their goals. Perception is one person’s reality. In a discussion on what’s really real, Babbie (2001) explains that “the nature of reality is perhaps more complex than we assume in our everyday functioning” (p.21). This was an exploratory research study to examine perceptions of elementary school administrators on the practices implemented in schools to involve parents. In this study, the administrators’ perceptions were their realities.

Finally, the researcher’s experiences working in public schools may have also unintentionally skewed her perception of the data. Every possible attempt was made for the researcher to remain personally detached and objective about the survey and the participants. Nevertheless, it is always possible that the researcher’s own perspectives created bias while analyzing emerging data. To help limit the degree to which bias played a role in this study, the researcher applied significant amount of planning before and during the study. In addition, utilizing a trained researcher to assist with the analysis of open-ended responses and the use of Cohen’s Kappa as a framework helped to increase the objectiveness of the activity.
Implications for Practice

There are several implications from this study. The findings from this research study may be used to inform administrators, teachers, parents, and community members about the important role parent involvement plays in students’ success. Principal leadership has been found to be a critical component of successful schools (Purkey et al., 1985). Learning the skills to involve parents is essential for administrators (Wanat, 1994). Understanding the theory and conceptual framework for involving parents is critical for future administrators. One method to accomplish this is for universities to link field-based activities with classroom experiences. Principal preparation programs should provide future administrators with opportunities to spend time with parents and conduct relevant research on the effectiveness of parent involvement.

Administrators and teachers are facing a changing world that will require diverse ways of teaching. Understanding the connections between families, schools, and communities has been supported by research (Wiseman, 2008). Many parents face barriers to involvement and schools need to adopt an approach that addresses these challenges (Sanders et al, 2009). Learning about children’s home environments is critical to help all children achieve successful outcomes (Pleyvak, 2003). Schools may need to help parents before the parents can help the children. This necessitates creating partnerships with community agencies to receive outside support. Moreover, it is important to conduct outreach activities in culturally diverse school settings to involve families and the community. Recognizing the connections of schools and families to the
community assists principals to mobilize support from community members to bring potential resources into the schools (Epstein, 2001).

This study has added to existing research stating that promoting appropriate methods of communication will help build a foundation of trust with parents (Sanders et al, 2009; Epstein, 2001). To achieve this objective, schools need to think beyond traditional methods and connect with families to support children’s success. This requires attention to teacher training that fosters effective communication (Anderson et al, 2007). From a pedagogical standpoint, teachers are able to develop meaningful learning opportunities “when they understand factors outside of the classroom and connect that knowledge to classroom curriculum” (Wiseman, 2008, p. 334). Research has documented several initiatives that have increased teachers’ parent involvement practices for in-service teachers (Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2002). Administrators can provide practitioners with strategies to overcome obstacles to parent involvement. These school leaders have the opportunity to plan professional development activities to promote parent involvement.

The final finding of this research study was the importance of school administrators monitoring and evaluating their parent and community involvement activities and persistently working to keep involvement effective. To maximize outcomes for successful parent involvement programs, annual evaluations need to be conducted (Sanders et al, 2009). Systematic evaluations should include parents, students, teachers and staff members. The overall purpose of these evaluations should be to gather, analyze, and evaluate data for program effectiveness.
**Future Research**

The following recommendations are offered from the data gathered in this study for further research regarding parent involvement in elementary schools:

1. A follow-up study could be conducted using focus groups or personal interviews to provide more in-depth information on the strategic programs principals utilize in their schools and how they came to choose these practices.

2. Research is needed to discover how prepared administrators are to work with families and parents once they enter the school. Providing hands-on activities in educational leadership programs would give future administrators the opportunity to work with parents. This would potentially create a stronger disposition toward parent involvement and the desire to implement practices that build partnerships with parents.

3. Further research could expand this study and address the relationship between home environments, SES, community resources, and parent involvement in a national survey.

4. Research on the specific practice of partnerships in various schools in South Carolina for diverse populations of students, families, teachers, and administrators would confirm and extend this study.

5. A future study could review staff development practices and in-service programs in school districts in South Carolina to determine if best practices, information, and relevant research to parent involvement are being included for administrators and teachers.

**Summary**

This study adds to current research regarding the role of the administrator as a key figure in advocating for parent involvement. With parent involvement proven to be a critical strategy in improving student outcomes in schools of all types, exploring the various ways in which school administrators promote parent involvement in schools was important. Research should continue to chart the progress of schools to consistently
involve parents (Krischenbaum, 2001). Initiatives to bridge the information gap between schools and parents are necessary to ensure successful outcomes for students. It is important to establish connections with school, district, and state partners to bring research-based approaches to schools and communities (Epstein, 2001). This study was guided by the theory of overlapping spheres of influence which states that children, families, schools and communities overlap. A central principle of the theory is that certain goals, such as student success, are best achieved through cooperative action and support.

In the last decade, the focus on the principal as one key to improving student outcomes has intensified (Cotton, 2003). Administrators in this study perceived their programs as employing various forms of the six types of involvement to create opportunities for parents to actively participate in their children’s education. This study added to research demonstrating the importance of elementary principals building programs that involve parents.

Furthermore, the growing literature described how schools could be more successful in meeting the needs of diverse student populations (Riehl, 2000). Programs that schools develop to engage all families (Auerbach, 2009; Sanders et al., 2009; Sanders & Harvey, 2002) highly determine the number of parents who choose to be involved. Schools play an important role in communities. The administrator, as the school leader, can strengthen relationships with parents and community members and also create school environments that foster partnerships (Sanders et al, 2009). Each school’s requirements will be unique and driven by the backgrounds and cultures of the
students and their families (MacNeil et al., 2005). The principal should take a leadership role in assessing the needs of the families to ensure that parents know their participation is critical to student success.

