Middle School Teacher and Parent Perceptions of Parental Involvement

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MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER AND PARENT PERCEPTIONS
OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

by

Brandon Graham

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology
Advisor: Patricia Reeves, Ed.D.

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“Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of intelligent effort.”

Brandon Graham
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There is a recurring theme found throughout educational research when it comes to parental involvement: it is without a doubt, a key factor in the academic success or failure of millions of children around the world. A number of research studies, literature reviews, and program evaluations have linked family involvement and support to positive outcomes for children with or without disabilities. (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Herderson & Mapp, 2002; Hughes C., Hwang, B., Kim, J., Killian, D.J., Harmer, M.L., & Alcantra, P.R., 1997; James & Petree, 2003, Keith, T. Z., Keith, P. B., Quirk, K. J., Sperduto, J., Santillo, S., & Killings, S., 1998; Kohler, 1996; Sanders, Epstein, & Conners-Tadros, 1999; Shaver & Walls, 1998; Simon, 2001; Yap & Enoki, 1994) These outcomes include improved achievement test results, decreased risk of dropout, improved attendance, improved student behavior, higher grades, higher grade point average, greater commitment to school work, and improved attitude towards school.

Throughout the past decade, there have been numerous reports and a large body of research stating that parent involvement is a critical factor in the success of students (Benson, Burckley, & Elliot, 1980; Esptein, 1992; Rioux & Berla, 1993 as cited in Whitaker & Force, 2001). In reviewing 49 studies of programs focusing on parental involvement, Henderson (1998) found across the board that parental involvement maximizes student achievement. Anne Henderson's review also listed the benefits of
parental involvement as “higher grades and test scores, long-term academic achievement, positive attitudes and behavior, more successful programs, and more effective schools” (p. 60). Despite the overall support for the benefits of parental involvement in the educational system, it is lamentable that there seems to be little practical application in the literature regarding strategies for drawing in parents who are not engaged with their children's education or the schools they attend.

One of the most indicative factors that contribute to children’s academic failure is the lack of parental involvement in their education (Comer & Hayes, 1991; Espstein, 1987; Kurtz, 1988; Williams, 1990). Parental involvement in the education of children is essential to the effective advancement of positive academic experience and successful outcomes (Carter & Wojtkiewicz, 1990). Comer (1997) indicates that parental involvement is critical to child development and the educational process. Factors that will make a difference in the involvement of parents in the education process are their school-family relationships and the experience provided in an effort to stimulate social, emotional, and intellectual development in their children. Interest in learning, academic achievement and the years of school children will pursue are determinants of these factors.

Three decades of research provides convincing evidence that parents are an important influence in helping children achieve high academic standards. When schools collaborate with parents to help their children learn and the parents participate in school activities and decision making, children achieve at higher academic levels. As a result,
when parents are involved in education, children do better in school, which results in higher academic achievement and enhanced school improvement (Lewis & Henderson, 1998).

While parental involvement is the primary term for the research done in this study, family involvement is another term used to evaluate the involvement of parents or guardians in the educational development of children. Family involvement in children's education takes a variety of forms, including involvement in the home (e.g., help with homework), involvement in the school (e.g., attending open houses), parent–teacher communication, and parent-to-parent communication. Reviews of family involvement research indicate that, on average, children whose families are more involved display higher levels of achievement than children whose families are less involved (Jeynes, 2005).

Schools that have implemented parental involvement components to their schools' framework for operating are more in-tune with the needs of children and their immediate community (Damond, 1997). Schools that thoroughly develop partnerships with parents tend to reap greater successes in fulfilling their objectives. As Epstein (1995) documented through her theory of overlapping spheres of influence (school, family and community), partnerships shift in order to meet and solve students' particular needs.

Taken from Parental Involvement, Title I, Part A Non-Regulatory Guidance (2003), parental involvement is at the forefront on the national level in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, and has long been a key component of Title 1. For the first
time in the history of education and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), parental involvement under the umbrella of the NCLB Act, now has a specific definition (Flakes, 2007).

The statute defines parental involvement as the participation of parents in regular, two-way and meaningful communication involving students' academic learning and other school activities, and included the assurance: (a) that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning, (b) that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's school, (c) that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child, and (d) that other activities are carried out, such that those described in section 1118 of ESEA (Parental Involvement, Section 9101 (32), ESEA).

Despite these calls for families to participate in partnerships supporting middle level children (between the ages of 11-14 years), family involvement decreases when children reach the middle level (Epstein, 1996). Little is known regarding how those directly involved with middle level students (parents, teachers, and community members) view their roles, responsibilities, and relationships with each other.

Designing and implementing family, school, and community partnership programs to benefit middle level students is complicated. The context, or environment, in which family, school, and community involvement programs are developed, must be taken into account. Factors that influence the middle-level family include: teacher and community partnerships, institutional setting, early adolescent development, expectations, attitudes,
The researcher in this study will be working to uncover meaning in one specific setting to better understand how specific factors influence perception of parental involvement.

Problem Statement

Parental involvement is important to the educational success of a young adolescent, yet it generally declines when a child enters the middle grades (Epstein, 2005; Jackson & Andrews, 2004; Jackson & Davis, 2000; NMSA, 2003). There are multiple factors that could influence this trend, but the topic is very worthy of study to help provide educators with meaningful information that will enable them to provide students, teachers, and parents with the tools necessary to provide effective parental involvement.

Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jarzorn, and VanVoorhis (2002) draw three key conclusions about parental involvement. First, parental involvement tends to decline across the grades unless schools make a conscious effort to develop and implement partnerships with parents. The reason for this declining pattern include parents' lack of familiarity with the curriculum at the higher grades, adolescents' preferences to have their parents stay involved in less visible ways, parents' decision to return to the work force once their children gain more independence; and secondary teachers' lack of awareness of how to effectively involve parents at the higher levels. Second, affluent parents tend to be involved in school more often and in positive ways, whereas economically distressed parents have limited contact with schools, and usually in situations dealing with their
student's negative achievement or behavior. Schools that work on building relationships with all parents, however, have shown they can equalize the involvement of all socioeconomic groups. Finally, single parents, employed parents, fathers, and parents who live far from the school, on average, are less involved in the school unless the school organizes opportunities that consider these parents' needs and circumstances.

Although the current body of knowledge gives us many of the reasons for a decrease in parental involvement at the middle level, less is known about how specific factors found within each educational setting that effects perceptions of involvement. Factors such as grade level differentiation within the middle level, demographic factors of teachers such as: (a) years of experience, (b) discipline, (c) grade level, and (d) gender. Additionally, little research has been done on specific parent demographics such as: (a) grade level of student, (b) ethnicity, (c) SES, and (d) number of children in school.

Statement of Purpose

Considering all of the factors that affect the success of a school program, I am investigating what parents and teachers perceive the level of parental involvement to be in a mid-west suburban school district. Through my literature review I have identified many studies in urban schools but little has been done in suburban districts. The specific role of this study will be to investigate the congruences and incongruences between teachers and parent perceptions. Additionally, I will be investigating the demographic factors of teachers: (a) years of experience (b) discipline (c) grade level, and (d) gender;
and also parents (a) grade of students, (b) ethnicity, (c) social economic status, and (d) number of children in school. Understanding the above mentioned factors and their relation to how they influence perceptions of parents and teachers is critical for understanding how to develop and implement successful involvement programs at the middle level.

Significance

This study is extremely important due to the growing demands placed on educators. Specifically with the requirements of No Child Left Behind, state testing and curriculum, expectations of the success of a student should not lie solely in the hands of educators. According to Clark (1990) school age children spend 70% of their waking hours (including weekends and holidays) outside of school. Therefore it is imperative that parents are involved and proactive in the education of their children.

The positive outcomes of parental involvement are extremely positive and include: improved educational performance (Epstein et. al., 2002; Fan & Chen, 2001; NMSA, 2003; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; VanVoorhis, 2003), better student classroom behavior (Fan & Chen, 2001; NMSA, 2003), parents experience greater feelings of ownership and are more committed to supporting the school's mission (Jackson & Davis, 2000), increased support of schools (NMSA, 2003), improved school attendance (Epstein et. al, 2002), and improved emotional well-being in students (Epstein, 2005). All of these factors support the need for further research as educators look for more clarity in understanding parental involvement.

Early adolescence is a developmental period of physical, emotional, social, and
intellectual change (Capelluti & Stokes, 1991; Clark & Clark, 1994; Epstein & Petersen, 1991; Manning, 1993; Wiles & Bondi, 1996). During this period, early adolescents begin to search for increased autonomy and independence (Coleman, 1980; Erikson, 1968; Havighurst, 1972). This does not mean, however, that adolescents no longer need adult guidance. In fact, most early adolescents still want and need adult guidance and approval (Allen, Splittgerber, & Manning, 1993; Capelutti & Stokes, 1991; Clark & Clark, 1994; Rich, 1990; Salzman, 1990; Stern, 1990). As early adolescents renegotiate relationships with their parents, parents' roles change. This means the nature of parental involvement in middle level schools will also change.

This study will provide a window of information that will help draw clarity into the perceptions of parents and teachers of middle school children in regards to parental involvement. The underlying purpose of this research is to investigate specific factors that influence parental involvement within the suburban school that the research is taking place. Most research has been done using data from large scale surveys such as NELS: 88 and focuses on minority students with low social economic status. This study will provide a different perspective and allow the researcher to examine unique demographic factors of parents and teachers and how they shape their perceptions of involvement.

The roles parents play in supporting their children's education continue to be both a focus of research and an area of concern. Often the most voiced concerns in defining family roles stems from the differing perspectives of educators and non-educators. Parents' perceptions of self-efficacy related to language and socioeconomic status are significant factors in how families determine their roles in their children's education, just as are in the teachers' perceptions about the role of the family (Baker, Denessen, Brus-
This study will shed light on parental communication in terms of parent and teacher perceptions at one middle school. It will be particularly important to evaluate within this specific setting the perceptions and how understandings are similar and different. To develop successful partnerships it is important for educators to understand the frames in which parents and teachers are viewing the essential need for involvement and teamwork.

Questions one and two of my research questions are designed to evaluate the perceptions of educators, teachers, non-educators, and parents in how they view the current understanding of involvement at the school in which this research is taking place.

In recent discussions of case study, Dr. Robert Stake commented that the work of the researcher is to identify “coherence and sequence” (2005, p. 444) to the activities within the boundaries of the case as patterns. He confirmed the concept of generalizability of case study research, when he noted, “the purpose of case study is not to represent the world, but to represent the case...the utility of case research to practitioners and policy makers is in the extension of experience” (1994, p.245).

My case study approach to the research that I am conducting on parental involvement allows me to set clear boundaries within the parameters of my school setting. Although this may be viewed as a simple presentation of a single case, it is necessary and helpful as educators to work to develop a better understanding of parental involvement (Yin, 1984). There is extensive existing research in regards to parental involvement, however, this study will allow for me to develop a comprehensive evaluation of the complexity of the organizational phenomena within a single middle
school building (p. xv).

It is my challenge to provide “coherence and sequence” to the perceptions of parental involvement from both teachers and parents. The purpose of this case study is not to represent the world, or middle school parental involvement as a whole, but to represent the case. The utility of my case will be that it will offer new light to researchers, practitioners, and policy makers who are working within similar demographic settings.

Research Questions

The following questions will serve as parameters in the investigation of the problem stated:

1. What is the degree of parental involvement as perceived by teachers?
2. What is the degree of parental involvement as perceived by parents?
3. Is there a relationship between the demographic characteristics of the parents and their perceptions of parental involvement?
4. Is there a relationship between the demographic characteristics of the teachers and their perceptions of parental involvement?
5. How do the perceptions of teachers differ from those of the parents on Epstein's six dimensions of parental involvement?

Methodology

The methodology that will be employed to investigate my research question will be a case study approach that will be quantitative in nature. The case study will allow the researcher to focus on a specific setting and thoroughly investigate the findings within that context. Through survey questions the researcher will gather data on the perceptions
of both teachers and parents. While investigating research questions the researcher will use descriptive statics, such as means and standard deviations to analyze the responses from both parents and teachers. In addition to the descriptive statistics, the researcher will perform a multiple regression analysis of both parent and teacher demographics in relation to the six dimensions of parental involvement to determine if there is any statistical significance. Finally it will be important to note that a critical effect size will be used to determine the practical significance of the results of each test. Cohen (1988) suggested that effects of .10 or less are considered small, effects between .11 to .30 medium, and effects .31 to .5 or greater are considered large.

When comparing the perceptions of teachers and parents, the researcher will use six independent sample t-tests. Statistical significance will be set at the 95% confidence level (p<.05).

The perceptions of teachers and parents will be compiled by means of a survey based on Epstein's Framework of Six Dimensions of Parental Involvement. The survey will address the teachers' and parents' perceptions of what should occur in the school regarding parental involvement. The survey consists of the following dimensions of parental involvement: (a) parenting, (b) communication, (c) volunteering, (d) learning at home, (e) decision-making, and (f) collaborating with the community (Epstein, 1995).

The survey will be based on the School and Family Partnerships Survey by Epstein and Clark-Salina (1993) for the Center of Schools, Family and Community Partnerships of John Hopkins University. The study analyzed the differences between the perceptions of teachers' and parents' regarding parental involvement as they perceived it should occur in the school.
In order to gain a more complete picture of the responses, the researcher will be evaluating through a multiple regression analysis the demographic factors for each area of teachers: (a) years of experience, (b) discipline, (c) grade level taught, (d) gender of the teacher as they relate to each of the six dimensions. Additionally, I will be analysis the demographics of the parents: (a) grade of students, (b) ethnicity, (c) SES, and (d) number of children in school as they relate to each of the six dimensions of parental involvement as identified by Epstein, 1995.

Delimitations

It is important to understand the delimitations that are inherent in this research study. First, the surveys submitted in this research are limited to one Middle School located in a suburban school located in a Mid-West state. The school consists of 715 7th and 8th grade students. The responses from parents and teachers in this school may not generalize to parents and teachers outside of this school setting. In addition, the surveys submitted in this research study will be submitted anonymously and those individuals new to the school may not have a good understanding of parental involvement within their new school.

Limitations

As with any study, it is also important to outline its limitations. The submission of the surveys will be subjective to the respondent. It is also critical to consider that the conclusions that are made are often the result of the mental models that have been shaped throughout an experience. The individuals who choose to participate in the survey are likely to be those who feel that they have a “voice” or are already connected to the school.
The individuals who are submitting surveys are expected to be honest with their responses, however, the instrument that is used will only get their initial responses to the questions that are posed to them. A deeper understanding of their responses may require additional research in a more qualitative form such as in-depth interviewing.

In this study, the researcher will be taking a Case Study approach to research and investigating middle school teacher and parent perceptions of parental involvement. This study will not be able to be generalized to schools other than the institution for which the researcher will be gathering and interpreting data, however, schools that have similar demographics could review these findings and use them as a base of knowledge when working on understanding the dynamics of teacher and parent perceptions in regards to parental involvement within middle schools.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined as relevant to the important constructs that form the conceptual framework for the inquiry:

**Early Adolescents.** Early adolescents are children between the ages of 10 and 14. The term is synonymous with young adolescents or preadolescents. Manning (1993) supports use of the terms early adolescence or young adolescence to recognize the age as a legitimate developmental period between childhood and adolescence.

**Communication.** A process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs or behavior.
Middle School. Wiles and Bondi (1986) suggest middle level schools are best defined in terms of their purposes or missions. Schools for children in the middle level grades are “dedicated to serving preadolescents (ages 10-14) through a comprehensive (physical, social, emotional, intellectual, moral) program that is both balanced (no one area dominates the others) and success-oriented (all persons experience the program and continue to develop)” (Wiles & Bondi, 1993, p. 38).

Parent. According to Henderson, Marburger, and Oorns (1986), the term “parent” includes those with “legal, quasi-legal custodianship, whether biological, adoptive, or foster parents of the child” (p. 18). This definition includes all family members and adults who are caregivers to children.

Parental Involvement. Parental involvement refers to the individual practices or types of involvement that may be implemented within school-family partnerships. Several researchers have used categories of involvement rather than a more narrow definition in order to define parental involvement (Henderson et al., 1986; Williams & Chavkin, 1986; Epstein, 1987; Swap, 1993).

Parenting. The raising of a child by its parents; the act or process of becoming a parent; the taking care of someone in the manner of a parent.

Partnership. A team effort to involve parents and school staff in reaching short and Long-range goals to achieve student success in school.

Perceptions. Mental images; awareness of the elements of environment through physical
sensation; quick, acute, and intuitive cognition.

**School-Family Partnerships.** School-family partnerships refer to the relationship between schools and families as they work together to promote the social and academic development of children. The term emphasizes that the two institutions share major responsibilities for children's education (Epstein, 1992).

**Volunteer.** To offer oneself as a volunteer, to offer or bestow one's services.

**Summary**

The research supporting parental involvement is extensive and overall highly supportive of school systems finding ways to actively engage parenting in meaningful partnerships with their children's schools. My study will be a case study that will investigate the perceptions of parents and teachers of one junior high school and analyze the congruences and incongruences of their views on parental involvement. The remainder of this study will be divided up as follows: Chapter 2 will present a literature review of parental involvement as well as research related to parental involvement. Chapter 3 will present the methodology and design of the study, population and sampling, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 will present an analysis of the data. Chapter 5 will present the summary, conclusions and recommendation of the study.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review presented will be broken into two pieces. The first portion of the chapter will cover the following areas: (a) Parental Involvement (b) Theoretical Framework, (c) Educational reforms and federal policies on parental involvement, (d) Adolescent (middle school) parental involvement, and (e) barriers and leading strategies to parental involvement. In the second component of this literature review I will be focusing on the importance of providing a case study to the existing body of literature.

Parental Involvement

Throughout our nations' history, many researchers have held that the parent's role in their children's education needs to be limited to creating a home atmosphere for the social, emotional and moral development of their child. In the 1960's however, federal legislation regarding parental involvement started to broaden with the passage of Head Start and Title I Elementary and Secondary Schools Act. In the United States, the issue of parental involvement in schools has become a topic that educators, parents, and legislators have been discussing widely over the past two decades (Ramirez, 2000).

Modern day parental involvement got its start going back to the 1960's War on Poverty. Edward Zigler and other founders of Head Start began asking questions about the damaging effects of poverty on young children. The Head Start program launched
numerous studies on the development of related programs for young children and families. Urie Brofenbrenner's review (1974) found that home-visiting programs that teach the mother to use learning materials had positive effects that lasted well into elementary school. Additionally, Irving Lazar's study of Head Start graduates (1978) found positive effects lasting through high school. The effects were strongest for students who had attended programs with high parental involvement.

These early investigations on parental involvement led the way for other researchers to explore this topic. Ira Gordan (1978) divided parental involvement into three models (a) Parent Impact Model, (b) School Impact Model, and (c) Community Impact Model. He concluded that the more comprehensive and long-lasting the parental involvement was, in all roles, the more effective it was likely to be. He also concluded that the effects are evident not only in children's achievement, but also in the quality of schools that serve the community.

Questions regarding parental involvement obviously grew out of the investigation of poverty and equitable opportunities for all children. During the 1980's James Coleman developed the concept of social capital to explain the importance of social relationships to the health of society. This concept focused on the value that was created through social skills and connections. In their study of public and private schools (1987), Coleman and Hoffer found that low-income students in Catholic schools performed a grade level higher than comparable public school students. The authors speculated that this difference was the relationship between families and schools. Public schools see
themselves as an instrument of society, intended to free children from the constraints of their family backgrounds. In the Catholic schools, however, parents and educators create a functional community around shared values.

The studies of the 60's, 70's, and 80's have all laid the ground work for our current understanding of parental involvement and how it relates to educating children. Although this research was born out of evaluating the negative effects of poverty, it has expanded into all educational settings. In an article titled *Effects of Parent Involvement on Eighth-Grade Achievement*, Hoe, Esther, & Willms, (1996) found that parental involvement at home (e.g. discussing school with children and helping children plan their education programs) had a strong positive relationship to student achievement. And, actually, the study did not find that higher-income parents or two-parent homes were more involved with their children's education.

Epstein (2001) suggests that parents who are informed and involved in their children's school can positively impact their child's attitude and performance. Parents' awareness and interest in their children's learning and school activities model for their children the importance of school which may lead to positive behaviors. Shumow, Lee, and Miller (2001) studied 60 families to examine the impact of parental involvement during middle grades (7th & 8th) and found that involvement at home contributed to positive attitudes toward school, while involvement at school contributed to higher grades.

Although there is a wealth of information on the positive effects of parental
involvement, it is also important to investigate the growing body of research that provides evidence that parental involvement in school drastically decreases as children progress through their experience (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Decreasing levels of communication with parents at the secondary school level, and especially the middle school level, leads to many teachers and parents struggling for common ground while trying to meet the unique social, emotional and academic needs of early adolescents. In addition, investigations into school-family partnerships have revealed barriers to parental involvement at the secondary level. These include differences in organizational patterns between elementary and secondary school (Scott-Jones, 1994), secondary teacher preparation (Epstein, 1986), and teachers' attitudes (Connors & Epstein, 1994; Dornbush & Ritter, 1988).

Theoretical Models

The role of parental involvement in school has been emphasized in several theories and frameworks by various authors. In Comer and Haynes (1991) school reform, school outreach to parents, including involvement in decision-making, is essential to connect families and communities and to affect children's positive development. Eccles and Harold's (1993) model discussed the major role of teacher beliefs and practices for children and the enhancement of this role if teachers work with families. In Joyce Epstein's model of school-family-community partnerships, she emphasized the roles of school, families, and communities working together to influence children's development. Lareau and Horvat (1999) noted the vital role of the school in
accepting or rejecting parents in their attempts to use personal resources to be involved with their children. Additionally, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) hypothesized that school practice may even serve to increase parent involvement among parents who feel it is their role to be involved, but do not feel they can effectively help their child.

Epstein (1987) stated that partnerships between parents and schools were manifested in six ways:

1. Basic Obligation of Parents: to provide for children's health and safety, prepare children for school, teach family life skills through the school years, and build positive home conditions that support school learning and behavior.

2. Basic Obligation of the Schools: to communicate through diverse means with parents about school programs and children's progress in order that they may understand them and support them.

3. Parent Involvement at School: parents are to serve as volunteers to assist teachers and administrators in the classrooms or other areas of the school. They are present at student performances, sport events, and other activities, or participate in workshops or other school sponsored programs to further their own education and training.

4. Parent Involvement in Learning Activities at Home: to initiate learning activities at home to support the learning process taking place in the school. Monitor or assist children at home with guidance from teacher in activities related to student's class work.

5. Parent Involvement in Governance and Advocacy: for parents to assume decision making roles in parent groups, advisory councils, or other committees or groups at
school, district or state level. They are active in independent advocacy groups that monitor the schools and strive for school improvement.

6. Parent Involvement through Community Collaboration: citizens in community agencies, businesses, service groups, cultural organizations, governmental units, faith communities, and other groups work together with schools in the best interest of the children's learning.

Models

Swap (1993) identifies four models that describe the relationship between schools, families, and the community. These models include: (a) the protective model, (b) school-to-home transmission model, (c) the curriculum enrichment model, and (d) partnership model. Additionally, Connors and Epstein (1995) developed a fifth model: the overlapping spheres of influence model.

The Protective Model

The protective model is described as the school being responsible for educating children and uses structure and ritual to protect itself from interference from families. The families' responsibilities are at home and the teachers assume responsibility for the children's school-based education. This model was supported by Weber (1947) in his separate responsibilities theoretical perspective. Weber believed that families are put in charge of a child's social development while schools are put in charge of the child's educational development and these roles remain separate.
School-to-Home Transmission

The school-to-home transmission model is a very direct approach, where the teacher sets the pace as to what parents need to do to support their children's learning at home. In this model, family involvement is requested only when the school needs something.

The Curriculum Enrichment Model

The curriculum enrichment model suggests mutual respect between parents and educators and promotes mutual learning and goal setting. The relationship is limited to curriculum and does not extend to school management or policy development.

The Partnership Model

The partnership model is the ongoing process that involves focusing on collaboration between educators and parents to solve problems and provide support for school success; thus initiating an empowerment process that combines mutual respect, intellectual activity, and inquiry.

The Overlapping Spheres of Influence Model

Conners and Epstein (1995) describe in this theoretical model that the family, school, community, and peer groups are seen as influencing a child's development in different ways at different times. This model recognizes that there are times when the spheres of influence (family, school, community, and peers) remain separate and other times when they overlap and interact with each other. Epstein and Conners (1993) explain these overlapping times as being potentially significant in influencing students.
Typologies of Family, School, and Community Involvement

There are a tremendous amount of researchers, organizations, and reports that have identified ways that families and communities are involved in schools (Bickel, 1995; Conners & Epstein, 1995; Davies, 1991; Epstein & Conners, 1993; Flaxman & Inger, 1992; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Hidalgo, Siu, Bright, Swap, & Epstein, 1995; Moore, 1991; National PTA, 1993; Riley, 1994; Rutherford, Billing, & Kettering, 1993). The role of parental involvement has been emphasized in several theories and frameworks. Epstein's model of school-family-community partnerships emphasizes the roles of schools, families and communities working together to influence children's development (Epstein, 2002).

Dr. Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement includes:

Parenting:

a. Help all families establish home environments conducive to learning
b. Provide suggestions for home conditions that support learning at each grade level.
c. Provide workshops and video/audio tapes on child rearing at each grade level.

Communication:

a. Design more effective forms of communication to reach parents.
b. Teachers conduct conferences with every parent at least once a year.
c. Send home weekly or monthly folders of student work with comments regarding progress.

Volunteering:

a. Recruit and organize parent help and support.
b. School volunteer program or class, parent, and committee volunteers for each
class.

c. Parent room or parent club for volunteers and resources for parents.

d. Annual surveys to identify available talents and time of volunteers.

Learning-at-Home:

a. Provide ideas to parents on how to help children at home.

b. Provide information to parents on skill in each grade level, regular homework
   schedule that requires students to discuss schoolwork at home.

c. Send home calendars with daily topics for discussion by parents and students

Decision Making:

a. Decision making roles in PTA/PTO, advisory councils or other committees and
   groups at school.

b. Parents and community activists that monitor the school and work for school
   improvement.

c. Survey of parents for input into what changes need to be made and what is
   working well.

Collaborating with Community:

a. Build on the strength of the local school community.

b. Collaborate exchanges with the community.

c. Identify and utilize resources for available community groups and agencies.

d. Establish connection between and among stakeholders that share responsibility.

These various types of involvement provide opportunities for all parents to participate
in their children's schools through activities that relate to their level of comfort as well as
their availability. Each type of involvement is important and contributes to the educational success of the children. These six dimensions of parental involvement do not have to be implemented at the same time. Based on the needs of the school and situations that may arise, they should be prioritized and incorporated accordingly (Epstein, 1991).

Legislation Supporting School Partnerships

School reforms and federal legislation such as the School Development Program (1968), Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994) and the NCLB Act (2001) have elevated parental involvement in schools to make it a national priority (Baker et. al, 1999, Baker & Soden, 1997).

In 1991 the first Bush administration promoted America 2000 in an effort to assist America's schools in achieving educational goals. In that document an eighth goal dealing with parental participation was added to the now famous National Education Goals. The eighth goal is stated as “Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional and academic growth of children” (Achieving the Goals, 1997). The Clinton administration adopted the Educate America Act of 1994, also known as Goals 2000, in March of 1994. Goals 2000 added two new educational goals to the original six:

1. Access to programs for the continued improvement of teacher's professional skills, and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century.

2. Promote partnerships to increase parental involvement and participation in
promoting growth of children.

In January 2002, President George W. Bush signed into the federal legislation the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. This Act is a landmark in education reform designed to improve student achievement and change the culture of America's schools. The NCLB Act is designed for the improvement of student achievement and to change the accountability of American schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

One key component of NCLB calls for schools to implement effective parental involvement activities for the improvement of academic achievement and school performance. Today the NCLB Act is the most comprehensive law affecting education. This act also reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). A major principle of the NCLB Act provides parents the option of schools. This option gives parents greater opportunities for involvement and decision-making in the education of their children.

The No Child Left Behind Act embodies four key principles: (a) Stronger accountability for results, (b) greater flexibility for states, school districts and schools in the use of federal funds, (C) more choices for parents of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and (d) an emphasis on teaching methods that have been demonstrated to work.

The parental involvement mandate of Title I was not completely new in the educational field, and have actually been field tested from 1978-1987 by James P. Comer and was known as the School Development Program (SDP). This model was described as a school-level participatory approach for reforming education that covered all the aspects of a school operation (Comer, 1996). This approach with parents and families as
the center of change fits perfectly within the educational reform established by Educate America Act (Goals 2000). This approach to parental involvement is characterized by its three levels and is represented by a pyramid which includes the following:

1. The base corresponds to half or more of the parents who support the school by attending parent-teacher conferences, reinforcing learning at home, and participating in the school’s social program.

2. The second layer represents 10 to 50% of the parents who are actively involved in the school.

3. And the third layer is comprised of the 1 to 10% of the parents who participate in the governance of the school, collaborating in decision making with school staff, students, and other members of the School Planning and Management Team (SPMT).

The SDP model is based on three “mechanisms” or “teams.” The School Planning and Management Team (SPTM) focuses on planning and coordinating school activities. To involve parents at all levels of school activity is the objective of the Parent Team. The Student Support Team (SST) task is to address school-wide prevention issues and manage individual student cases. These teams adhere to three guiding principles: “consensus, collaboration and no-fault approach to teamwork and problem solving” (Comer, 1996).

In addition to these three teams, the SDP model contemplates three operations: Comprehensive School Plan, Staff Development, and Assessment and Modification. These operations and the three “mechanisms” or “teams” transform the school’s power structure into collaborative and involvement systems of all key stakeholders in the education of children.
Adolescent Parental Involvement

Studies suggest that the nature of school-family partnerships change through the years of a child's schooling (Epstein, 1992, Epstein & Connors, 1995). Epstein (1992) suggests that the nature of parental involvement practices can be viewed as developmental. Parental involvement practices change for children as they grow older, for families at different periods of time, and for teachers in different grade levels (Epstein, 1992).

Adolescent needs differ from those of elementary-aged children. Families' needs also change as children grow older. Adolescence has been described as a period of diversity in development of physical, social and emotional, and intellectual domains (Capelluti & Stokes, 1991; Clark & Clark, 1994; Epstein & Petersen, 1991; Manning, 1993; Wiles & Bondi, 1986). Adolescents develop new abilities in all of these domains simultaneously but at different rates. According to Capelluti and Stokes (1991), development differences among students are the widest between the grades of five and nine. The early adolescent is neither child, nor adolescent, but in a period of transition.