Ultimately, administrators must be well-informed regarding parent involvement practices in order to build successful partnerships with parents (Barnyak et al., 2009). This study confirmed that many variables affect the level of parent engagement. School administrators should increase strategies that accommodate the varied language and cultural needs existing in the schools. Flexibility and diversity are key ingredients in building effective parent involvement programs. The work schedules of families today create an opportunity for schools to be resourceful in planning activities to encourage parent participation. Administrators have the opportunity to build and sustain successful parent involvement programs to ensure that students will have improved learning outcomes. With the emphasis on parent involvement and the effect involvement has on children’s learning, it is vital for school leaders to view the spheres of influence in children’s lives as an influential and important variable in school success.
### Table A.1

**Types of Involvement with Administrators’ Mean Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Six types of Involvement</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>Practices that increase families understanding of their child’s growth and development by establishing home environments to support children’s learning.</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practices designed to increase two-way communication from school-to-home and home-to-schoo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School about school and classroom programs and children’s progress.</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Recruiting and training families to share their time and talents to support the school, teachers, and students.</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>Providing information and ideas to families about the student work to enable them to help their children at home with homework and other curriculum related activities.</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning at Home</td>
<td>Providing parents with opportunities to participate in decisions about school programs, developing parent leaders and representatives.</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>Encouraging the cooperation of schools, families and community groups to collaborate and work together to improve schools, strengthen families, and help students to be successful in school and life.</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix A

Tables
Table A.2

**Principal Survey: Parenting Response Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parenting (P)</th>
<th>Rating Avg.</th>
<th>Not Occurring %</th>
<th>Rarely %</th>
<th>Occasionally %</th>
<th>Frequently %</th>
<th>Extensively %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Conducts workshops on child development</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Provides information to those who need it</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Asks families for info. about children</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sponsors home visiting programs</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Provides info. to develop home conditions</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Respects cultures</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A.3

Principal Survey: Communicating Response Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communicating (C)</th>
<th>Rating Avg</th>
<th>Not Occurring %</th>
<th>Rarely %</th>
<th>Occasionally %</th>
<th>Frequently %</th>
<th>Extensively %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Review print info</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Support Non-English</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Home to school comm</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>59.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Conferences every</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Annual survey</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. New parent orientation</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Student work</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>82.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Curriculum and</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>67.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Academic/Behavior</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>81.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. School plan</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Train staff</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Build policies</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Newsletter</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>75.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Utilize language</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A.4

*Principal Survey: Volunteering Response Summary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteering (V)</th>
<th>Rating Avg.</th>
<th>Not Occurring %f</th>
<th>Rarely %f</th>
<th>Occasionally %f</th>
<th>Frequently %f</th>
<th>Extensively %f</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Annual survey to identify interests</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.6% (7)</td>
<td>6.2% (12)</td>
<td>18.6% (36)</td>
<td>39.2% (76)</td>
<td>32.5% (63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parent resource room</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>15.5% (30)</td>
<td>10.3% (20)</td>
<td>10.8% (21)</td>
<td>25.8% (50)</td>
<td>37.6% (73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Flexible schedule for volunteers</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>2.1% (4)</td>
<td>5.2% (10)</td>
<td>12.4% (24)</td>
<td>35.2% (68)</td>
<td>45.1% (87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Trains volunteers</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>6.8% (13)</td>
<td>5.7% (11)</td>
<td>22.9% (44)</td>
<td>29.7% (57)</td>
<td>34.9% (67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Recognizes volunteers for efforts</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>1.6% (3)</td>
<td>1.0% (2)</td>
<td>11.4% (22)</td>
<td>36.3% (70)</td>
<td>49.7% (96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Varied times for events</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>0.5% (1)</td>
<td>3.1% (6)</td>
<td>13.0% (25)</td>
<td>38.0% (73)</td>
<td>45.3% (87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Reduces barriers</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>10.9% (21)</td>
<td>15.0% (29)</td>
<td>30.6% (59)</td>
<td>27.5% (53)</td>
<td>16.1% (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Encourage involvement</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>2.6% (5)</td>
<td>15.6% (30)</td>
<td>26.6% (51)</td>
<td>55.2% (106)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A.5

Principal Survey: Learning at Home Response Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning at Home (LH)</th>
<th>Rating Avg.</th>
<th>Not Occurring % f</th>
<th>Rarely % f</th>
<th>Occasionally % f</th>
<th>Frequently % f</th>
<th>Extensively % f</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Monitoring homework</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.0% (2)</td>
<td>2.1% (4)</td>
<td>22.0% (42)</td>
<td>50.3% (96)</td>
<td>24.6% (47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How to assist students with skills</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.5% (1)</td>
<td>3.1% (6)</td>
<td>16.7% (32)</td>
<td>55.7% (107)</td>
<td>24.0% (46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Aware of reading at home</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>2.1% (4)</td>
<td>3.6% (7)</td>
<td>30.7% (59)</td>
<td>63.5% (122)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Students setting academic goals</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>2.1% (4)</td>
<td>3.2% (6)</td>
<td>22.3% (42)</td>
<td>44.7% (84)</td>
<td>27.7% (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Schedules regular interactive homework</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>3.2% (6)</td>
<td>8.4% (16)</td>
<td>26.8% (51)</td>
<td>40.0% (76)</td>
<td>21.6% (41)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A.6  

Principal Survey: Decision Making Response Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision Making (DM)</th>
<th>Rating Avg.</th>
<th>Not Occurring % f</th>
<th>Rarely % f</th>
<th>Occasionally % f</th>
<th>Frequently % f</th>
<th>Extensively % f</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Active PTA/PTO</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>(50)</td>
<td>(129)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parent reps on school council</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>83.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(27)</td>
<td>(158)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Parent reps on district council</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(18)</td>
<td>(36)</td>
<td>(114)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parents review programs</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>(72)</td>
<td>(91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Parents assist to revise curricula</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(18)</td>
<td>(24)</td>
<td>(53)</td>
<td>(54)</td>
<td>(41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Diverse groups included</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>(53)</td>
<td>(109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Formal network to link families</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(18)</td>
<td>(23)</td>
<td>(46)</td>
<td>(48)</td>
<td>(53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Students included in groups</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(19)</td>
<td>(31)</td>
<td>(60)</td>
<td>(38)</td>
<td>(41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Deals with conflict</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>58.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>(65)</td>
<td>(107)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Parents helping parents</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(18)</td>
<td>(31)</td>
<td>(46)</td>
<td>(51)</td>
<td>(44)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table A.7

**Principal Survey: Collaborating with the Community Response Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaborating with Community (CC)</th>
<th>Rating Avg.</th>
<th>Not Occurring % f</th>
<th>Rarely % f</th>
<th>Occasionally % f</th>
<th>Frequently % f</th>
<th>Extensively % f</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Resource Directory</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Families using resources</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Work with organizations</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>39.9%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. One-stop shopping</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Opens building</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. After school programs</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Solves turf problems</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Utilizes resources</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1. Resource Directory**
- Not Occurring: 12.7% (24)
- Rarely: 10.6% (20)
- Occasionally: 24.9% (47)
- Frequently: 32.8% (62)
- Extensively: 19.0% (36)

**2. Families using resources**
- Not Occurring: 2.1% (4)
- Rarely: 6.9% (13)
- Occasionally: 31.4% (59)
- Frequently: 41.0% (77)
- Extensively: 18.6% (35)

149
Table A.8

*Frequency Distribution for Type of Public Elementary School*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title I</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Ribbon</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>57.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>209</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A.9

*Parenting: Ordinal Logistic Regression Results: Type of Public Elementary School*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Odds-Ratio</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>.422</td>
<td>.047*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>.269</td>
<td>.587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>.567</td>
<td>.131</td>
<td>.014*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>.902</td>
<td>.169</td>
<td>.583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>.414</td>
<td>.027*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>.818</td>
<td>.199</td>
<td>.410</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A.10

*Collaborating with Community: Ordinal Logistic Regression Results: Type of Public Elementary School*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Odds-Ratio</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CC1</td>
<td>.735</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>.049*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC3</td>
<td>.822</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>.426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC4</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>.209</td>
<td>.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC5</td>
<td>.766</td>
<td>.144</td>
<td>.160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC6</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>.220</td>
<td>.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC7</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>.191</td>
<td>.679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC8</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.209</td>
<td>.859</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A.11

*Frequency Distribution for Gender of the Principal*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A.12

*Volunteering: Ordinal Logistic Regression Results: Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Odds-Ratio</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V1</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>.273</td>
<td>.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2</td>
<td>.970</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td>.829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4</td>
<td>.988</td>
<td>.198</td>
<td>.954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5</td>
<td>.870</td>
<td>.233</td>
<td>.605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V6</td>
<td>.773</td>
<td>.193</td>
<td>.303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V7</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>.180</td>
<td>.608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V8</td>
<td>.579</td>
<td>.144</td>
<td>.029*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A.13

*Frequency Distribution for Total Number of Years as an Elementary School Principal*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>57.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>84.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A.14

*Parenting: Ordinal Logistic Regression Results: Total Number of Years as an Elementary School Principal*

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Variable</th>
<th>Odds-Ratio</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>.170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>.680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>.620</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>.942</td>
<td>.150</td>
<td>.711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>.243</td>
<td>.247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>.285</td>
<td>.073</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table A.15

*Volunteering: Ordinal Logistic Regression Results: Total Number of Years as an Elementary School Principal*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Odds-Ratio</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V1</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>.183</td>
<td>.262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2</td>
<td>.773</td>
<td>.091</td>
<td>.029*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5</td>
<td>.825</td>
<td>.182</td>
<td>.386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V6</td>
<td>.879</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>.524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V7</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>.149</td>
<td>.596</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A.16

*Frequency Distribution for Community Size*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural (less than 2500)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town (2500-5000)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small City (5000-20,000)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>77.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City (21,000-49,999)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban (50,000 or more)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A.17

*Communication: Ordinal Table Regression Results: Community size*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Odds-Ratio</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>.972</td>
<td>.235</td>
<td>.909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>.895</td>
<td>.166</td>
<td>.552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>.672</td>
<td>.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>.227</td>
<td>.636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5</td>
<td>.988</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>.957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>.036*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>.366</td>
<td>.643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C8</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>.415</td>
<td>.652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9</td>
<td>.744</td>
<td>.289</td>
<td>.447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C10</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>.303</td>
<td>.954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C11</td>
<td>.731</td>
<td>.166</td>
<td>.169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C13</td>
<td>.817</td>
<td>.262</td>
<td>.532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C14</td>
<td>.888</td>
<td>.171</td>
<td>.540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>.972</td>
<td>.235</td>
<td>.909</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A.18

*Learning at Home: Ordinal Logistic Regression Results: Community size*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Odds-Ratio</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LH1</td>
<td>.681</td>
<td>.155</td>
<td>.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LH3</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>.481</td>
<td>.018*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LH4</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>.297</td>
<td>.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LH5</td>
<td>.809</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td>.224</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table A.19

*Collaborating with Community: Ordinal Logistic Regression Results: Community size*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Odds-Ratio</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CC1</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>.148</td>
<td>.272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC3</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>.392</td>
<td>.008*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC4</td>
<td>.877</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC5</td>
<td>.946</td>
<td>.148</td>
<td>.726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC6</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.138</td>
<td>.853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC7</td>
<td>.727</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>.041*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC8</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>.614</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table A.20

*Frequency Distribution for Traditional Families*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-15%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-30%</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-50%</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
<td>75.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 50%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A.21

*Parenting: Ordinal Logistic Regression Results: Traditional Family*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Odds-Ratio</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>.250</td>
<td>.457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>.897</td>
<td>.181</td>
<td>.593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>.251</td>
<td>.092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>.943</td>
<td>.152</td>
<td>.720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>.660</td>
<td>.136</td>
<td>.045*</td>
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Table A.22

*Communicating: Ordinal Table Regression Results: Traditional Family*

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</tr>
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<td>C2</td>
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Table A.23

**Volunteering: Ordinal Logistic Regression Results: Traditional Family**

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<td>.010*</td>
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<td>V6</td>
<td>.718</td>
<td>.156</td>
<td>.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V7</td>
<td>.903</td>
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<td>.468</td>
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Table A.24

**Learning at Home: Ordinal Logistic Regression Results: Traditional Family**

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<th>P-Value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>LH3</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>.484</td>
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<td>LH4</td>
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<td>.501</td>
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### Table A.25

*Decision-Making: Ordinal Logistic Regression Results: Traditional Family*

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<tr>
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<td>.649</td>
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<td>DM3</td>
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<td>.251</td>
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<td>.425</td>
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<td>.309</td>
<td>.176</td>
</tr>
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<td>DM8</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>.175</td>
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<td>DM9</td>
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### Table A.26

*Frequency Distribution for Blended Families*

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<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-15%</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>29.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-30%</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
<td>81.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-50%</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>98.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 50%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A.27

*Communicating: Ordinal Table Regression Results: Blended Family*

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<th>Odds-Ratio</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>.664</td>
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<tr>
<td>C2</td>
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<td>.256</td>
<td>.664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>1.52</td>
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<td>.300</td>
</tr>
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<td>C4</td>
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<td>.409</td>
<td>.338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5</td>
<td>1.02</td>
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<td>C6</td>
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<td>.119</td>
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<td>C7</td>
<td>.650</td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>.193</td>
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<tr>
<td>C8</td>
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</tr>
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<td>C9</td>
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<td>.144</td>
<td>.012*</td>
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<tr>
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Table A.28

*Learning at Home: Ordinal Logistic Regression Results: Blended Family*

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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>LH3</td>
<td>.857</td>
<td>.251</td>
<td>.599</td>
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<tr>
<td>LH4</td>
<td>.856</td>
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<td>.494</td>
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Table A.29

*Decision-Making: Ordinal Logistic Regression Results: Blended Family*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>P-Value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>DM2</td>
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<td>DM8</td>
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Table A.30