Children's search for autonomy and independence during early adolescence has been widely documented (Erikson, 1968; Coleman, 1980; Havinghurst, 1972). According to Erikson (1968), individuals go through eight psychosocial stages with each having a designated age range, distinct characteristic, and crisis. Early adolescents, ages 10-14, span two of Erikson's stages including the ages 6-11 characterized by a crisis
between industry and inferiority, and the ages 12-18 characterized by a crisis between identity and role confusion. In order to develop successfully, adolescents must resolve each of these crises by accomplishing worthwhile tasks, feeling a sense of pride, and developing an increased sense of independence. Similarly, Havighurst (1972) viewed development occurring in six stages with two of the stages, found in middle school (ages 6-12) and adolescence (ages 12-18), and spanning the early adolescent's age range. He also believed there is a need for adolescents to begin to achieve emotional independence from parents. Early adolescents, however, demonstrate both as children and adolescents. While early adolescents are searching for independence, they still want and need the security of adult guidance and approval (Allen, 1993; Capelluti & Stokes, 1991; Clark & Clark, 1994).

Parental involvement may be withdrawn during the middle grade years because parents believe that young adolescents should be more independent (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989). In a major synthesis of research findings, the Carnegie Council (1989) characterized the adolescent's move from dependence to interdependence as a difficult transition involving renegotiating relationships with parents and other caregivers. A parent may misperceive a child's increased independent thinking and greater need for autonomy as a rejection of parental ties. Young adolescents, however, "neither need nor desire a complete break with parents and other family members" (Carnegie Council, 1989, p. 66). Several researchers (Amato, 1989; Coleman, 1980; Epstein & Conners, 1995; Kandel & Lesser, 1972) indicate that adolescents hold a high
regard for their parents and value their parents' advice and assistance. The actual role that parents play may be changing at this age, but it is still important.

A number of studies suggest that school-family partnership practices decline dramatically with each grade level (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Stevenson & Backer 1987). Becker and Epstein (1982) surveyed 3,698 first-, third-, and fifth grade teachers and 600 elementary school principals to determine how they felt about parental involvement and how widely such activities were used. Home learning activities included checking homework, tutoring, reading to children or listening to children read, taking children to the library, conducting discussions, and playing learning games. While seven out of eight first-grade teachers reported encouraging parental involvement in reading activities or training parents how to teach their children at home, only one-third of the fifth-grade teachers reported doing so. Thus parental involvement practice in elementary schools appears to be more common in earlier grades.

Dauber and Epstein (1993) surveyed more than 2000 parents of children in five elementary schools and three middle schools. They concluded that the most consistent predictors of parental involvement were school programs and practices specifically developed to encourage and guide parental involvement. Elementary schools were reported to have more opportunities for parental involvement than middle school. One limitation of this study is that the data was collected early in the school year, possibly before teachers and parents had time to become acquainted or initiate practices of
involvement.

In another study, Epstein and Dauber (1991) surveyed 171 teachers in the same elementary and middle schools as the study described earlier. This time the researchers studied teachers' attitudes and practices of parental involvement. They sought to determine the relationship between six types of parental involvement (i.e., parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community) with the child's school level (elementary and middle school). The results revealed that on four of the five types of parental involvement, there was a negative correlation between parental involvement and middle school level (r = -.212 to r = -.484). This means that there is a stronger relationship between parental involvement and elementary school.

Stevenson and Baker (1987) surveyed the teachers of 179 children ranging in age from 5-17 in a nationwide random sample. They found the age of the child was significantly negatively correlated to the amount of parental involvement in school activities. When they categorized the children into two groups, ages 5-11 and ages 12-17, a significantly greater number of parents of younger children were likely to be involved in school activities (e.g., parent-teacher organizations or parent-teacher conferences) than parents of older children (t = .381, p = .000).

Results from these studies (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Stevenson & Baker, 1987) demonstrate a decline in the amount of parental involvement as children move from elementary schools to secondary schools. These studies are
limited, however, since they do not address why parents get involved or their perceptions about their involvement. Such information may provide a better understanding of why there is a decline in parental involvement as children grow older. The studies have limited potential for informing educators about perceptions from both teachers and parents. The current study will address these limitations.

*Barriers and Leading Strategies to Parental Involvement*

The National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988, a large survey of principals, parents, and students at the eighth grade level suggested a limited amount of parental involvement occurs at the eighth grade level. Only 19 percent of parents reported they were actively involved in various types of activities. Fifty-four percent reported limited involvement with activities at home. Twenty seven percent reported few or no communications and activities with the school. One third of the students in the same grade reported their parents had no contact with the school during the current year. Overall the survey indicated that principals, parents, and students reported minimal parental involvement with only superficial connections between home and school (Epstein & Lee, 1995).

A major challenge in investigating parental involvement in education is the fact that many obstacles may hinder parental participation, including: narrow conceptualization of parental involvement by schools, negative attitudes towards parents by school personnel, a lack of teacher preparation, occupational demands that impose constraints on parents participation, cultural characteristics that affect parental
involvement and parental insecurities concerning schools (Yap & Enoki, 1995).

There are numerous factors that shape the way families are involved in their children's education. Among these factors are: (a) the family's perceptions of what their role should be, (b) the family's sense of their ability to help their children, and (c) the family's ability to respond to opportunities to interact with the school and with their children at home (Hoover-Demsey & Sandler, 1995; Moles, 1993).

Barriers to school-family partnerships are more likely to exist at the secondary level (Epstein & Conners, 1992). The differences in organizational patterns between elementary schools and secondary schools may explain some of the differences in the levels of parental involvement. Secondary schools are usually larger and departmentalized. Secondary schools also serve a larger proportion of the community than smaller, elementary schools. Teachers in secondary school also have a larger number of students than teachers in elementary schools. Scott-Jones (1994) argued that once teaching becomes departmentalized and a child has more than one teacher, maintaining teacher-parent relations is difficult. This means less personal contact occurs between teachers and parents. In addition, the period of time children attend middle school level school is limited to two or three years. When children are in elementary school, parents have five to six years to build a relationship with elementary teachers and personnel. Organizational structures provide less time for parents to form meaningful partnerships in middle level schools.

In addition to organizational barriers, both teachers and parents may have personal
barriers that prevent strong partnership practices. Epstein and Conners (1992) describe teachers who were certified at the secondary level as "educated as subject matter experts" and "unprepared to work with families" (p. 177). Epstein (1986) concluded that the increased complexity of course content and more diversified needs of students might prohibit teachers of higher grades from engaging in parental involvement practices. Several studies (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Moles, 1982; Tangri & Leitch, 1982) point out barriers to parental involvement that may exist within families. These barriers include lack of time, busy work schedules, job or family demands, and family health problems.

Some researchers believe that a family's belief in their ability to help their children is grounded in their own history and socialization patterns. A family's social class, how a family member's parents were involved with their education, and how a family's friends are involved in school influence how families perceive their role. Moles (1993) concluded that "factors associated with poverty and limited education exert more influence in school contact than minority status" (p. 27). Poverty, under education, cultural difference, and minority status present difficult social and psychological barriers for families to overcome in being involved with their children's school (Moles, 1993). A families' ability to respond to opportunities to interact with the school and with their children at home is also influenced by social class, family structure, employment obligations, need for child care, transportation difficulties, inconvenient meeting times, and limited financial resources to provide materials for their children (Lareau, 1987; Leitch & Tangri, 1988; Moles, 1993, Yap & Enoki, 1995).
Another element that may affect the amount of parental involvement in schools is teachers' attitudes (Conners & Epstein, 1994; Dornbush & Ritter, 1988; Linek, Rasink, & Harkins, 1997). On a survey of 307 high school teachers, more than half of the teachers reported they preferred more contact with parents of children with learning difficulties and with parents of children with disciplinary problems (Dornbush & Ritter, 1988). Conversely, the teachers reported having less contact with parents of average student who were doing well in school and did not wish to increase contact with these parents. The same survey was administered to 3,746 parents of high school students. Fewer than 20 percent of the parents believed it was no longer appropriate for them to be involved in their children's education. In contrast, over 80 percent of the parents reported wanting to know how to stay involved in their children's education. The researchers concluded that the large majority of parents in this study had little or no contact with their children's teachers (Dornbush & Ritter, 1988). These findings indicate teachers' attitudes may limit the amount of communication with parents.

Teachers can face some of the same obstacles to participating in partnerships as families. Teachers, after all, are human beings who also have roles, family members, and community members. Moles (1993) pointed out that teachers are also parents, may be single parents, and face some of the same difficulties in responding to opportunities to develop partnerships as the families they serve.

Lack of training for teachers regarding how to communicate and interact with parents is often cited as an obstacle to implementation of partnerships (Chavkin &
Williams, 1988; Chrispeels, 1993; Comer, 1980; Moles, 1993; Rich, 1988; Riley, 1994; Swap, 1993; Young & Edwards, 1996). Therefore, it is common that teachers experience difficulty communicating with all families, but especially with families from cultures and socioeconomic groups that are different from their own. This often results in frustration and misconceptions on the part of teachers and parents.

Teachers may also feel threatened by families and community involvement in school. Ryan and Feidlaender (1996) found that tensions can develop if teachers perceive that families are overstepping their bounds and that parental scrutiny is viewed as a threat or as questioning their expert status as educators. Experiencing “teacher bashing,” constant public criticism, accusations that teachers are not “professional” (Spencer, 1996), perceptions that the public does not trust them (Hartoonian, 1991), and continual budget cuts, all lead to low teacher morale. When experiencing low morale, teachers are less likely to take part in what can be perceived as extra work in trying to develop partnerships with parents. Suggestions such as increasing contacts with parents, serving on partnership teams, and writing newsletters can be perceived as additional burdens to already overworked teachers (Moles, 1993).

Innovations involving the introduction of practices that are the latest “fad” and do not take into consideration the norms of the school, the classroom circumstances, or the teacher's voices, contribute to teachers' resistance to implement them (Spencer, 1996). As a result, policies are often ignored or redesigned by teachers in application to meet their current practices (Smylie, 1996).
Leitch and Tangri (1988) found that some teachers blame families for their children's problems and see the family attitudes as obstacles to developing home-school partnerships. Dauber and Epstein (1993) found that teachers in inner city schools perceived that parents did not want to be involved with schools. Lightfoot (1978) referred to this perception as myth. Research done by Epstein and Dauber (1989) found that inner city families do want to be involved. In fact, it would seem that regardless of class or culture, all families want to be involved in their children's education.

Dauber and Epstein (1993) found that despite the obstacles, teachers believe that parent involvement can aid in children's achievement and also help them to be more successful teachers. Harris, Kagy, and Roass (1987) found that 69% of the teachers in their study thought it was important to provide families with information regarding what is being taught at school. More than 95% of the teachers felt it was the teacher's responsibility to communicate with families and provide information about helping their children.

Studies of family involvement indicate that the actions taken by teachers will directly influence the amount and type of family involvement at home. Dauber and Epstein (1993) found that:

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. Regardless of parent education, family size, student ability, or school level (elementary or middle school), parents are more likely to become partners in their children's education if they perceive that the schools have strong practices to involve parents at school...(p. 61)
Leading Strategies

In a review of the literature, Becher (1984) concluded that parents develop more positive attitudes about the school and school personnel, develop more positive attitudes about themselves, and develop improved relationships with their children when they are more involved in their children's schools. Epstein's (1986) study included parents of 1,269 children in third and fifth grades and used a regression analysis to examine the effects of teacher practices of parental involvement on parents. Parents reported increased understanding about their children's school work when teachers frequently used parental involvement activities (b=.406) and frequently communicated with the parents (b=.231). Parents also rated the quality of teaching higher (b=.728) if teachers frequently used parental involvement. Similarly, teachers reported positive feelings about teaching and their school when there was more parental involvement at the school (Leitch & Tangri, 1988). Swap (1993) concluded that teachers who collaborated with parents broadened their perspectives and increased their sensitivity to varied family circumstances.

Effective strategies for parental involvement may differ from community to community. The most appropriate strategies for a particular community will depend on local interest, needs, and resources. These strategies include: overcoming time and resource constraints, providing information and training to parents and school staff, restructuring school to support family involvement, bridging school-family differences, and tapping external supports for partnerships (U.S. Department of Education, 1997). In
order to overcome barriers to parental involvement, it is important to build strong partnerships between families and schools. “In order to build strong partnerships, families and school staff members need to get to know each other, learn from one another, and plan how they will work together to increase student learning” (p. 7).

An in-depth profile of 10 parent involvement programs is highlighted in the “Idea Book” (U.S. Department of Education, 1997). These 10 programs were selected to highlight differing approaches to building successful school-family involvement partnerships. They were also selected to represent a mix of effective strategies to promote family involvement in elementary and secondary schools in urban, suburban, and rural areas across the country. The guidelines for the successful partnership in these programs are as follows:

1. There is no “one size fits all” approach to partnerships. Build on what works well. Begin the school-family partnerships by identifying with families, the strengths, interests and needs of families, students, and school staff, and design strategies that respond to identified strengths, interests, and needs.

2. Training and staff development is an essential investment. Strengthen the school-family partnership with professional development training for all school staff as well as parents and other family members. Both school staff and families need the knowledge and skills that will enable them to work with one another and with the larger communities to support children's learning.

3. Communication is the foundation of effective partnerships. Pan strategies that accommodate the varied language and cultural needs as well as lifestyle and work
schedules of school staff and families. Even the best-planned school-family partnerships will fail if the participants cannot communicate effectively.

4. Flexibility and diversity are key. Recognize that effective parent involvement takes many forms that may not necessarily require parents' presence at a workshop, meeting, or school. The emphasis should be on parents helping children learn, and this happens in schools, homes, and elsewhere in the community.

5. Projects need to take advantage of the training, assistance, and funding offered by sources external to schools. These can include school districts, community organizations and public agencies, local colleges and universities, state education agencies, and ED-sponsored Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers. While Title 1 funds support the parent involvement activities of many programs featured here, several have increased the resources available for parent involvement activities by looking beyond school walls.

6. Change takes time. Recognize that developing a successful school-family partnership requires continued effort over time, and that solving one problem often creates new challenges. Further, a successful partnership requires the involvement of many stakeholders, not just a few.

7. Projects need to regularly assess the effects of the partnership using multiple indicators. These may include indicators of family, school staff, and community participation in and satisfaction with school-related activities. They may also include measures of the quality of the school-family interactions and of student educational progress (U.S. Department of Education, 1997b).
Structures and strategies which would permit true collaboration between school and home should be developed. This collaboration will afford parents the opportunity to become full partners with the school. The parents' strengths, needs, and interests need to be taken into consideration. In order to achieve this end, it is critical that effective communication skills and strategies, such as building rapport and responsible listening, be used. These skills will be used to establish and maintain positive partnerships with parents in a variety of interpersonal exchanges that may occur (Mundschenk & Foley, 1994).

Developing a Case

Although much research has focused on the importance of parental involvement in children's education, it is also critical to examine what the overall impact of parental involvement is on student populations. Throughout the existing research there is a limited body of knowledge regarding which aspects of parental involvement help student achievement and just what components of this involvement are most important (Christian, Morrison, & Bryant, 1998; Epstein, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Dr. William H. Jeynes conducted a meta-analysis to determine the overall effects of parental involvement on k-12 students' academic achievement and to determine the extent to which certain expressions of parental involvement are beneficial to children. His analysis drew from 77 studies, comprising over 300,000 students. Of the 77 studies, 36 included data only from secondary schools, 25 consisted of data only from elementary schools, and 16 possessed data for both elementary and secondary schools.

Furthermore, Dr. Jeynes meta-analysis indicates that consistent parental involvement is almost always associated with higher student achievement outcomes.
These findings emerged consistently whether the outcome measures were grades, standardized test scores, or a variety of other measures, including teacher ratings. For the overall population of students, on average, the achievement scores of children with highly involved parents were higher than children with less involved parents. The academic advantage for those whose parents who were highly involved in their education averaged about .5 -.6 of a standard deviation for overall education outcomes, grades, and academic achievement. In other words, the academic achievement score distribution or range of scores for children whose parents were highly involved in their education was substantially higher than that of their counterparts whose parents were less involved.