*Frequency Distribution for Single Parent*

<table>
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<th>Frequency</th>
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<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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<td>5-15%</td>
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<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-30%</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
<td>60.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-50%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>85.4%</td>
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<td>14.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Table A.31

*Communicating: Ordinal Table Regression Results: Single Parent*

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<th>P-Value</th>
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</thead>
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<td>C2</td>
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<td>.147</td>
<td>.110</td>
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<td>.395</td>
<td>.941</td>
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<td>C4</td>
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<td>.306</td>
<td>.234</td>
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Table A.32

*Volunteering: Ordinal Logistic Regression Results: Single Parent*

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Table A.33

Learning at Home: Ordinal Logistic Regression Results: Single Parent

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<td>.184</td>
<td>.142</td>
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Table A.34

Decision-Making: Ordinal Logistic Regression Results: Single Parent

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<th>P-Value</th>
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Table A.35

Collaborating with Community: Ordinal Logistic Regression Results: Single Parent

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<td>.633</td>
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<td>CC5</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.166</td>
<td>.969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC6</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>.170</td>
<td>.243</td>
</tr>
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<td>CC7</td>
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<td>.130</td>
<td>.215</td>
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Table A.36

Frequency Distribution for Alternative Guardian/Grandparents

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<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>68.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-30%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>94.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-50%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>99.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 50%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Table A.37

*Parenting: Ordinal Logistic Regression Results: Alternative Families*

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<th>P-Value</th>
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<td>P2</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>.341</td>
<td>.390</td>
</tr>
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<td>P3</td>
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<td>.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>.315</td>
<td>.040*</td>
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<tr>
<td>P5</td>
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<td>.582</td>
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Table A.38

*Collaborating with Community: Ordinal Logistic Regression Results: Alternative Families*

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<th>P-Value</th>
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<td>.321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC3</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>.622</td>
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<td>CC4</td>
<td>.950</td>
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<td>.785</td>
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<td>CC6</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>.940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC7</td>
<td>1.20</td>
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<td>.342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC8</td>
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<td>.177</td>
<td>.194</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Survey Instrument

This survey will aid in understanding parent involvement activities currently implemented by principals. The following information will provide knowledge about your school.

1. **Type of Public Elementary School.**
   - Title I School
   - Charter School
   - Blue Ribbon School
   - Other

2. **Years of Experience Serving as a School Administrator**
   - 0-5 years
   - 6-10 years
   - 11-20 years
   - More than 20 years

3. **Please check one of the following.**
   - Male
   - Female

4. **How would you describe your community?**
   - Rural (less than 2500)
   - Town (2500-5000)
   - Small City (5000-20,000)
   - City (21,000-49,999)
   - Urban (50,000 or more)

5. **Please provide an estimate of the number of families in your building who are:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>5-15%</th>
<th>15-30%</th>
<th>30-50%</th>
<th>More than 50%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blended</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Single Parent  O  O  O  O  O
Alternative Guardian/ Grandparent/Social Services  O  O  O  O
OTHER (Please specify) ________________________________
I. PARENTING: Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our School:</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Conducts workshops or provides information for parents on child development.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Provides information, training, and assistance to all families who want it or who need it, not just to the few who can attend workshops or meetings at the school building.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Produces information for families that is clear, usable, and linked to children’s success in school.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Asks families for information about children’s goals, strengths and talents.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sponsors home visiting programs or neighborhood meetings to help families understand schools and to help schools understand families.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Provides families with information/training on developing home conditions or environments that support learning.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Respects the different cultures represented in our student population.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other types of activities:</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
II. COMMUNICATIONS: Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children’s progress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our School:</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reviews the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and nonprint communications.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Develops communication for parents, who do not speak English well, do not read well, or need large type.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Establishes clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and from school to home.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Conducts a formal conference with every parent at least once a year.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Conducts an annual survey for families to share information and concerns about student needs and reactions to school programs, and their satisfaction with their involvement in school.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Conducts an orientation for new parents.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Sends home folders of student work weekly or monthly for parent review and comment.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Provides clear information about the curriculum, assessments, and achievement levels and report cards.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Contacts families of students having academic or behavior problems.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Develops school’s plan and program of family and community involvement with input from educators, parents, and others.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Trains teachers, staff, and principals on the value and utility of contributions of parents and ways to build ties between school and home.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12.</strong> Builds policies that encourage all teachers to communicate frequently with parents about their curriculum plans, expectations for homework, and how parents can help.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13.</strong> Produces a regular school newsletter with up-to-date information about the school, special events, organizations, meetings, and parenting tips.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14.</strong> Provides written communication in the language of the parents.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other types of activities:</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### III. VOLUNTEERING: Recruit and organize parent help and support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our School:</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Conducts an annual survey to identify interests, talents, and availability of parent volunteers, in order to match their skills/talents with school and classroom needs.</td>
<td>Not Occurring Rarely Occasionally Frequently Extensively 1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Provides a parent/family room for volunteers and family members to work, meet, and access resources about parenting, childcare, tutoring, and other things that affect their children.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Creates flexible volunteering and school events schedules, enabling parents who work to participate.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Trains volunteers so they use their time productively.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Recognizes volunteers for their time and efforts.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Schedules school events at different times during the day and evening so that all families can attend some throughout the year.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Reduces barriers to parent participation by providing transportation, childcare, flexible schedules, and addresses the needs of English-language learners.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Encourages families and the community to be involved with the school in a variety of ways (assisting in classrooms, giving talks, monitoring halls, leading activities, etc.)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other types of activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our School:</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Provides information to families on how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Provides ongoing and specific information to parents on how to assist students with skills that they need to improve.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Makes parents aware of the importance of reading at home, and asks parents to listen to their child read or read aloud with their child.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Assists families in helping students set academic goals, select courses, and programs.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Schedules regular interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning with a family member.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other types of activities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V. DECISIONMAKING: Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our School:</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Occurring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Has active PTA, PTO, or other parent organizations.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Includes parent representatives on the school’s advisory council,</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improvement team, or other committees.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Has parents represented on district-level advisory council and</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>committees.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Involves parents in an organized, ongoing, and timely way in the</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>planning, review, and improvement of programs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Involves parents in revising the school/district curricula.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Includes parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other groups in the school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Develops formal networks to link all families with their parent</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>representatives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Includes students (along with parents) in decisionmaking groups.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Deals with conflict openly and respectfully.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Asks involved parents to make contact with parents who are less</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>involved to solicit their ideas, and report back to them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other types of activities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VI. COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY: Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our School:</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Provides a community resource directory for parents and students with information on community services, programs, and agencies.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Involves families in locating and utilizing community resources.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Works with local businesses, industries, and community organizations on programs to enhance student skills and learning.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Provides “one-stop” shopping for family services through partnership of school, counseling, health, recreation, job training, and other agencies.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Opens its building for use by the community after school hours.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Offers after-school programs for students with support from community businesses, agencies, and volunteers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Solves turf problems of responsibilities, funds, staff, and locations for collaborative activities to occur.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Utilizes community resources, such as businesses, libraries, parks, and museums to enhance the learning environment.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other types of activities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 2:

1. What major factors have contributed to the success of your school’s family and community involvement efforts?

2. What major factors have limited the success of your school’s family and community involvement efforts?
Appendix C

Permission to Use Survey from Dr. Steven Sheldon

RE: Permission to use survey
Steven Sheldon [ssheldon@CSOS.jhu.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, November 04, 2009 10:16 AM

Hi Paula,

You have permission to use the survey "Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships" for your dissertation research. We ask only that you provide the appropriate citation for the instrument in any manuscript that results from your use of the survey.