When evaluating the particular influence of specific aspects of parental involvement, two patterns emerged for the findings. First, parental involvement required a large investment of time, such as reading and communicating with one's child. The more subtle aspects of parental style and expectations such as parenting style had a greater impact on student education outcome than some of the more demonstrative aspects of parental involvement, such as having household rules, and parental attendance and participation at school functions.

When examining studies of 100% minority students and mostly minority students, Dr. Jeynes found that they were close to about .5 of a standard deviation. The effects of parental involvement tended to be larger for African American and Latino children than they were for Asian American children, however, the effect sizes remained statistically significant for all three of these minority groups. The results highlight the consistency of the impact of parental involvement across racial and ethnic groups.

Anne Henderson (1994) reviewed 66 studies involving parental involvement and
student achievement, and found that when parents are involved in their children’s education they do better in school. When parents are involved at school, their children go farther in school and the schools they go to are better. Using data from a nationally representative sample of 21,814 students and their parents participating in the National Education Longitudinal Study, (Keith, et. al), concluded that “parental involvement has a powerful effect on eighth graders' achievement,” and that although its effects were slightly stronger in math and social studies, it proved to be a powerful influence on student success in all subject areas.

Given all of the research on the positive aspects of parental involvement, it is critical for researchers to begin examining the specific aspects of individual educational settings to help better understand what influences and drives positive parental involvement at each developmental level. Prior research shows that parents and teachers who take time to build strong relationships between home and school will yield, on average, higher academic achievement levels and have higher levels of satisfaction with their schools. Teachers' attitudes towards involving parents influence the extent to which parents are involved in their children's school. A report by West (2000) discusses an elementary teacher’s efforts to increase parent-teacher communication, and its effect on students' success in reading. Findings from this study show that parent-teacher communication can motivate students to complete reading homework, which results in better quiz and test scores. This particular report demonstrates the importance of teachers initiating positive contact with parents, and the potential effects it can have on students' achievement in school.

Misconceptions about when, how, what, and if families are meaningfully engaged
in their children's education continues to be a predominant issue in fostering school-
family connections (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Baker, Denessen, & Brus-Laven, 2007;
Barajas & Ronnkvist, 2007; Caspe & Lopez, 2006; Davis, 2006; Fram, Miller-Cribbs, &
VanHorn, 2007; McGrath, 2007; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006; Wong & Huges, 2006).
Whether it is racial bias (Barajas & Ronnkvist, 2007), lack of staff preparation to address
misconceptions (Baker, et. al, 2007), or other factors, this single issue continues to play a
significant role in the effectiveness of family involvement efforts because misconception
leads to mistrust (Baker, et. al & McGrath, 2007). Throughout the current literature,
researchers explore the strategies for identifying misconceptions that teachers and
families hold about each other's motivation, practices, and beliefs. When there is an
atmosphere of mistrust, it is difficult for educators and parents to create effective school-
family partnerships to support student learning.

Although several studies have examined the relationship between family
involvement during k-12 years and student outcomes (Cotton & Wicklund, 1989;
Desimone, 1999), the majority have focused on the elementary school setting. Much less
is understood about the impact of family involvement on middle and high school students
(Balli, Demo, & Wedman, 1998; Brough, 1997; Keith et al., 1993; Rutherford & Billing,
1995; Trivette et al., 1995). However, through their research, Dr. Joyce Epstein and her
colleagues at Johns Hopkins University have identified and studied multiple measures of
parental involvement in the middle grades (Epstein, 1995; Epstein, Sanders, Simon,
Salinas, Jansorn, & Van Voorhis, 2002). As a result of this research they have developed
a framework of six types of involvement with associated activities, challenges, and
expected results. This framework will be used for a frame of analysis to evaluate teacher
and parent perceptions of parental involvement in this case study of a 7th and 8th grade building.

Most large-scale research done at the middle school level has been done at the 8th grade level. The National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS: 88), provides an easily available source of information for researchers. Starting in 1988, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) followed 25,000 eighth graders from 1,000 schools. It surveyed them at two-year intervals through 1994, and again in 2000. The NCES also surveyed parents, teachers, and school principals and collected data from high school transcripts. In 1988, the base year, and in follow-up years students also took tests in math, reading, science and social studies. Although this is a rich source of data, it focuses on students in one grade level: eighth grade. In contrast to NELS: 88, my case study will specifically investigate the transition through the 7th and 8th grades. I am interested in looking at the perceptions of teachers and parents and evaluating the differences and similarities that exist at each level.

Ho Sui-Chu & Willms (1996) found that families of all racial backgrounds maintain rules about homework throughout high school, but did find some variation by ethnicity in the NELS: 88 data:

1. African Americans reported slightly higher involvement than Whites reported in all types of involvement at home. At school the levels of involvement reported was about the same.

2. Hispanics reported slightly higher levels of home supervision than Whites did, but reported about the same in all other types.

3. Asians reported more supervision at home than Whites reported. Asians also
reported spending less time discussing school, communicating with school staff, and volunteering and attending PTO meetings than White families reported.

Outside of the NELS:88 study, my literature review identified that a large portion of the research that has been conducted at the middle level focuses on urban populations and the effects of poverty in relation to the effects on parental involvement. Another factor that will differentiate my studies lies in its racial component and the ethnic composition of my school. The demographic makeup of my population consists of 92% white, 1% African American, .8% American Indian, and 2.5% Asian, and 3.7% Hispanic. Although this population is rather homogeneous, it will provide insight into this specific setting.

While social economic status and ethnicity have been thoroughly evaluated through current research (Clark, 2000; Dryfoos, 2000, Inernizzi et al. 1997, Newman, 1995; Sanders and Herting, 2000), specifically evaluating the number of children that parents have in school in relation to parental involvement has been relatively underdeveloped. When investigating parent perceptions, I will be focusing on this element as it relates to the dimensions of Dr. Epstein’s framework for parental involvement.

Teachers have also been identified throughout the research as key players in the development of positive parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Mapp, 2002; Marcon, 1999). Developing and collaborating with parents, sharing goals and creating clear an expectation concerning young adolescents’ learning and development has already been the focus of current literature (Ruebel, 2001). Conversely, when evaluating teachers’ perceptions of parental involvement, I will be focusing on the specific demographics of years of experience, discipline (what they teach), grade level (7
or 8th), and gender to glean valuable information about how those demographics effect perceptions of parental involvement.

Lastly, I will be looking at the congruence between teachers and parents to see if in my setting there are any significant differences in the perception of parental involvement. This will prove extremely helpful as suburban schools with similar demographic work seek to develop appropriate and effective programs to engage teachers and parents in involvement activities and programming.

Summary

The information provided in this literature review was intended to show the positive influence that parental involvement has on children as they progress through school. It also explains how involvement is negatively associated as children move into secondary schools. Early adolescence is a difficult time for parents and educators to develop effective and meaningful partnerships that will help lead to successful school experiences for children. Additionally, this literature review provided a rationale for the study that is proposed based on the current body of literature and the holes that have been identified within the literature. This study is intended to analyze both parents’ and teachers’ perceptions of parental involvement as it exist in a specific middle school setting. Chapter 3 will outline the methodology that will be used to conduct this case study.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overview

In this research, I will be conducting a quantitative study that will analyze perceptions of both teachers and parents in regard to parental involvement at the middle school level. This study will be a case study of one school and will investigate the variance in perceptions of middle school parents and teachers in regard to parental involvement. This information will not be able to be generalized to all middle schools but will provide evidence of these perceptions based on the demographics of the sampling school.

The purpose of this study will be to examine the perceptions of teachers' and parents' toward parental involvement in a suburban Junior High School located in the Midwest United States. Such perceptions will be compiled by means of questionnaires based on Epstein's Framework of Six Dimensions of Parental Involvement. These dimensions are: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein, 1995).

Reliability

Epstein and Salinas (1993) reported the reliability in terms of internal consistency through the use of Cronbach's alpha, due to numerous Likert-type items. The survey instrument included scales for teachers' and parents' attitudes, practices and barriers with regard to parental involvement. The reliabilities ranged from $a=.44$ to $a=.91$ on the
teacher and parent scales, which indicates their value for research.

Methodology

This study will address the perceptions of teachers and parents with regard to six dimensions of parental involvement using a quantitative research. According to de Carvalho (2001), the majority of current parental involvement models are built on results from quantitative studies focusing on academically successful students with involved parents. However, Lareau (2000) reported that quantitative approaches to research on parental involvement have left gaps in the literature, with little understanding of the needs of under-represented groups. She suggested the need for further studies conducted from a qualitative approach. Although this study is quantitative in nature, the population, suburban middle school children, is under-represented in the current research.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) set for three important attributes of quantitative research that can provide guidance for this study. First, quantitative research is effective at “capturing the individual's point of view” (p.10). The words of individual participants provide great meaning and can prove convincing to a reader (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In addition, quantitative researchers' value rich description of the natural setting where a study takes place (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Finally in quantitative studies, the close relationship between the research and what is being studied is stressed. In an essay regarding her research methodology, Lareau (2000), stated her belief that quantitative research “adds to our knowledge in a critical way” (p.229).

The general purpose of multiple regressions (the term was first used by Pearson, 1908) is to learn more about the relationship between several independent or predictor variables and a dependent or criterion variable. In the social and natural sciences,
multiple regression procedures are very widely used in research. In general, multiple regressions allows the researcher to ask, and hopefully answer, the general question "what is the best predictor of...". For example, educational researchers might want to learn what are the best predictors of success in high school. Psychologists may want to determine which personality variable best predicts social adjustment. Sociologists may want to find out which of the multiple social indicators best predict whether or not a new immigrant group will adapt and be absorbed into society.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher will be using the following independent variables for parents: (a) grade of students, (b) ethnicity, (c) Socioeconomic status, and (d) number of children in school, and for teachers: (a) years of experience, (b) discipline, (c) grade taught in school, and (d) gender. These independent variables will be used to evaluate how they respond to involvement activities that happen at school. The dependent variables will be involvement activities that align with Dr. Joyce Epstein’s six dimensions of parental involvement which are: (a) parenting, (b) communication, (c) volunteering, (d) learning at home, (e) decision making, and (f) collaborating with community. It is anticipated that the data collected will provide understanding of how these demographic factors influence perceptions of parental involvement at the school where this research is taking place. Through regression analysis it is expected that variables that are significant will be identified during this study.

Descriptive or Survey research attempts to answer questions about the current status of a subject or topic of study. Usually, this type of research involves study preferences, attitudes, practices, concerns or interests of some group of people (Gay & Airasian, 1999). According to Fong (1992), two critical issues in descriptive design, both
necessary for validity are the ability to generalize from a sample (which must be large) and the reliability and validity of observations (measurements). Given these characteristics of quantitative research, a quantitative approach will be implemented in order to gather useful data for this study.

The study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What is the degree of parental involvement as perceived by teachers?
2. What is the degree of parental involvement as perceived by parents?
3. Is there a relationship between the demographic characteristics of parents and the perceptions of parental involvement?
4. Is there a relationship between the demographic characteristics of the teachers and their perceptions of parental involvement?
5. How do the perceptions of teachers differ from those of the parent on Epstein’s six dimensions of parental involvement?

Methods and Procedures

While investigating research questions 1 & 2, the researcher will use descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations to analyze the responses from both parents and teachers. Histograms will also be constructed to illustrate the distributional characteristics for each of Epstein's six dimensions for both teacher and parents.

Research questions numbers 3 & 4 will require that the researcher perform a multiple regression analysis of both parent and teacher demographics in relation to the six dimensions of parental involvement to determine if there is any statistical significance. In addition, a critical effect size will be used to determine the practical significance of the
results of each test. Cohen (1988) suggested that effects of .10 or less are considered small, effects between .11 to .30 medium, and effects .31 to .5 or greater are considered large.

The fifth and final research question will be comparing the perceptions of teachers and parents. The analysis of this question will require the researcher to use six independent sample t-tests. Statistical significance will be set at the 95% confidence level (p<.05).

**Setting, Subjects, Sampling, and Access**

This study will take place in a suburban Junior High School located in the Midwest of the United States. My study will evaluate survey responses from 36 full-time teachers as well as 701 parents of 7th and 8th grade students ranging in age from 12-14 years old.

This setting is being selected because it will give insight to a specific population that has been underdeveloped in the current literature. This study, although not able to be generalized in its findings, will provide valuable understanding for the school in which the research is being done. Additionally, schools with similar demographic make-ups will be able to utilize this research as a foundation for ongoing studies to better understand the perceptions of both teachers and parents in regarding to parental involvement.

The researcher has been given access to the participants in this study through the permission of the school’s superintendent. The participants will be able to voluntarily participate in this study and their identities will remain anonymous. The researcher will use anonymous surveys to keep the identity of the participants protected. The researcher will also make sure that participants are made aware of their rights through informed
consent procedures outlined in Appendix A. As surveys are completed, both teachers and parents will put their completed surveys in a box located in the office of the superintendent. This will eliminate the researcher from knowing who participated in the study. Once all surveys are completed the researcher will enter non-identified data into spreadsheet sheets to begin the analysis of responses.

The researcher will specifically look at how parental involvement is perceived at their developmental stage. Since the researcher is principal of the school selected to be the setting for this case study, the researcher will employ both a convenience and criterion approach to sampling. The specific criteria for selecting participants will be based on their current status with the school (e.g. parent participants will have to have at least one student that is currently (2008-09) attending the identified Junior High School). Additionally, teachers who will be surveyed are those that have Full-Time equivalent (FTE) status teaching in the same building. The anticipated sample size of the school will be N 36 teachers and N 701 parents if all potential respondents agree to complete the survey.

When gathering information from the teaching staff, the researcher will explain the protocol for the study and distribute the surveys following a staff meeting. During this time the research assistant will explain the nature of the study and provide teachers with informed consent forms prior to them taking the survey. Teachers will be instructed to drop their anonymous surveys in an envelope to the office of the school's superintendent.

As for the protocol for the parent surveys, the researcher will be mailing home to all 701 parents a survey tool along with a letter of informed consent. Parents will be
instructed to review the letter of consent and if they desire to participate in this research to send their anonymous survey responses to the office of the superintendent. All surveys will remain locked in the office of the superintendent until the deadline for response has passed and the researcher is ready to begin analysis.

Data Analysis

The researcher will be using a survey tool created by Sheldon, S.B. & Epstein, J.L. (2007) called the Parent and Student Surveys on Family and Community Involvement in the Elementary and Middle Schools. This evaluation tool has been purchased and permission to use it has been granted by the authors for the purpose of this study. This tool will ask both parents and teachers to rate their perceptions of current parental involvement activities. Teacher and Parents will rate their perceptions of involvement by providing a numerical rating 1-5 as to their agreement or disagreement with the involvement indicators that are provided.

Data Collection Methods and Procedures

The goal of this study is to examine and compare the perceptions’ of parents and teachers with regards to Epstein's six dimensions of parental involvement. This study will also examine the relationship between parent and teacher demographic characteristics and perceptions with regard to Epstein's six dimensions of parental involvement. Through multiple regressions analysis, the researcher is looking to see if there is any significance in the demographic characteristics of Parents or Teachers in regard to the different dimensions of parental involvement. Finally, based on parents' and teachers' perceptions, this study will attempt to identify congruences between parents and
teachers in their perceptions of involvement.

Therefore, the dependent variable of interest in this study will be the parental and teacher involvement perceptions. The independent variables for parents include: grade level of students, ethnicity, SES, number of children in school; and for the teachers: years of experience, discipline, grade level, and gender.

All data will be scored and analyzed using statistical analysis program MINITAB. Each participant's response for each item will be recorded numerically such that a response of strongly disagree will receive a value of one, disagree will receive a value of two, slightly agree receive a value of three, agree receive a value of four and strongly agree a value of five. Therefore higher ratings will indicate a stronger agreement.

Parents' and Teachers' scores for the six dimensions will be computed by taking the average of all of the items mapping to the given dimension. Each dimension will be measured by five items totaling 30 items on the questionnaire. A map of the items and their corresponding dimensions is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Parental Involvement Questionnaire Item Mapping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>1, 4, 7, 9 &amp; 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>2, 8, 14, 20 &amp; 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>3, 6, 10, 15 &amp; 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning at Home</td>
<td>11, 16, 19, 22 &amp; 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>12, 17, 23, 27 &amp; 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with the Community</td>
<td>5, 13, 28, 24 &amp; 26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question #1: What is the degree of parental involvement as perceived by teachers?
Delimitations and Limitations

As mentioned earlier in chapter one, there are limitations to this study. The following are a few key areas the researcher has considered when conducting this study.

Delimitations

It is important to understand the delimitations that are inherent in this research study. First, the surveys submitted in this research are limited to one Middle School located in a suburban school located in a Mid-West state. The school consists of 715 7th and 8th grade students. The responses from parents and teachers in this school may not be generalized to parents and teachers outside of this school setting. In addition, the surveys submitted in this research study will be submitted anonymously and those individuals new to the school may not have a good understanding of parental involvement within their new school.

Limitations

As with any study, it is also important to outline its limitations. The submission of the surveys will be subjective to the respondent. It is also critical to consider that the conclusions that are made are often the result of the mental models that have been shaped throughout an experience. The individuals who choose to participate in the survey are likely to be those who feel that they have a “voice” or are already connected to the school.

The persons who are submitting surveys are expected to be honest with their responses, however, the instrument that is used will only get their initial responses to the
questions that are posed to them. A deeper understanding of their responses may require additional research in a more qualitative form such as in-depth interviewing.

In this study, the researcher will be taking a Case Study approach to research and investigating middle school teacher and parent perceptions of parental involvement. This study will not be able to be generalized to schools other than the institution for which the researcher will be gathering and interpreting data. However, schools that have similar demographics could review these findings and use them as a base of knowledge when working on understanding the dynamics of teacher and parent perceptions in regard to parental involvement within middle schools.

Summary

Chapter III is intended to review the purpose of this study and the research questions posed by the researcher. Seven hundred and fifteen parents and thirty teachers will be surveyed to obtain data on their perceptions of parental involvement. The survey instrument that will be used was created by Sheldon, S.B. & Epstein, J.L. (2007). It is the Parent and Student Surveys on Family and Community Involvement in the Elementary and Middle Schools. This survey will allow the researcher to collect data and analyze the perception of parents and teachers as well as evaluating how demographic characteristics may influence those perceptions. Chapter IV will provide a presentation of the data and an analysis of the findings. Chapter V will provide the summary, findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further study.
CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Findings

The goal of this study was to examine and compare congruences and incongruences of parents and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement activities. Based on Joyce Epstein's six dimensions of parental involvement, teachers and parents rated each dimension based on their current perceptions of what is happening at the school in which this research is taking place. This study also looked at key demographic indicators of both parents and teachers to evaluate whether there was any significance in their perceptions.

This chapter presents the data analysis finding which addresses the following questions:

- What is the degree of parental involvement as perceived by teachers?
- What is the degree of parental involvement as perceived by parents?
- Is there a relationship between the demographic characteristics of the parents and their perceptions of parental involvement?
- Is there a relationship between the demographic characteristics of the teachers and their perceptions of parental involvement?
- How do the perceptions of teachers differ from those of the parents on Epstein's six dimensions of parental involvement?

The dependent variable of interest in this study will be the parental and teacher
involvement perceptions. The independent variables for parents include: grade level of students, ethnicity, SES, number of children in school; and for the teachers: years of experience, discipline, grade level, and gender. The remainder of this chapter will discuss the data preparation and analysis techniques, the data analysis results for each question, and will conclude with a summary.

Distribution of Data

Distribution of data in any research study is very important. For this study I sent out 701 parent surveys as well as 36 teacher surveys containing 30 indicators of parental involvement. Of the teacher surveys, I had 100% of the teachers participate in this study; for the parental distribution I had 344 responses to my survey. This indicates that 49% of the parents in the school responded to the survey on parental involvement. In working to evaluate the validity of these responses, I used a chi-square goodness of fit test that was developed by Snedecor and Cochran (1989) to test if the sample data came from a population with a similar demographic population of that found at the research site.

The grade level demographics of the school indicate that there are 355 7th grade students and 346 8th grade students. The following table shows the goodness of fit calculation showing the data received versus the expected responses:

Table 2: Goodness of Fit Calculation for Grade Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Historical Counts</th>
<th>Test Proportion</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>Contribution to Chi-Sq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>0.506419</td>
<td>163.573</td>
<td>1.6496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>0.493581</td>
<td>159.427</td>
<td>1.69251</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=323  DF=1  Chi-Sq=3.34211  P-Value=0.068

The p value of .068 is > than .05 shows that the difference in the responses based
on grade is not statistically significant. Therefore, the responses to this study based on grade level are similar to the demographics of the school as a whole.

The other category on which I was able to calculate the goodness of fit test was the ethnicity demographics of my responses compared to that of the school. The population and ethnic demographics of the school consist of the following: Asian (12), Black (17), White (641), Hispanic (23), Indian (8), and Pacific Islander (1). I was able to calculate the response rates according to ethnicity. Due to the large majority of the population being white, the categories for this test were divided into white and non-white. The following table shows the goodness of fit calculation showing the data received versus the expected responses:

Table 3: Goodness of Fit Calculation for Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Historical Counts</th>
<th>Test Proportion</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>Contribution to Chi-Sq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0.085714</td>
<td>28.114</td>
<td>0.0004646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>0.914286</td>
<td>299.886</td>
<td>0.0000436</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=328  DF=1  Chi-Sq=0.0005081  P-Value=0.982

The p value of .982 is > .05 which indicates that the responses based on ethnicity is not statistically significant. Therefore, the responses to this study based on ethnicity are similar to the demographics of the population as a whole. The expected responses in this category are almost identical to the actual response figures.

The other demographic factors that were evaluated were number of children in school and household income. Unfortunately, because of the lack of responses to these questions I was unable to calculate a goodness of fit for these demographics. It was anticipated that the sample size regarding the distribution of responses based on grade level and ethnicity were similar to those of the school population. Statistically, the
sampling of parents and teachers that participated in this study is a good representation of the demographics found in the school.

Data Preparation and Analysis

All data was scored and analyzed using MINITAB statistical analysis software. Each participant's response for each item was recorded numerically such that a response of strongly disagree received a value of one, disagree received a value of two, slightly agree received a value of three, agree received a value of four and strongly agree a value of five. Therefore higher ratings indicate a stronger agreement.

Parents' and Teachers' scores for the six dimensions were computed by taking the average of all of the items mapping to the given dimension. Each dimension will be measured by five items totaling 30 items on the involvement survey. A map of the items and their corresponding dimension is provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Parental Involvement Questionnaire Item Mapping

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Items</th>
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<td>11, 16, 19, 22 &amp; 28</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with the Community</td>
<td>5, 13, 18, 24 &amp; 26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question One

The first research question examined the teachers' perceptions regarding Epstein's six dimensions of parental involvement. Teachers were asked to rate their current perceptions of parental involvement activities that were taking place at the research site. Table two provides descriptive statistics for the teachers by dimension.
Table 5: Descriptive Statistics—Teacher Perceptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.9611</td>
<td>.5447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.3029</td>
<td>.4611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.688</td>
<td>.659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning at Home</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.7056</td>
<td>.5845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.6778</td>
<td>.4764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.9429</td>
<td>.4767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with the Community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of Table 5 indicate that teachers provided the highest rating (strongest level of agreement) for communication (4.30), followed by Parenting (3.96), Collaborating with the Community (3.94), Learning at Home (3.70), Volunteering (3.69), and finally Decision Making (3.68). All teacher scores were on the higher end with them at least slightly agreeing with each dimension. The average standard deviation of all ratings for the teachers was .5337.

The distribution of scores for the teacher sample scores in the dimension of parenting ranged from 2.2-4.8 with a mean score of 3.9611 and a standard deviation of .5447. Figure 1 indicates that 67% of teachers rated this dimension within the range of 4.0-4.8 (agree rating), 27% of the teachers rated the dimension of parenting between 3.0-4.0 (slightly agree rating), and 6% of the teacher respondents rated this dimension as a 2.2-3.0 (between disagree and slightly agree rating). Overall, 94% of the teacher ratings for parenting practices were rated at slightly agreeing or higher in this dimension.
Figure 1: Parenting Dimension—Teacher Distribution

Figure 2: Communication Dimension—Teacher Distribution
The distribution of scores in the communication dimension ranged from 3.0-4.8 with a mean score of 4.3029 and a standard deviation of .4661. Figure 2 indicates that 83% of the teachers rated communication within the range of 4.0 and 4.8 (agree rating), and the remaining 17% of the teachers rated communication between 3.0 and 3.9 (slightly agree rating). All teachers rated communication activities in a least the slightly agreeing category.

![Histogram of Volunteering - Teachers](image)

Figure 3: Volunteering Dimension—Teacher Distribution

The distribution of scores in the volunteering dimension ranged from 2.2-4.8 with a mean score of 3.688 and a standard deviation of .659. In this dimension 41% of the teachers responded with scores between 4.0-4.8 (agree rating), 47% of the teachers rated this dimension between 3.0-4.0 (slightly agree rating), and 12% of the teacher respondents identified volunteering a score of 2.2-3.0 (between slightly disagree and slightly agree rating). Although most teachers reported that they agreed with volunteering activities at the school, none of the teachers showed full agreement regarding the use of volunteers.
Figure 4: Learning at Home Dimension—Teacher Distribution

The distribution of teacher scores in the dimension of learning at home ranged from 2.4 to 4.8 with a mean score of 3.7056 and a standard deviation of .5845. The largest distribution of responses, 47%, came between 3.2 and 4.0 which is a slightly agree rating. The next largest response rating was found between 4.0 and 4.8 (agree rating) and constituted 39% of the responses. The last 14% of the ratings fell in the (disagree to slightly disagree rating) as identified with score of 2.2-2.5. It is important to note that 5 teachers rated the dimension of learning at home as slightly disagree rating or disagree.

The results in Figure 5 indicate that scores for the dimension of Decision Making ranged from 2.6 to 4.8 with a mean score of 3.6778 and a standard deviation of .4764. The highest percentage of teachers (56%) rated this dimension between 3.0 and 4.0 (slightly agree rating). This was followed by 39% of the responses between 4.0 and 4.8 (agree rating). The lowest percentage of responses (5%) were found between 2.6 and 3.0 which is found within the disagree rating. Again, nobody was in total agreement with this dimension.
The distribution of teacher's scores in the dimension of collaborating with the community ranged from 2.6 to 4.6 with a mean score of 3.9429 and a standard deviation of .4767. The largest distribution of responses, 60%, came between 4.0 and 4.6 which is an agree rating. The next largest response rating was found between 3.2 and 4.0 (slightly agree rating) and constituted 37% of the responses. The last 3% of the ratings fell in the
disagree to slightly disagree rating as identified with score of 2.6.

In evaluating the overall distribution of scores for teachers, 54.8% rated all dimensions with an agree rating. The second largest percentage of teacher ratings came in the slightly agree rating with 38.5% of the respondents rating all categories between 3.0-4.0. The lowest average percentage of teacher responses came within the disagree rating with 6.7% rating between a 2.2-3.0. It is also interesting to note an average standard deviation of .5337 which was much tighter than that of the parents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PARENTING</td>
<td>6% (2.2-3.0)</td>
<td>27% (3.0-4.0)</td>
<td>67% (4.0-4.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNICATION</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17% (3.0-3.9)</td>
<td>83% (4.0-4.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOLUNTEERING</td>
<td>12% (2.2-3.0)</td>
<td>47% (3.0-4.0)</td>
<td>41% (4.0-4.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEARNING AT HOME</td>
<td>14% (2.2-2.5)</td>
<td>47% (3.2-4.0)</td>
<td>39% (4.0-4.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECISION MAKING</td>
<td>5% (2.6-3.0)</td>
<td>56% (3.0-4.0)</td>
<td>39% (4.0-4.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY</td>
<td>3% (2.6)</td>
<td>37% (3.2-4.0)</td>
<td>60% (4.0-4.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Distribution of Teacher Responses

Research Question Two

The second research question examined the parents’ perceptions regarding Epstein's six dimensions of parental involvement. Parents were asked to rate their current
perceptions of parental involvement activities that were taking place at the research site.

Table three provides descriptive statistics for the teachers by dimension.

The results in Table 7 indicate that parents certainly had a wide range of responses in regards to all dimensions of parental involvement. Parents responded highest to Collaborating with the Community (3.97) followed by Communication (3.82), Decision Making (3.74), Parenting (3.70), Volunteering (3.53), and finally Learning at Home (3.36). Interestingly, the range in which the parents viewed each dimension spanned from 1 to 5. The average standard deviation for the parent rates in all categories was .7251.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics—Parent Perceptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td>5.0000</td>
<td>3.7019</td>
<td>.7101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>1.4000</td>
<td>5.0000</td>
<td>3.8185</td>
<td>.7660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>1.2000</td>
<td>5.0000</td>
<td>3.5283</td>
<td>.7593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning at Home</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>1.4000</td>
<td>5.0000</td>
<td>3.3563</td>
<td>.8187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>1.2000</td>
<td>5.0000</td>
<td>3.7447</td>
<td>.6624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with the Community</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>1.2000</td>
<td>5.0000</td>
<td>3.9686</td>
<td>.6339</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7 shows that the ranges of scores in the dimension of parenting range from 1.0 to 5.0 with a mean score of 3.7019 and a standard deviation of .7101. The largest distribution of parents, 47%, rated the parenting dimension between 4.0-5.0 (agree to strongly agree rating), followed by 41% rating it between 3.0-4.0 (slightly agree rating), and finally 12% rating this in the range between 1.0-3.0 (strongly disagree to disagree rating).
Figure 7: Parenting Dimension—Parent Distribution

Figure 8: Communication Dimension—Parent Distribution

Figure 8 shows a range of 1.4 to 5.0 with a mean score of 3.8185 and a standard deviation of .7660. For the communication dimension, 50% of the parent respondents rate this between 4.0-5.0 (agree to strongly agree rating), followed by 39% in the range of 3.0-4.0 (slightly agree rating), with the lowest rating 11% being distributed within the (strongly disagree to disagree rating).
Figure 9 shows scores that range from a 1.20 to 5.00 with a mean score of 3.53 and a standard deviation of .7593. Although the mean of this score would indicate an overall a positive rating, the scores are distributed over a wide range. Within this dimension, 49% of the parents responded within the 3.0-4.0 range which indicates a slightly agree rating. The second largest distribution was 33% found in the 4.0-5.0 range, with explained as an agree to strongly agree rating, and 18% of the respondents identified this as a 1.2-3.0 strongly disagree to disagree rating.
The parents' distribution for learning at home dimension is presented in Figure 10. The histograms indicate a range of 1.40 to 5.00 with a fairly normal distribution. The mean score for learning at home was a 3.7447 with a standard deviation of .8187. Within this dimension 44% of the responses were found between a 3.0-4.0 (slightly agree rating). Followed by 29% within the range of 1.4-3.0 (strongly disagree to disagree rating), with the lowest response of 27% being found with the range of 4.0-5.0 (agree to strongly agree rating).

![Histogram of Decision Making - Parents](image)

**Figure 11: Decision Making Dimension—Parent Distribution**

Figure 11 provides the distributional characteristics for parents' decision making dimension ratings. The results of Figure 11 show a range of 1.20 to 5.00 with a mean score of 3.74 and a standard deviation of .6634. Within this dimension 43% of the parents rated this between a 4.0-5.0 (agree to strongly agree rating). Ratings between 3.0-4.0 (slightly agree rating) represented 46% of the responses and 11% of the parents' scores of 1.2-3.0 (strongly disagree to disagree rating).