Best of Luck with your dissertation.

Regards,
Steve Sheldon
Appendix D

Survey Invitation Letter

Paula Schubert
Doctoral Student
Curriculum & Instruction
Clemson University, Clemson, S.C

Dear Elementary School Administrator,

I am a former classroom teacher currently completing the doctoral program at Clemson University. You are invited to participate in a research study to explore administrators’ perspectives of parent involvement in South Carolina. Your participation will involve completing a survey titled, Measure of School, Family and Community Partnerships, and is based upon the framework of the six types of involvement developed by Dr. Joyce Epstein in 1995.

On the first part you are asked to rate your school on the six types of involvement using a scoring rubric. The amount of time required for your participation will be approximately 15 minutes. The second part of the survey requests you to respond to several questions. There are no known risks associated with this research. You are not required to put your name on the questionnaire and the responses to the items will be confidential. Your identity will not be revealed in any publication that might result from this study. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study. If you choose to be part of this study, your name will be entered into a drawing to win a free registration for the SCASA Summer Leadership Program in June at Myrtle Beach, S.C.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Paula Schubert at 864-280-1640, or Dr. Dee Stegelin at 864-656-0327. Institutional Review Board approval has been granted for this study and if you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance at 864.656.6460.

Here is a link to the survey:[SurveyLink]

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Paula Schubert
Appendix E

IRB Approval Letter

IRB Approval Letter
Friday, February 26, 2010 3:24 PM
Cc: Paula Schubert

Dear Dr. Stegelin,

The Chair of the Clemson University Institutional Review Board (IRB) validated the protocol identified above using Exempt review procedures and a determination was made on **February 26, 2010**, that the proposed activities involving human participants qualify as Exempt from continuing review under Category **B1**, based on the Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46). You may begin this study.

Please remember that no change in this research protocol can be initiated without prior review by the IRB. Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects, complications, and/or any adverse events must be reported to the Office of Research Compliance (ORC) immediately. You are requested to notify the ORC when your study is completed or terminated.

Please review the Responsibilities of Principal Investigators (available at [http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/regulations.html](http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/regulations.html)) and the Responsibilities of Research Team Members (available at [http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/regulations.html](http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/regulations.html)) and be sure these documents are distributed to all appropriate parties.

Good luck with your study and please feel free to contact us if you have any questions. Please use the IRB number and title in all communications regarding this study.

All the best,

Nalinee

**Nalinee D. Patin**
IRB Coordinator
Clemson University
Office of Research Compliance
Appendix F

Greenville County Schools Letter

March 15, 2010

Jason B. McCready, Ph.D., Director
301 Camperdown Way
Box 2848
Greenville, SC 29602-2848
Phone 241-3201
Fax 241-4143

Ms. Paula Schubert
418 C Tillman Hall
Clemson University
Clemson, SC 29634

SUBJECT: Administrator's Perspective of Parent Involvement in S.C. Elementary Schools

Dear Ms. Schubert:

While we wish you well in your studies, at this time, Greenville County Schools is not accepting solicitations for external research. Due to receiving a large volume of research solicitations coupled with continued budget cuts over the last few months, our aim is to maintain capacity among our faculty and administrators allowing them to concentrate on the core mission of the district.

Sincerely,

Jason B. McCready, PhD
Appendix G

Figures

Figure A.1

*Type of School*
Figure A.2

Years of Experience Serving as a School Administrator
Figure A.3

*Gender*
Figure A.4

Type of Community
Figure A.5

*Family Structure*
Appendix H

Inter-Rater Coding

Factors that Make Schools Successful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Coder 1</th>
<th>Coder 2</th>
<th>Exact Match</th>
<th>Kappa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with Community</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Otherwise Categorized</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>175</strong></td>
<td><strong>175</strong></td>
<td><strong>141</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.70</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factors that Limit Schools Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Coder 1</th>
<th>Coder 2</th>
<th>Exact Match</th>
<th>Kappa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with Community</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning at Home</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Otherwise Categorized</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>171</strong></td>
<td><strong>169</strong></td>
<td><strong>153</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.69</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I