The histogram in Figure 12 shows parental responses to indicators of collaborating with the community. The scores in this dimension ranged from 1.20 to 5.00.
with a mean score of 3.97 and a standard deviation of .6339. This was the highest rated
dimension within the parental distribution. In collaborating with the community, 57% of
the parents provided ratings between 4.0-5.0 (agree to strongly agree rating).
Additionally, 38% of the parents gave ratings of 3.0-4.0 (slightly agree rating). The
remaining 5% of responses were found within the range of 1.2-3.0 (strongly disagree to
disagree rating).

![Histogram of Collaborating w/ the Community - Parents](image)

**Figure 12: Collaborating with the Community—Parent Distribution**

In evaluating the overall distribution of scores for parents, 42.83% rated all
dimensions with an agree rating of 4.0-5.0. Interestingly, 42.83% of parents also rated
each dimension with a slightly agree rating between a 3.0-4.0. The lowest average
percentage of parent responses came within the disagree rating with 14.34% rating
between a 1.2-3.0. It is also important to note that an average standard deviation of .7251
was much larger than that of the teachers. As you can see in the above graph the
distribution of scores were much more evenly distributed, indicating that parents had
more of a range in their perceptions of involvement.
Table 8: Distribution of Parent Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PARENTING</strong></td>
<td>12% (1.0-3.0)</td>
<td>41% (3.0-4.0)</td>
<td>47% (4.0-4.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMMUNICATION</strong></td>
<td>11% (1.4-3.0)</td>
<td>39% (3.0-4.0)</td>
<td>50% (4.0-5.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VOLUNTEERING</strong></td>
<td>18% (1.2-3.0)</td>
<td>49% (3.0-4.0)</td>
<td>33% (4.0-5.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEARNING AT HOME</strong></td>
<td>29% (1.4-3.0)</td>
<td>44% (3.0-4.0)</td>
<td>27% (4.0-5.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DECISION MAKING</strong></td>
<td>11% (1.2-3.0)</td>
<td>46% (3.0-4.0)</td>
<td>43% (4.0-5.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY</strong></td>
<td>5% (1.2-3.0)</td>
<td>38% (3.0-4.0)</td>
<td>57% (4.0-5.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage Average</strong></td>
<td>14.34%</td>
<td>42.83%</td>
<td>42.83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question Three

The third research question was intended to evaluate the relationship between the demographic characteristics of parents and their perceptions of parental involvement. The demographic characteristics that were evaluated were: (a) Grade of student, (b) Number of Children in School, (c) Ethnicity of Child, (d) Household income. To answer this research question, a multiple regression analysis of parent responses was analyzed in relation to how they rated the six dimensions of parental involvement to determine if there is any statistical significance. In addition, a critical effect size will be used to determine the practical significance of the results of each test. Cohen (1988) suggested...
that for social sciences effects of .10 or less are considered small, effects between .11 to .30 medium, and effects .31 to .5 or greater are considered large. This effect size is be outlined in the following tables and described through $f^2$ values. Histograms are provided for those dimensions that showed a statistical significance with a p value of < .05. The histograms were also provided to show the distribution of responses as well as explain the practical significance, if any is found.

Table 9: Significant Perceptions from Parents Regarding the Dimension of Parenting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parenting</th>
<th>$f^2$</th>
<th>Pooled St. Dev.</th>
<th>$f$</th>
<th>p value</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade of Student</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.7066</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.0329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.7064</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.772</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.7123</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.740</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children in School</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.7116</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 shows that in regards to the dimension of parenting, the only demographic that showed any statistical significance was the grade level of the student. Although the p value in this category showed that there was significance in the rating based on grade level, the practical significance found in the $f^2$ score showed that there was no practical significance in this demographic. Figure 13 shows the detail of the analysis of grade level in relation to the dimension of parenting.

The data found in Figure 13 shows that although 7th grade parents tended to rate the parenting dimension higher than 8th grade parents, there was no practical significance to the distribution of scores. It should also be noted that four respondents identified that they had both a 7th and 8th grade students and therefore, they were evaluated as grade 7.5.

74
The number of responses that held this demographic was determined insignificant based on the number of respondents (4).

Figure 13: Histogram of Parenting Based on Demographic of Grade Level

Based on Table 10 there were no significant relationships between parental responses to the communication dimension and demographic characteristics. Grade of student dimension was again the lowest p values, but the p value was >.05 and therefore shows there is no significant relationship in regards to parental responses.
Table 10: Significant Perceptions from Parents Regarding the Dimension of Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>$f^2$</th>
<th>Pooled St. Dev.</th>
<th>$f$</th>
<th>$p$ value</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade of Student</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.7699</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.7664</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>.370</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.7762</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.646</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children in school</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.7720</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.684</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Significant Perceptions from Parents Regarding the Dimension of Volunteering

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteering</th>
<th>$f^2$</th>
<th>Pooled St. Dev.</th>
<th>$f$</th>
<th>$p$ value</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade of Student</td>
<td>.0376</td>
<td>.7438</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.0362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.7448</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.606</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.7431</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.853</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children in school</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.7508</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>.334</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 shows that in regards to the dimension of volunteering, the only demographic that showed any statistical significance was the grade level of the student. Although the $p$ value in this category showed that there was significance in the rating based on grade level, the practical significance found in the $f^2$ score showed that there was no practical significance in this demographic. Figure 14 shows the detail of the analysis of grade level in relation to the dimension of volunteering.

The data found in Figure 14 shows that although $7^{th}$ grade parents tended to rate the parenting dimension slightly higher than $8^{th}$ grade parents there was no practical
significance to the distribution of scores.

Figure 14: Histogram of Volunteering Based on Demographic of Grade Level

Table 12: Significant Perceptions from Parents Regarding the Dimension of Learning at Home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning at Home</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>Pooled St. Dev.</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>p value</th>
<th>R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade of Student</td>
<td>3.765 * 10⁻⁴</td>
<td>.8238</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.0194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.8205</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.680</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.8231</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.868</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children in school</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.8277</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.998</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12 indicates that the only characteristic that showed any significance in the dimension of learning at home was the grade level of the student. Because the p value = .05 the $f^2$ value was calculated to determine if there was any practical significance to this demographic. As indicated in the $f^2$ value, the practical significance was almost non-existent.

![Histogram of Learning at Home](image)

**Figure 15: Histogram of Learning at Home Based on Demographic of Grade Level**

The data found in Figure 15 shows that although 7th grade parents tended to rate the learning at home dimension slightly higher than 8th grade parents, there was no practical significance to the distribution of scores.
Table 13: Significant Perceptions from Parents Regarding the Dimension of Decision Making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision Making</th>
<th>f²</th>
<th>Pooled St. Dev.</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>p value</th>
<th>R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade of Student</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.6682</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.6626</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.858</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.6754</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.923</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children in school</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.6729</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.882</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Significant Perceptions from Parents Regarding the Dimension of Collaborating with the Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaborating with the Community</th>
<th>f²</th>
<th>Pooled St. Dev.</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>p value</th>
<th>R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade of Student</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.6365</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>.090</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.6342</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.671</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.6375</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.405</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children in school</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.6390</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.688</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables 13 and 14 show there were no statistical differences in the relationship to how parents rated both dimensions of decision making and collaborating with the community based on the demographics of grade of student, ethnicity, SES, or number of children in school.

The results of the analysis for this research question show that there was no practical significance to the parental response ratings based on the demographics studies. However, in the areas of Parenting, Volunteering, and Learning at Home, 7th grade parents tended to rate these areas slightly higher than those of 8th grade parents.
Research Question Four

The fourth research question was intended to evaluate the relationship between the demographic characteristics of teachers and their perceptions of parental involvement. The demographic characteristics that were evaluated were: (a) Grade Level Taught, (b) Gender, (c) Discipline and (d) Years of Experience. To answer this research question, a multiple regression analysis of parent responses was analyzed in relation to how they rated the six dimensions of parental involvement to determine if there was any statistical significance. In addition, a critical effect size will be used to determine the practical significance of the results of each test. Cohen (1988) suggested that effects of .10 or less are considered small, effects between .11 to .30 medium, and effects of .31 to .5 or greater are considered large. This effect size is outlined in the following tables and described through $f^2$ values. Histograms are provided for those dimensions that showed a statistical significance with a $p$ value of $< .05$ in relations to any of the demographic factors. These histograms were also provided to show the distribution of responses as well as explain if any practical significance was found.

Table 15 indicates that there is a significant difference in the distribution of teacher ratings in the area of parenting based on their years of experience. The $p$ value of .028 shows that there is significance and the $f^2$ value indicates that there is a large effect.

In Figure 16 you can see that there is a significant difference in the rating of parenting based on teacher responses according to their years of experience. Teachers with 1-5 years and 15-20 years of experience rated this dimension much higher with mean scores of 4.28 and 4.31 respectively while teachers with 5-10 years and 25+ years rated this dimension lower with mean scores of 3.70 and 3.67. Teachers with 10-15 years
of experience rated this dimension between the 5-10 and 25+ groups with a mean score of 3.9.

Table 15: Significant Perceptions from Teachers Regarding the Dimension of Parenting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parenting</th>
<th>f²</th>
<th>Pooled St. Dev.</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>p value</th>
<th>R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years of Experience</td>
<td>.406</td>
<td>.4881</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.2889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.5842</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.872</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.5599</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.940</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.5324</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in Table 16, gender did show significance in perceptions of communication. Although the p value shows that there is significance in this finding, the f² value indicates that there is no practical significance in terms of gender.

Table 16: Significant Perceptions from Teachers Regarding the Dimension of Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>f²</th>
<th>Pooled St. Dev.</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>p value</th>
<th>R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years of Experience</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.4422</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.4633</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>.385</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.4486</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>.156</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.173</td>
<td>.4321</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.1477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 16: Histogram of Parenting Based on Demographic of Years of Experience

Figure 17 shows that female teachers tend to rate the dimension of communication higher than that of males. The mean score for females is 4.46 and for males is 4.11. Again although this difference is significant, the practical significance of this difference is statistically insignificant.
Figure 17: Histogram of Communication Based on Demographic of Gender

Table 17: Significant Perceptions from Teachers Regarding the Dimension of Volunteering

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteering</th>
<th>Pooled St. Dev.</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>p value</th>
<th>R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years of Experience</td>
<td>.5366</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.4176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.6520</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>.376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.6784</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.6541</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>.229</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17 shows that the most statistically significant difference in response ratings regarding volunteering are found in years of experience. This is indicated in an $f^2$ value of .717 which identifies this as a large effect on responses and practically significant.
Statistically, the largest effect found in all dimensions of parental involvement was observed in the difference of how teachers perceive volunteering. The histogram in Figure 18 shows that teachers with 1-5 years of experience as well as those with 15-25 years of experience rate this dimension much higher than those with 5-10 years, 10-15 years, and 25+ years of experience. The mean score for 1-5 years and 15-25 years of experience are 4.14 and 4.27 respectively, while 5-10 years of experience have a mean rating of 3.53, 10-15 years of experience a mean of 3.50, and finally 25+ with a mean rating of 3.24.

![Histogram of Volunteering](image)

*Figure 18: Histogram of Communication Based on Demographic of Volunteering*
Table 18 shows that there is a statistically significant difference in response ratings for teachers based on their years of experience. The p value of .019 shows statistical significance while the $f^2$ value indicates that there is a practical significance found within this dimension.
The figure above outlines the difference in perceptions of volunteering based on the dimension of volunteering. The significant finding was again found in years of experience. Teachers with 1-5 years of experience, 10-15 years of experience, and 15-25 years of experience all rate this dimension higher than their peers with 5-10 years of experience as well as 25+ years of experience. The difference in the perceptions of teachers with 15-25 years and those with 25+ years show the largest difference in perceptions of volunteering with mean scores of 4.11 and 3.34 respectively.

Table 19: Significant Perceptions from Teachers Regarding the Dimension of Decision Making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision Making</th>
<th>$f^2$</th>
<th>Pooled St. Dev.</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p value</th>
<th>R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years of Experience</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.4530</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>.131</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.4721</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>.322</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.4901</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.970</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
<td>.474</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>.253</td>
<td>No Significance in P value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the findings outlined in Table 19, there is no statistically significant difference in the perception of decision making based on the demographic characteristics of teachers.

Years of experience is again identified as a significant factor in perceptions of parental involvement in the dimension of collaborating with the community as shown in Table 20. The practical significance of this finding is explained as a large effect based on the $f^2$ value of .477.
Table 20: Significant Perceptions from Teachers Regarding the Dimension of Collaborating with the Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaborating with the Community</th>
<th>(f^2)</th>
<th>Pooled St. Dev.</th>
<th>(F)</th>
<th>(p) value</th>
<th>(R^2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years of Experience</td>
<td>.477</td>
<td>.4175</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.3231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>No Significance in (p) value</td>
<td>.5072</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.820</td>
<td>No Significance in (p) value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td>No Significance in (p) value</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.916</td>
<td>No Significance in (p) value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>No Significance in (p) value</td>
<td>.4838</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.937</td>
<td>No Significance in (p) value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 20: Histogram of Communication Based on Demographic of Collaborating with the Community

Years of experience statistically shows that it has a significant impact on the perceptions of parental involvement in the dimension of collaborating with the
community. As you can see on the histogram in Figure 20, the mean scores tend to go
down with years of experience. Teachers with 1-5 years of experience show a mean
score of 4.28, while teachers with 25 + years of experience have a mean score of 3.58.
Based on the analysis of research question number 4, years of experience was identified
as the key demographic indicator for perceptions of parental involvement.

**Research Question Five**

The fifth and final research question of this study was to compare the parents' and
teachers' perceptions for the six dimensions of parental involvement to determine if
congruences and incongruences did exist. This research question is addressed through the
use of six independent sample t-tests. Statistical significance was set at 95% confidence
level (p<.05). To understand the overall rating, both parents and teachers responses,
Table 21 shows the descriptive statistics from both groups in relation to the six
dimensions of parental involvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of Parental Involvement</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>Parents &amp; Teachers</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>3.7287</td>
<td>.6986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Parents &amp; Teachers</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>3.8643</td>
<td>.7555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>Parents &amp; Teachers</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>3.5457</td>
<td>.7498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning at Home</td>
<td>Parents &amp; Teachers</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>3.3914</td>
<td>.8045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>Parents &amp; Teachers</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>3.7377</td>
<td>.6452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with the Community</td>
<td>Parents &amp; Teachers</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>3.9658</td>
<td>.6182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To determine whether or not the differences between teachers and parents were
statistically significant, independent sample t-tests were conducted. The results of these
tests are outlined in Table 22. As indicated in the following table, the categories of
parenting $t = -2.61$, communication $t = -5.47$, and learning at home $t = -3.25$ are the dimensions that show the most significant differences between the two groups.

Additionally, an effect score as outlined in Cohen's $d$ shows the effect for each of these categories. Cohen (1988) outlines effect size of 0.2 to 0.3 to be small, 0.3 to 0.8 medium and an effect of 0.8 to 1.0 to be a “large” effect. It is also noted that the $d$ might be larger than one. The effect size of communication is identified as the largest, with learning at home and parenting following.

**Table 22: Independent Sample T-Test Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Cohen's $d$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>-2.61</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>-.259188</td>
<td>.746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>-5.47</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-.484350</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>-1.31</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>.196</td>
<td>-.159920</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning at Home</td>
<td>-3.25</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>-.349209</td>
<td>.910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>.450</td>
<td>.066882</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with the Community</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>.773</td>
<td>.025784</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of this research question show that the perception of involvement for teachers and parents is quite different. Teachers rated their perceptions of involvement as higher in all dimensions with the exception of decision making and collaborating with the community. Both parents and teachers rated their perceptions of involvement as slightly agreeing, on average, with that of all six dimensions of parental involvement.