Factors that Make Schools Successful

1. Getting these children involved as early as 1-4 years old.
2. Having workshops where parents and students can participate together.
3. Holding morning and evening sessions of workshops.
4. Parents want their children to succeed and are willing to work with teachers.
5. Most parents are extremely involved in their child's education and believe in the importance of taking part in their child's educational life.
6. Parents want their children to succeed.
7. However, when it comes to our parent workshops, attendance is extremely low. Parents respond to surveys and have opportunities to solicit input. Most have no concerns with what we are doing which is a good thing.
8. We try to reach all of the different nationalities to help in building programs.
9. Respect parents as partners.
10. Our children are 3 and 4 yr olds and parents tend to be more involved; the Family Literacy program offers parents a way to get their GED.
11. Our parenting staff provides a variety of services based on the needs of our parents and students.
12. Attaching an event to a parent workshop or activity.
13. Meeting with parents regularly and allowing them to give input.
14. Positive communication, caring environment, and a high performance learning culture; individualized family involvement; meeting the needs of individual families.
15. Sustained efforts by faculty and staff to improve parent communication.
16. Positive communication, caring environment, and a high performance learning culture; individualized family involvement; meeting the needs of individual families.
17. Our continued efforts of the faculty and staff to find ways to communicate with parents - newsletters, emails, home visits, literacy/math nights.
18. Trust. Everyone knows each other.
19. Communication with parents through newsletters, flyers, Parent Link and telephone calls.
20. Constant communication with our parents through newsletters, phone message system and the internet.
21. Parent involvement: Varied times of activities/events.
22. We stay involved with the needs of our parents. We also have an open door policy and encourage our parents to come and spend time at our school.
24. Fostering Business Partnerships.
25. Using a few parent volunteer.
26. We are an Early Childhood Center. We encourage an open door policy with our parents. We work to accommodate our parents and students' needs. We find that the parents of young children really make the effort to be involved in our school.
27. Open line of communication.
28. Open and honest communication.
29. Open door of communications and an eagerness to embrace change that positively impacts our school community.
30. Open communication and frequent communication.
31. Communication is the key to keeping parents involved, both general and personal.
32. Communication with parents and community.
33. Communication and our open door policy make parents and stakeholders feel welcome.
34. Clear communication of expectations to parents from the school's perspective.
35. Consistent, flexible hours for Meet the Teacher and Parent Conferences (8 AM-12PM, and 4-7 PM). School Connects telephone messaging to parents.
36. Newspaper article weekly, asking for parent and community volunteers.
37. Open communication with community and family.
38. Building relationships with students and parents.
39. Varied hours so working parents can attend, sending information often and using various venues.
40. Finding creative ways to get information to parents.
41. We encourage through newsletters and telephone calls so that all parents have opportunities to be involved.
42. Teachers making positive calls to parents.
43. Respectful interactions.
44. Communicating in a variety of ways.
45. Use the school messenger to remind parents of events, have teachers to call and solicit support of parents.
46. School phone system and newsletters.
47. Newsletters.
48. Being open to all parents and their ideas and suggestions.
49. Flyers.
50. Having a funded parent educator on site.
51. Variety of activities and choices of times.
52. Supportive families.
53. Parents are afforded many opportunities for communicating with the school via our parenting center and parent educators.
54. Openness and willingness to listen.
55. Communicating the vision and mission of the school to the community.
56. Contacting parents to come help at school.
57. Contacting parents to come help at school, desire by the administration to continuously increase parent participation.
58. Sustained efforts by faculty and staff to improve parent communication.
59. We have a lot of work to do to get our families successfully involved. Lots of times there are opportunities that parents don't take advantage of.
60. Involving everyone in our school.
61. Encouraging parents to be involved in varied opportunities.
62. Helping them understand that they are valued stakeholders has contributed to the success of collaboration.
63. A willing and able parent population.
64. Family oriented culture.
65. Providing opportunities for all to volunteer.
66. Teachers and parents working together.
67. Provide incentives for attendance, allow students to perform at events.
68. We also have a large base of parents who don't work that are unavailable.
69. Large group of parents who do not work and are continually volunteering and helping in whatever way that we ask.
70. Our strong volunteer program brings over 40 parents to our school to assist us weekly and many more who volunteer on an as needed basis.
71. Holding events at different times throughout the day and on Saturday.
72. Students performing at PTA are a big factor as well.
73. Variety of activities and choices of times.
74. There are some parents who are consistently involved with school activities. We always have great attendance at our curriculum nights, quarterly award ceremonies, and other school events.
75. Special events such as "Grandparents Day" and "Author's Tea" provide opportunities for home/community involvement as well as programs such as Junior Achievement and Sunshine Math.
76. Inviting them for events that involve their children.
77. Staggered times to allow more participation.
78. Holding events at different times throughout the day and on Saturday.
79. Because parents work, have limited education and lack verbal communication skills, they are reluctant to volunteer or serve as homeroom parents.
80. Our school has routinely tied in PTO meetings and family events on Friday evenings.
81. PTA.
82. SIC input.
83. SIC input.
84. Very active PTO and SIC. Strong community support. Very active Mentoring and volunteer programs.
85. School Improvement Council and PTO.
86. The School Improvement Council and the Parent Teacher Organization have been very supportive and diligent in ensuring that all parents are involved in school activities and remaining engaged in their child's academic, social, and behavior school life.
87. We have a leadership team that involves teachers, administrators, and parents to help plan and coordinate events and communication tools to involve community and family members. We keep track of the data from each event which helps us plan for future events as well as identify families and their involvement and volunteer efforts.
88. Our PTO and School Improvement Council is made up of strong parent volunteers.
89. We work together in partnership and as a team in the best interest of our students.
90. PTO Involvement and motivation.
91. We have an extensive PTO and parent volunteer program so we seek their input daily. Our school is a collaborative effort of the parents and employees.
92. We are a small school with a good PTA and offer many things for our parents at flexible hours always flavored with food when we can. Commitment to ensure that parents are active in school through the PTA, School Improvement Council, Jaguar Family Day, Annual Male Leadership Conference, and the Parent Educator.
93. PTO.
94. Very active PTA (100% membership for 25+ years). Excellent staff members. High achieving students.
95. Strong PTO.
96. We have a highly effective PTO and SIC and they have helped in getting the families involved.
97. We also have a very open door policy where parents feel very welcome and are encouraged to attend and they do so.
98. The support and deep involvement of our PTA and School Improvement Council.
99. Strong PTO
100. Very active PTO and SIC.
101. PTO.
102. Our district has a Parent Advisory Staff that works closely with the schools.
103. We used the red carpet application process to improve our family and community involvement efforts.
104. Partnerships that we have formed with agencies to assist us.
105. Close ties with the neighborhood association and elected officials in the area. Also several faith-based partnerships with local churches.
106. District Parent Educators.
107. Spending time getting to know parents and key community members. ASKING FOR HELP.
108. The factors that have made a difference are the guidance counselor and district representatives.
109. We have a core group of community volunteers who have contributed to many areas of need in our school. Many provide instructional support; others donate resources to enhance the buildings and ground. We have several who serve on SIC and Title I Committees.
110. Collaboration, invitations and involvement with businesses and the D-5 community. Key people in positions such as the high school career specialist who finds the right mentor for the right student.
111. Small close-knit community. The school is the "hub" of the community.
112. The focus on parent and community involvement by the administration. Everyone working together to make this a success.
113. Partnerships with local businesses; required 3 formal parent-teacher conferences per year; Formal Awards Day; Parents as Partner nights sponsored by PTO.
114. School is focal point of community.
115. Parents and the community at large are very interested in and involved with the school.
116. The school is located in the community and many of the parents that attended the school, now their children go there. Some of the same teachers are still there and it is a sense of trust.
117. Community support
118. This is a rural community in which the school is the hub of the community because there are few other recreational or cultural events in the area.
119. Community businesses open to help.
120. Talented-community based faculty and staff who focus on children.
121. Business partners.
122. Our school is located close to a largely affluent community where many moms do not work.
123. The additional resources to add community involvement activities.
124. This school has a history of strong community involvement.
125. Several influential parents in the community.
126. Living in a small town and knowing everybody helps build community.
127. The factors of success include the fact that we are a small community that is very close-knit, helping when and where needed.
128. Our school community is trusting of what we do here at school.
129. The community is very active and wants to be a part of the school.
130. Community involving activities.
131. I think the rural community- everybody knows everybody- contributes to our school's success.
132. Traditionally strong community support.
133. Parent involvement in our community cannot be measured in the traditional way. The way parent involvement is measured here is by the participation in our "Open House", "PTO" Programs/Events and attendance at our "Academic Awards Programs". Parents strongly support these types of activities.
134. The implementation of PBIS.
135. Warm and friendly atmosphere conveyed at school.
136. Having been a federally funded reading first school allowed the additional resources to add additional support personnel, training.
137. Being a Title I school for many years has provided funding for our parenting efforts.
138. A commitment for our staff to involve parents and the community in the education of our children.
139. We also have a Case Manager who is the liaison between parents and community agencies.
140. We also have a very open door policy where parents feel very welcome and are encouraged to attend and they do so.
141. Guidance program.
142. Music program.
143. Title I Plan.
144. "Open Door" policy of having parents involved in various school activities.
145. Welcoming environment.
146. The climate/culture of the school and parents to embrace diversity.
147. Positive and welcoming staff when parents come.
148. It is unrealistic to expect a parent making minimum wages to take off of work and volunteer at the school. These same individuals would not feel comfortable reading or assisting students due to their own lack of reading and speaking skills.
149. Open door access to parents.
150. Family nights.
Good teachers, one mission, vision and one common purpose.

Diligent staff.

An inviting atmosphere.

Having a Family School coordinator and a Family resource center.

Having a Spanish speaking Family Liaison position has increased our Hispanic involvement.

Creating inviting climate.

Involving all stakeholders.

Technology.

The major contributor is our very friendly, nurturing environment that makes parents and community feel welcomed at our school.

Family involvement in Family Writing Nights.

Serving food and providing childcare.

The employment of a home/school facilitator full time to coordinate programs.

Title 1 funding.

We also have a solid number of military families. Our school has earned a stellar reputation w/in the community in our 7 year existence.

Involvement in The National Network of Partnership Schools and our business and community partnerships.

We are always asking families and the community resources to work with us to make our children successful.

To encourage the involvement of families and the community, we hold events that will be a "draw" to students. When there are students performing, we get our best response from parents.

We also hold quarterly Awards Days and Writers' Guild Ceremonies to recognize students. This is a draw for parents.

We also place high emphasis on "family activities" to help parents understand the importance of family time. These activities take place throughout the year.

We are a magnet school for the Arts. Parent and community involvement increased with performances in the school and community. We offer a variety programs to involve parents such as: Read Across America, Family Read Night, Mother and Daughter Tea, Hispanic Night, International Program, Fun Run, and Winter.

We live in a small town.

Community outreach efforts to get all stakeholders involved.

The school is the heart of the community. Parents want to be a part of what activities that occur in the school. Just recently the PTO hosted a fund raise to give donations to a student that has been diagnosed with a brain tumor. PTO was able to donate over $2,000 to the student's family. Togetherness has contributed to success of school and family.
Appendix J