Summary

The results of this study indicate that parents and teachers do have different perceptions of parental involvement based on the practices that are happening at the
research site. Parents and teachers were statistically different in their responses to the dimensions of Parenting, Communication, and Learning at Home. In each of these areas, teachers rated this dimension higher than that of the parents. This indicates that teachers may believe the ways in which they are involving parents in their children's learning are more significant than the perceptions of parents.

In terms of parental demographic characteristics (a) grade of student, (b) number of children in school, (c) ethnicity of child, or (d) household income, none of these showed any significant statistical significance in response ratings. The only factor that showed minimal effect in the parental distribution was that of grade level. Typically, 7th grade parents rated indicators of involvement higher than those of eighth grade parents. Although even this was practically insignificant according to the $f^2$ values shown.

Teachers on the other hand, did show some statistically significant differences in their responses according to the demographics studies: (a) grade level taught, (b) gender, (c) discipline, (d) years of experience. In the dimension of parenting, volunteering, and collaborating with the community, years of experience was statistically significant in response ratings. In the dimension of parenting and volunteering, teachers with 1-5 years of experience, as well as those with 15-20 years of experience rated this dimension much higher than those teachers with 5-10 and 25+ years of experience. In the dimension of collaborating with the community the more experience that teachers had, the lower they rated this dimension. And lastly, in the dimension of communication, female teachers were found to rate this dimension higher than their male counterparts.

This study shows that there are a variety of perceptions that are evident through the responses of teachers and parents. The analysis also indicated that the demographic
characteristic (years of experience) does have an impact on how teachers perceive parental involvement at the research site. All of these factors will be discussed further in Chapter V.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The approval and initiation of the NCLB policy of parental involvement in 2001, which derived from Public Law 107-110 ESEA, has forced educators to investigate closely the role that parents are playing in the education of their children. This study was intended to evaluate the current level of parental involvement at one junior high school and evaluate the perceptions of involvement from both parents and teachers in terms of how they view involvement at their school. The study utilized the six components of involvement that were created by Dr. Joyce Epstein. Those components consist of (a) Parenting, (b) Volunteering, (c) Communication, (d) Learning at Home, (e) Decision Making, and (f) Collaborating with the Community. Additionally, this study also investigated demographic characteristics of parents and teachers to see if within the research setting there was a significance found in how these factors shaped the perceptions of involvement.

Parental involvement or lack thereof, is one of the biggest challenges faced by educators today (Tonn & Wallheiser, 2005). The research that is available overwhelmingly tells us that it is not only the law that parental involvement is necessary, but it is critically important to the academic success of children. Parent or family support has been linked to positive outcomes for all children with or without disabilities (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002); Huges C., Hwang, B., Kim, J., Killian, D. J., Harmer, M.L., & Alcantra, P.R., 1997, James & Petree, 2003, Keith, T.Z.,
Keith, P. B., Quirk, K. J, Sperduto, J., Santillo, S., & Killings, S., 1998; Kohler, 1996; Sanders, Epstein, & Conners-Tadros, 1999; Shaver & Walls, 1998; Simon, 2001; Yap & Enoki, 1994). These outcomes include improved achievement test results, decreased risk of dropout, improved attendance, improved student behavior, higher grades, higher grade point averages, greater commitment to school work and improved attitude towards schools.

According to Epstein (1996) despite the calls for families to participate in partnerships supporting middle level children, family involvement decreases when children reach the middle level. This study was intended to evaluate middle level students in 7th and 8th grades. While much research has been done regarding early education, a more complete understanding of the nuances that shape involvement in specific settings at the middle level is needed. These studies will be valuable to school leaders as they work to develop appropriate and successful parent involvement programs.

Designing and implementing family, school, and community partnership programs to benefit middle level students is complicated. The context, or environment, in which family, school and community involvement programs are developed, must be taken into account. Factors that influence the middle-level family include: teacher and community partnerships, institutional settings, early adolescent development, expectations, attitudes, beliefs of the parents, teachers and community (Rutherford, Bilig, & Kettering, 1993). The researcher in this study worked to uncover meaning in one specific setting to better understand how specific factors influence perceptions of parental involvement.

The requirement of No Child Left Behind, state testing and curriculum, and expectations of the success of students cannot lie solely in the hands of educators.
According to Clark (1990) school age children spend 70% of their waking hours (including weekends and holidays) outside of school. Therefore, it is imperative that parents are involved and engaged in their children's education.

Dauber and Epstein (1993) found that:

"The strongest and most consistent predictors of parent involvement at school and at home are the specific programs and teacher practices that encourage and guide parent involvement. Regardless of parent education, family size, student ability, or school level (elementary or middle school), parents are more likely to become partners in their children's education if they perceive that the school have strong practices to involve parents in school."

A review of the literature shows that a number of studies have examined perceptions of teachers and parents on parental involvement. Some of the studies support the suggestion that there is a relationship or difference between parent perceptions (attitudes, practices, and barriers) and the level of parent involvement based on various factors (Grossman, Osterman, & Schemelkin, 1999; Novey, 2001). Varying attitudes and practices prevent parents from becoming and staying involved in the academic lives of their children (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Hoffman, 1997; Starling, 1991). Thus obtaining the perceptions and bridging the gap between the teachers and parents is the first step to increasing, enhancing, and maintaining parental involvement.

In order to examine the perceptions' of teachers and parents with regard to parental involvement, this study addressed five research questions:

- What is the degree of parental involvement as perceived by teachers?
- What is the degree of parental involvement as perceived by parents?
• Is there a relationship between the demographic characteristics of the teachers and their perceptions of parental involvement?

• Is there a relationship between the demographic characteristic of the parents and their perceptions of parental involvement?

• How do the perceptions of teachers differ from those of the parents on Epstein's six dimensions of parental involvement?

This study relied on numerical results; a quantitative research approach was used in its development. The collected data was analyzed and presented by means of descriptive statistics with a multiple regression analysis of demographic factors of influence. The study provided for the respondents' perceptions of current involvement activities. The study examined the perceptions of 36 teachers and 344 parents of junior high students at a research site located in the Midwest United States.

The survey tool used for this investigation contained 30 items pertaining to the six dimensions of parental involvement presented in Epstein's Framework, in addition to 4 demographic characteristic factors identified for each group. The surveys were presented to all parents who had children attending the school in which this research was being conducted. There was a 100% participation rate among the teachers and a 49% participation rate for the parents.

Chapter IV presented the results and analysis of the data collected in this study. The following section will present the conclusion and recommendations which were derived from this research study. The most relevant findings pertaining to the research questions are presented as part of the conclusions.
Conclusions

As a result of doing this study, it is evidenced that teachers' and parents' perceptions of involvement vary across the six dimensions of parental involvement. The most relevant findings are presented below in accordance with the order of the research questions that guided this study.

Research Question One

The first research question examined teachers' perceptions and attitudes regarding parental involvement activities. Overall, 54% of teachers rated that they agreed or strongly agreed with all activities that were found within the six dimensions of parental involvement. The dimensions of Parenting, Communication, and Collaborating with the Community had the highest rating among the teaching staff. Communication was the highest rated category among the staff with 83% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the indicators in this dimension. This is consistent with research done by Haris, Kagy, and Roass (1997) where they found that 69% of teachers thought it was important to provide families with information regarding what is being taught in school. In their study more than 95% of the teachers felt it was the teacher's responsibility to communicate with families and provide them with information about helping their children.

Volunteering, Learning at Home, and Decision Making ranked lowest among the ratings according to the teacher population. Volunteering had 41% in agreement, Learning at Home 39% in agreement and Decision Making 39% in agreement. This may be explained by the fact that because parents and students are moving from dependence to interdependence (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989) these dimensions are negatively impacted. Teachers may be viewing these aspects of
involvement as less important because they do not see these dimensions creating positive interaction with parents.

Overall teacher perceptions of involvement were quite high. In addition to overall high ratings in all categories, teacher responses also had a much tighter standard deviation across the dimensions, which would indicate that they are perceiving involvement through a similar lens. This finding is consistent with Dauber and Epstein (1993) where they found that despite the obstacles, teachers believe that parent involvement can aid in children's achievement and also help teachers to be more successful.

Parent perceptions were scattered widely with ratings between (1) strongly disagree and (5) strongly agree. It appears that parents were either very satisfied or very unsatisfied with the current practices of parental involvement. The lowest ranked dimension among parents was learning at home. This would indicate that parents are less satisfied with how the school is providing information and ideas to families about how to help students with homework and other curricular-related activities.

I believe that some of the discrepancy in ratings between parents and teachers is the result of different mental models about what is currently happening in regard to parental involvement. Most teachers in the building have a long history with the policies and practices that have been developed to engage parents in involvement activities. Parents on the other hand most likely were not involved in development of practices and procedures and are left to gain understanding as they work to support their children. This fact would indicate that involving parents and teachers in redefining engagement activities for parental involvement will be a valuable tool for future professional
Research Question Two

The second research question examined parents' perceptions and attitudes regarding parental involvement activities. The results of this question showed that their responses were much more evenly distributed among the rating scale than that of the teachers. This was evidenced through a much greater standard deviation than was found in all six dimensions of involvement. The highest rated dimensions in regards to parent perceptions were Collaborating with the Community, Communication, and Parenting. In the category of Collaborating with the Community, 57% of the parents rated this dimension as agreeing or strongly agreeing with the indicators provided.

Collaborating with the community was highest on the parent rating scale, and the distribution of scores would indicate that the teachers and the parents perceive this dimension very similarly. This similar distribution would lead me to believe that both groups feel that the teachers and parents are working with the community to provide students with the resources and services needed to be successful.

Communication received the second highest rating among the parent population. However, the percentage of parents that rated this dimension as agree or strongly agree was only 50% in contract to the 83% of teachers who gave a similar rating. This is an important finding and shows that there is a distinct difference in the perceptions of teachers and parents in regards to communication. In this dimension 11% of the parents rated that they disagree or strongly disagree with the indicators of communication. This could be explained through a variety of factors: Scott Jones (1994) argued that once teaching becomes departmentalized and a child has more than one teacher, maintaining
teacher-parent relations is difficult. This means less personal contact occurs between teachers and parents. This could certainly be one factor for the lower rating in communication as perceived by the parents.

The lowest rating within the parental responses came in the dimension of learning at home. This dimension can be explained as providing information and ideas to families about how to help their students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning. Within this category, 29% of the parents provided a rating within the disagree to strongly disagree score. Although this was a lower ranking within this study, it was relatively high considering the scores that were provide through the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988. In this study only 19% of parents reported they were actively involved in various types of activities. Fifty four percent reported limited involvement with activities at home and 27% reported few or no communications and activities with the school. It is important to see that more than double the number of parents (29%) were unsatisfied with learning at home compared to 14% of teachers.

Parent perceptions were scattered widely with ratings between (1) strongly disagree and (5) strongly agree. Interestingly, it appears that parents were either very satisfied or very unsatisfied with the current practices of parental involvement. I believe that some of the discrepancy in ratings between parents and teachers is the result of different mental models about what is currently happening in regard to parental involvement. Most teachers in the building have a long history with the policies and practices that have been developed to engage parents in involvement activities. Parents, on the other hand, most likely were not involved in the development of practices and
procedures and were left to gain understanding as they work to support their children. This fact would indicate that involving parents and teachers in redefining engagement activities for parental involvement is a valuable tool for future professional development.

Research Question Three

This research question was intended to evaluate the relationship between demographic characteristics of parents and their perceptions of parental involvement. The demographic characteristics that were evaluated were: (a) Grade of Student, (b) Number of Children in School, (c) Ethnicity of Child, (d) Household Income. A regression analysis was done to evaluate if any of the demographic characteristics of parents had an effect on their perceptions of involvement.

The literature is filled with studies that investigate parental involvement and what the factors are that lead to the increase or decline of engagement by parents. A number of studies suggest that school-family partnerships practices decline dramatically with each grade level (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). However, within this study, grade level only showed minimal significance in the dimensions of volunteering and learning at home. In both of these dimensions, 7th grade parents had slightly higher ratings than those of 8th grade parents. Statistically, these ratings didn't show any practical significance.

According to Keith & Keith (1993) in an analysis of the National Educational Longitudinal Study 8, parents with higher socioeconomic status (SES) were more involved than lower SES parents, but there were no significant differences in levels of involvement between various ethnic groups. This study evaluated the difference between income level and ethnicity and discovered that there were no statistically
practical differences in their perceptions of involvement based on those factors. It is important to also note that the school in which this research took place is very homogenous in terms of the ethnic make-up of its student population.

The last factor that was investigated in research question number three was the number of children in school. This factor examined if there was a difference in the perceptions of parents based on the number of children they currently had in school. The finding of this study showed that there was not a statistically significant or practically significant difference in their responses based on this factor.

*Research Question Four*

This research question was intended to evaluate the relationship between demographic characteristics of teachers and their perceptions of parental involvement. The demographic characteristics that were evaluated were: (a) Years of Experience, (b) Discipline, (c) Grade Level, (d) Gender. A regression analysis was done to evaluate if any of the demographics characteristics of teachers had an effect on their perceptions of involvement.

Years of experience was identified as a statistically and practically significant indicator of teacher perceptions of parental involvement. Looking at all of the dimensions, years of experience was shown to have a significant effect on the following dimensions: Parenting, Volunteering, Learning at Home, and Collaborating with the Community.

In the dimension of parenting, the regression analysis shows that teachers with 1-5 years of experience and 15-20 years of experience rated this dimension much high than teachers with 5-10 years and 25+ years of experience. It seems through the distribution
of scores that early on and halfway through their careers teachers tend to rate this factor much higher. This could be because novice teachers are trying to do everything in their power to express what they are teaching to students and parents. When teachers “hit their stride” they develop a confidence that they no longer need to have the help of the parents. They may view themselves as content experts and think that they no longer are in need of parent involvement to help their students understand the material. Epstein and Conners (1992) describe teachers who were certified at the secondary level as “educated as subject matter experts” and “unprepared to work with families” (p. 177). Epstein (1986) suggest that the increased course content and more diversified needs of students might prohibit teachers of higher grades from engaging in parental involvement practices. When teachers are at 15-25 years they often have school aged children themselves and again realize the importance of parent involvement. And finally, 25+ year teachers may have burned out on years of trying to connect with parents and do not see the importance of parental involvement.

The dimension of communication indicated that females rated this category slightly higher than that of the male teachers. The p value for gender within the communication dimension was .023 but the practical significance found within the f2 value shows that this wasn't practically significant in terms of gender effecting perceptions of communication.

Years of experiences was also identified as a significant demographic factor in influencing the perceptions of teachers in the dimension of volunteering. In this dimension, teachers with 1-5 years of experience as well as those with 15-25 years of experience rated this dimension much higher than those with 5-10 years, 10-15 years and
25+ years respectively. It is interesting to see the split in perceptions based on the years of experience. Prior to conducting this study, the researcher had hypothesized that the more years of experience the lower the rating would be on volunteering. Although 25+ years of experience teachers did rate this category lower than 1-5 years teacher, the responses go up and down across the years of experience.

The dimension of learning at home showed that there was a significant response rating for teachers based on years of experience. Within this dimension, teachers with 1-5 years of experience, 5-10 years of experience, and 15-20 years of experience all rated this dimension higher than their peers with 15-25 years of experience. This was again found to be a significant finding with an f² value of .446 which shows that it had a large effect on the responses.