Factors that Limit Parent Involvement

1. The fact that we are in a small rural community and most parents work out of town or do not have transportation to school.
2. Transportation and staff at night.
3. Mobility factor.
4. Time and the amount of things that have to be done.
5. One obstacle that limits the school's family and community involvement is the ongoing challenge of the school "meeting people where they are" in order to avoid false perceptions and build trust between the school and its community.
6. Large numbers of non-English speaking students and parents. We have been successful with Hispanic families. We need translators for Vietnamese, Chinese, and middle Eastern languages as well as African languages. Cost of hiring translators is prohibitive.
7. It becomes more and more frustrating from the school's perspective for parents to be less interested in their child's education. They do not read notes from parents or the school/class newsletter.
8. They refuse to take a phone call from the school.
9. They have such high demands of survival in their lives, the children's education is not a priority.
10. We have good communication with our parents.
11. Participation.
13. Transportation.
14. We serve students from nine different schools.
15. Promotions of the activities and scheduling in a timely fashion vs. spur of the moment to meet guidelines.
16. Parents limited access to educational resources.
17. Funds.
18. NCLB.
19. Many of our students reside more than 20 miles away and their parents do not have the resources to get to the school. Therefore their involvement is very limited.
20. money and short on personnel- people wearing many hats.
21. Limited resources of parents and limited education of parents.
22. Out of school activities such as football, baseball, dance, etc.
23. Economic times have reduced participation. Seems to be more stress in homes.
24. Transportation.
25. Language.
27. Transportation: offered transportation by school bus to several events.
28. Communication with some of our more disadvantaged parents that live at the other end of the attendance zone from the school. We have held parent teacher meetings there. These attempts to get the families involved have met with some limited success
29. Lack of leadership.
30. Lack of parent concern.
31. Time.
32. We need more involvement from our parents. We have many opportunities for parents and to visit and be involved.
33. We have many opportunities for the community to visit and be involved, but the number who actually come out is very disappointing.
34. A lot of the contact is one on one to contact parents with no phone, when certified mail is not picked up students not taking information home. But overall this involvement is there.
35. Parent interest in after hour events.
36. Time and resources.
37. Diverse Population.
38. We are fortunate that our school’s family and community believe in supporting this school with monetary donations as well as volunteer hours.
39. Lack of education among the adult population. Many parents have little formal education, especially the grandparent population.
40. CLASS SIZE - TOO BIG
41. Communication.
42. Lack of funding.
43. Outside community activities.
44. Having no parent coordinator.
45. Not placing emphasis on PTO.
46. Limited number of parents involved.
47. Parents losing their perspective on the importance of education - unless they become upset about a situation
48. Single family homes.
49. Parents that working two jobs to make ends meet.
50. Phone numbers that are out of service, disconnected, etc.
51. Funding for additional activities such as going into the communities, using transportation resources and for educators to be able to visit homes more frequently.
52. This is not a neighborhood school and proximity to the community presents a problem.
53. Budget.
54. Low socio-economics.
56. It is often difficult to reach parents. The contact info we have is ever changing.
57. Many parents do not have the time to check book bags for notes....they are just trying to survive.
58. Flexible scheduling to allow for time during the day to host PTO types of events for families that traditionally cannot attend in the afternoon or night.
59. $$
60. Parents are working longer hours and some that did not work in the past are now working to increase family income.
61. The poorest section in our attendance area is across town, so those parents rarely participate. We have had community based programs for them.
62. One third of our student population is Hispanic. The language barrier has somewhat limited our success. We are fortunate to have a Spanish speaking staff member who translates all of our correspondence with our parents into Spanish.
63. The turn-over of leadership at the school within the last 5 years. There have been 3 different leaders and 3 different ideas of family and community involvement. This is a sense of distrust between the school and community due to constant turn over.
64. Funds.
65. Time and money.
66. Conflicts with active recreation department.
67. Budget constraints.
68. Parents are very busy- lives are complicated with family and financial issues. This probably limits our family and community involvement.
69. There is also a feeling that the 'haves' control everything so there is no need for 'us' to get involved. Once again, the vast majorities supports our school and are supportive of what we do. We are always working to improve the efforts and we have made progress over the past few years and will continue to do whatever we can to grow in this area.
70. Most parents are working parents and are not available to become more involved.
71. Effects of poverty on accessible transportation or needing to work multiple jobs to support family.
72. Transportation,
73. Apathy.
74. Economy.
75. Limited technology at home.
76. State budget and funding cuts, the economy, lack of a stable funding source for public education.
77. Many parents work two jobs and it is difficult for them to be active participants.
78. Our major school business partner closed, not a very large community and have to depend on limited businesses to help us and other schools.
79. The fact that we are a working community with very difference work schedules, limiting some of the possible involvement by parents.
80. An increase in mental health concerns with care givers.
81. Funding.
82. The changing economy has had an impact on many families through job loss & relocation.
83. Transportation issue and work schedules for parents.
84. Effective ways to get information to all stakeholders.
85. Unavailability or disinterest of parents.
86. Funding.
87. Funding.
88. Funding. It is difficult to host programs when you have no additional sources of income (i.e. Title I).
89. Being able to communicate.
90. Many of our students live in neighborhoods that are a great distance from the school and some parents do not have the sense that is usually associated with "neighborhood schools".
91. Parents work and are not able to volunteer.
92. We are somewhat a new school and we are still building community.
93. Funding.
94. Highly transient neighborhood.
95. Apathy from some parents.
96. Lack of participation from some parents.
97. Parents' employment hours.
98. Parents' involvement with other aspects of the community that keep them from participating at the elementary school level, i.e. sports teams.
99. Some parents have more than one job and limit the time that they can be involved in school activities.
100. Parents being a part of the learning process.
101. Competition from church and community sporting events in which students have made a commitment;
102. Lack of interest on the part of parents who are struggling to make ends meet or who are somewhat dysfunctional.
103. Work schedule conflicts.
104. Fear of becoming too close to the school and being asked to become involved in a way that might make parent uncomfortable.
105. Socioeconomic
106. Transportation to school events during the day; babysitting issues during the evenings.
107. Family stressors.
108. Economic hardship.
109. Priority of values.
110. Most of the parents are working parents who cannot take time away from their jobs to attend functions.
111. Transportation on parent part.
112. Working parents, parents working 2 or more jobs.
113. Transportation, although we offer transportation.
114. Child care (although we offer child care services).
115. Families not having transportation.
116. When we do not have someone to translate the language for our Hispanic families at all events.
117. Funding is limited.
118. Lack of funding.
119. Limited resources.
120. Budgets.
121. Keeping buildings open require additional power bills, maintenance, etc.
122. It also has begun limiting some written communiqués. We utilize technology but all homes do not have access.
123. We have younger demographics of parents who do not take the time to get involved with the school. Opportunities are there, but not many take the time to visit.
124. Parent availability and willingness to participate.
125. There is a high population of Hispanic students and a large number of parents do not speak English. We have hired an ESOL teacher that is fluent in Spanish to provide assistance and maximize the participation of the Hispanic parents.
126. Parent Apathy
127. Time and the economy has affected parent participation this year
128. Socio-economic situation.
129. Over crowded school.
130. Little money to implement after school activities.
131. Economy forcing people back to work.
132. Transportation.....large , mountainous geographical area.
133. Parents have children at other schools and scheduling is sometimes a problem.
134. Family life and difficult situations.
135. Negative experiences when they were in school - they don't want to "go back there".
136. Education level - I'm not smart enough others will do it simply not interested - not a priority.
137. Time.
138. Maintaining an exemplary level of community involvement by parents, community leaders, and business leaders, keeping the drive fresh and active is a challenge.
139. Inability to build a relationship with some parents.
140. Poverty, work schedules.
141. Apathy.
142. Time restraints.
143. Bused in families.
144. Lack of transportation / one - family vehicle.
145. Older parents living with adult children requiring homecare.
146. Not all parents take advantage of the opportunities that are presented to them. We find that about 35% of our parents constantly attend meetings, workshops, and visit the school regularly.
147. The economy has hurt some.
148. Limited number of parents that are willing to volunteer.
149. Parent participation in workshops is not good. We plan according to the request of the parent.
150. We have tried to include our African-American families on our advisory boards, but are having a difficult time.
151. Parents without transportation.
152. Parents who did not have a good experience in school and are not as willing to come to the school for events or meetings.
153. Parent work schedules.
154. Negative experiences in schools as students carry over to feelings about present.
155. Transportation.
156. A small group of our families are transient and hard to reach.
157. Resources to devote to the planning and creating special events to put the school's best face on view.
158. Money and local and state resources.
159. Parents are not eager to participate.
160. No organized out-reach from the school or district level that has been sustained.
161. Not having that one or two persons to drive the initiative.
162. Not effectively reaching out to our faith based community members.
163. Funds- many of our programs require funding for food, services and transportation.
164. Most parents are working parents and can't always come in during the day to volunteer but make an effort to do what their schedule allows.
165. Working families.
166. Scheduling conflicts.
167. Additional responsibilities placed on teachers.
168. Economics.
169. Lack of educational background.
170. Conflict with work.
171. Lack of reading and communication skills.
172. Lack of transportation.
173. Conflicting parent responsibilities (other small children at home or elderly parents).
174. Resources.
175. Time and availability of parents and money.
176. Many families do not get involved for different reasons- many are busy, work schedules, children involved in activities.
177. Parents who feel entitled and able to "tell" the school what is best.
178. Because we are small, county recreational sports take precedent over school meetings, etc. Being involved in sports is wonderful for our kids, but practices and games run throughout the school year and interfere with our special meetings.
179. Some parents are more difficult to "pull in" to the school than others, but we have had success with all parents.
180. Poverty in the area.
Work schedules, busy people.
The amounts of time parents have to become involved. Many parents work and cannot come to school during day or night hours.

Hard economic times, various job shifts.

Transportation for some families along with the economy.

Families move often, difficult family problems.

Funding to provide a wider array of events.

Parent perception of the school.

Parents’ schedules are not always flexible to be in the school. They are tired at night for evening meetings, have family and church responsibilities.

Work third shifts.

Lack of transportation and time outside the family is not available.

Overcoming barriers of distrust.

A number of parents have to work when meetings are being held.

Funds for some things.
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