Lastly the dimension of collaborating with the community was shown to be effected by years of experience. This was found to have a large effect with an f² value of .477. In this dimension, with the exception of 15-20 years, the more years of experience teachers had, the lower they rated this category. This could be explained by the fact that more experienced teachers have a better understanding of how the school is actually operating, or they have based the perceptions on past practices.

As described above, the teachers with 25+ years of experience rated all dimension lower than those of their peers. New educators or those with 1-5 years of experience rated all of the categories higher. This could be anticipated because perceptions are developed over years of working in a specific setting. The mental models of the teaching staff have been developed through the experiences that they have had while educating children (Senge, 2000). Interestingly, the teachers with 15-25 years of experience also
rated almost all dimensions higher than teachers with 5-10 and 10-15 years of experience.

Since NCLB was instituted in 2001, those teachers with 1-5 years of experience have all been trained in their teacher preparation classes with the knowledge that engaging parents is an expectation of public school teachers. Although this seems an obvious connection, the law now mandates it. Those teachers with more experience, especially those with 25+ years of experience, received different preparation than those who have been more recently trained.

Ryan and Friedlander (1996) found that tension can develop if teachers perceive that families are overstepping their bounds and that parental scrutiny is viewed as a threat or as questioning their expert status as educators. Experiencing “teacher bashing,” constant public criticism, accusations that teachers are not “professional” (Spenser, 1996), perceptions that the public does not trust them (Hartoonian, 1991), and continual budget cuts all lead to low morale. These may be just a few of the factors that have led more veteran teachers to view parental involvement as lower than those with few years of experience.

_Research Question Five_

The fifth and final research question of this study was to compare the parent and teacher perceptions for the six dimensions of parental involvement. The finding on this question did show that there were significant differences in the perceptions of Parenting, Communication, and Learning at Home. The large incongruences came within the area of communication, with a mean difference of -.48435. This is an interesting finding because teachers believed this to be the strongest dimension among Epstein's Framework.

Research indicates that a lack of teacher training in how to communicate and
interact with parents is often cited as an obstacle to implement partnerships (Chavkin & Williams, 1988; Chrispeels, 1993; Comer, 1980; Moles, 1993; Rich, 1988; Riley, 1994; Swamp, 1993; Young & Edwards, 1996). Therefore, it is common that teachers experience difficulty communicating with all families from cultures and socioeconomic groups that are different from their own. This finding is in line with that of the research that although teachers perceived communication to be strong, the parents viewed this dimension in a different frame.

The Learning at Home dimension showed the second largest discrepancy with a mean difference of -.349209. Teachers again rated this dimension much higher than the parents. While teachers perceived that they are providing parents with information and ideas about how they could help their students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, parents did not have those same perceptions.

The last major incongruence found within this research question was the difference in responses to the dimension of parenting. The mean average in this dimension was -.259188. Teachers rated this category of involvement higher than that of parents. In fact, over double the number of parents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the indicators than that of the teachers. This is consistent with the research finding of Dornbush & Ritter (1988) who surveyed 3,746 parents of high school students and found that fewer than 20% of the parents believed it was no longer appropriate for them to be involved in their children's education. While secondary teachers are striving to build independence in adolescent students, parents still want to be actively involved in their education. In the same study, over 80% of the parents reported wanting to know how to stay involved in their children's education. This finding shows that parents may actually
want to be more involved in opportunities for them to support learning at home.

The two areas that showed the most agreement between teacher and parent perceptions were collaborating with the community and decision making. While there were large difference in the above mentioned dimension both of these areas were rated very similarly. Decision Making had a mean difference of .06668, while collaborating with the community had a mean difference of .02878. These areas show that the perceptions of parents and teachers were closely aligned within these categories.

Limitations

The findings for this study are limited to Epstein's framework of six types of family involvement. Although Epstein's model has been widely tested, there may be aspects of the model that do not capture the concerns of the research site. Another limitation of this study is the small sample size and the fact that this research was done within a single setting. As a result, applicability and generalizability of the findings and conclusions to schools and families in other locations with different demographic characteristics may be limited.

In addition to the small sampling size, the use of this survey may be another limitation. Survey data are subjective and dependent upon the objectivity of the respondents. This study was limited to those parents and teachers that volunteered information. The parents that have chosen to participate in this study could be considered those that are already engaged in their children's education. Additional research would be needed to dig deeper into why teachers and parents have the perceptions that they currently hold. This could be done through a qualitative approach of focus groups that
represent the different demographic characteristics that were evaluated.

Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to examine the teachers' and parents' perceptions of parental involvement at one junior high school located in the Midwestern United States. According to the results of this study, there is a need for improvement in the area of parenting, communication and learning at home within the school in which the research is taking place. In addition to these areas, teacher training on effective strategies should also be found in the professional development of all staff. It is important that all teachers are given the tools necessary to effectively engage parents as partners in educating our children. As I have evaluated all of the areas of this study, communication seems to be the key link between many of the other dimensions. If teachers and parents are clearly communicating expectations, concerns, learning opportunities, and ways for parents to support learning at home, parental involvement should improve.

As I mentioned earlier, further research should be done to evaluate parent and teacher perceptions. A qualitative research approach in which researchers conduct focus groups among the different demographic factors would add another layer of understanding to the identified perceptions. This research would allow for expanded findings and may lead to further understanding of how schools can effectively engage their specific populations.

Based on the results of this study, I believe that the follow questions could be addressed through a qualitative study:

1. Does learning at home provide meaningful connections for parents and
students and should homework be structured to engage parents more frequently?

2. Why do teachers with 1-5 years of experience and 15-20 of years of experiences view parenting, volunteering, and collaborating with the community so differently?

3. What ways do parents feel that the school can best engage them in parental involvement activities?

I believe that these questions would provide rich insight into ways for schools to best reach out and engage its parents and teachers in successful partnerships. It would be my recommendation that focus groups be established to pull meaning from conversations that would provide more a clearer explanation as to why these perceptions exist, and provide a deeper understanding of how to address the differences between both parents and teachers.

In terms of developing appropriate measures for fostering greater understanding of the processes used in developing meaningful family engagement, I would suggest that schools utilize the National Center for Family and Community Connections school framework (SEDL, 2005). The framework includes the following:

**Sense of Welcome**

When school-family partnerships are characterized by a sense of welcome, they incorporate processes that foster relationships between educators and non-educators, allowing all involved to discover that each family member, not matter the background or ability, can engage in supporting a child's education in meaningful ways.
Misconceptions Among Stakeholders

Effective efforts to engage families use strategies that reveal and confront misconceptions that blind both school staff and families to the roles families can play in ensuring that all children reach their full potential academically, emotionally, physically, and socially.

Use of the Issues Related to Resources

As those involved target their resources and identify additional resources to support student learning, they will increase involvement and create opportunities for effective engagement for family members.

Home Context and Student Performance

Effective school-family connections prepare educators and non-educators to engage in two-way partnerships that uncover contextual carriers to purposeful family involvement, while simultaneously creating opportunities to encourage and maintain family support for student learning.

Program Structures

Structures that effectively support school-family connections avoid isolated family involvement events by adopting a systemic approach to preparing both educators and non-educators to take on roles that ensure academic, emotional, physical, and social needs of all students are met.

The findings in this study support the National Center for Family and Community Connections School Framework. Specifically, in the areas of Misconceptions Among
Stakeholders, Use of Issues Related to Resources, and Home Context and Student Performance; my findings support the need for schools to have an accurate and valid perception of teachers and parents. The ability to engage families and determine roles they can play in ensuring children can reach their full potential academically, emotionally, physically, and socially, is at the core of understanding what parents and teachers expect from one another.

The research on parental involvement suggests clearly that parents have at least as many influences on students' learning and behavior as do the teachers and the school (Pena, 2000). The most effective programs may be the ones in which the parents and the school work together on behalf of the child. Despite the many barriers for both parents and teachers, research shows that it is possible for schools to develop effective strategies to increase parental involvement.

Effective schools will develop, in collaboration with parents, shared goals and missions concerning young adolescents' learning and development (Ruebel, 2000). These shared goals will give clarity to the benchmarks that students, parents, and teachers are trying to achieve. If there isn't a clear understanding of where one is trying to go, chances are pretty good that the desired destination will never be reached.

As shown in the SEDL framework, it is important to engage parents in professional development (Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center, 2005; Marzano, 2003). To do this, schools must first conduct a needs assessment to identify focus areas for parent professional development. The findings in this study support the need to investigate the needs of teachers and parents. Even when it seems as though policies and practices are clearly understood, evaluation is necessary to bring to light
differences that exists. Using this needs assessment will help guide the development of a balanced, and comprehensive program. This professional development will help not only parents but teachers as they discuss specific behaviors that can be used as a vehicle to improve all aspects of the school (Marzano, 2003). Within this research study it was evident that communication needed to be improved. Having teachers and parents collaborate together will provide ownership and understanding from both parties and will ultimately work towards eliminating the misconceptions that lead to disengagements with the school.

In addition to professional development, schools need to identity the best ways in which they can establish open and two-way lines of communication (Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center, 2005; Esptein et. al, 2002; Jackson & Andrews, 2004; NMSA, 2003). These lines of communication may be face-to-face, over the phone, via e-mail, newsletters, etc. It is important that schools accurately identify what the best avenues are for each of their constituents.

Final recommendations for the research site:

1. Involve parents in shaping parental involvement strategies so they have ownership and input into how the school can most effectively communicate with them.

2. Develop focus groups to gain more clarity into the themes that were identified within this research study. (Differences in perceptions of: Parenting, Communication, and Learning at home.)

3. Review findings with staff to provide a clear understanding of the differences in perspectives between parents and teachers.
4. Examine the policies and practices of homework and home learning activities to assure that they are meeting their goals of supporting learning and involving parents in their children's education.

Recommendations for other schools:

1. Evaluate current literature regarding parental involvement to discover some of the common misconceptions that exist between teachers and parents.

2. Conduct research on teachers and parents to discover their current perceptions of parental involvement practices.

3. Finds strengths and weaknesses of current programming to help guide school improvement plans.

4. Provide professional learning opportunities for both parents and teachers where training on strategies for successful involvement will be taught.

5. Develop written policies that are approved by parent groups, teachers, administrators, and the board of education to assure that commitment to the program is carried out.

All of this being said, the most consistent predictors of children's academic achievement and social adjustment are parent expectations of their child's academic attainment and satisfaction with their child's education in school (Reynolds, et al. 2000).

It is the responsibility of educational leaders to find ways to partner with parents to raise the expectations of all children, and provide them with a safe and engaging school that allows them to reach their fullest potential.
REFERENCES


(2003). *This we believe: Successful schools for young adolescents*. Westerville, OH: Author National PTA.


Appendix A

Middle School Parent and Teacher
Perceptions of Parental
Involvement
RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. What is the degree of parental involvement as perceived by teachers?
2. What is the degree of parental involvement as perceived by parents?
3. Is there a relationship between the demographic characteristic of the parents and their perceptions of parental involvement?
4. Is there a relationship between the demographic characteristics of the teachers and their perceptions of parental involvement?
5. How do the perceptions of teachers differ from those of the parents on Epstein's six dimensions of parental involvement?
Appendix B

Parent Survey on Parental Involvement
### Parent Survey on Parental Involvement

**Demographic Questions:** Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Circle the appropriate answers to the following four questions.

1. **Grade of Student:** 7th or 8th
2. **Number of children that attend JPS:** 1, 2, 3, 4+
3. **Ethnicity of child:**
   - African American
   - Asian American
   - Hispanic American
   - White
   - Other
4. **Household Income:**
   - $10,000-$25,000
   - $25,000-$35,000
   - $35,000-$50,000
   - $50,000-$75,000
   - $75,000-over

Please review the following statements and give your opinions in regards to the activities and practices of Jenison Junior High. Answer ALL questions to the best of your knowledge! Please place a X under the column that represents your opinion according to the following scale:

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

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<td>2. Teachers notify parents regarding projects and programs at the school.</td>
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<td>3. The school uses volunteer parents in classrooms to assist teachers and students.</td>
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<td>7. The school trains parents in child rearing techniques according to age and grade level.</td>
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<td>8. Teachers provide opportunities on a regular basis to answer parent's questions.</td>
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<td>9. Teachers are available to discuss test results with individual parents.</td>
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<td>11. Teachers provide parents with ideas of how to improve skills in different classes and how to prepare for assessments.</td>
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<td>12. Teachers encourage parents to assume decision-making roles in the school.</td>
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<td>13. The school fosters community integration through developing partnerships with other agencies, organizations and businesses.</td>
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<td>14. Teachers provide to families clear and usable information that is linked to children's success in school.</td>
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15. The school seeks the collaboration of parents in school activities that take place outside of the classroom.

16. Teachers provide parents with supplemental activities that help support the learning that takes place in the classroom.

17. The school consults parents about the implementation of new programs or projects in the school.

18. The school disseminates to parents community activities that link learning skills and talents. (ex. Music opportunities such as voice or private instrument lessons.)

19. Teachers explain to parents how to best help their children with homework assignments.

20. Teachers maintain open communication channels with parents.

21. The school uses volunteer parents to help students succeed in school.

22. Teachers inform parents of skills required for each subject area.

23. The school promotes parent participation in district and school committees.

24. The school integrates school and family services with education.

25. Teachers use telephone, e-mail, or powerschool to inform parents of their child’s progress.

26. The school provides information for all students and families about community programs and services (ex. Community Education opportunities or other community athletic organizations).

27. The school encourages parents to be actively involved in their child’s educational process.

28. Parents are encouraged to check their children’s homework daily.

29. Parents are encouraged to teach their children discipline.

30. All parents can learn ways to assist their children with homework, if shown how.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH! Please do NOT put your name on this survey!

Please Return all surveys by NOVEMBER 25, 2008 to: Jenison Public School
Attn: Joyce Allerding
8375 20th Ave.
Jenison, MI 49428
Appendix C

Teacher Survey on Parental Involvement
Teacher Survey on Parental Involvement

Demographic Questions: Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Circle the appropriate answers to the following four questions.

1. Grade Level Taught: 7th or 8th

2. Gender: Male or Female

3. Discipline: Math
   Science
   Science
   Social Studies
   Social Studies
   Language Arts
   Language Arts
   Years
   Years
   Years
   Years

4. Years of Experience: 1-5 years
   5-10 years
   10-15 years
   15-25 years
   25+ years

Please review the following statements and give your opinions in regards to the activities and practices of Jenison Junior High. Answer ALL questions to the best of your knowledge! Please place a X under the column that represents your opinion according to the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree
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<td>6. The school uses former students and parents to assist in school programs.</td>
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<td>26. The school provides information for all students and families about</td>
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<td>community programs and services (ex. Community Education opportunities</td>
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<td>or other community athletic organizations).</td>
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<td>27. The school motivates parents to be more involved than they are</td>
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<td>now.</td>
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<td>28. Parents are encouraged to check their children's homework daily.</td>
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<td>29. Parents are encouraged to teach their children discipline.</td>
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<td>30. All parents can learn ways to assist their children with homework,</td>
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<td>if shown how.</td>
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THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH! Please do NOT put your name on this survey!

Please return all surveys by NOVEMBER 25, 2008 to: Jenison Junior Public Schools
Attn: Joyce Allerding
8375 20th Ave.
Jenison, MI 49428
Appendix D

Human Subjects Institutional Review Approval Board Letter
Date: November 7, 2008

To: Patricia Reeves, Principal Investigator
Brandon Graham, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 08-10-27

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "Middle School Teacher and Parent Perceptions of Parental Involvement" has been approved under the exempt category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: November 7, 2009
Dear Parents,

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “Middle School Teacher and Parent Perceptions of Parental Involvement” which has been designed to examine how teachers and parents currently view parental involvement at Jenison Junior High. This study is being conducted by Dr. Patricia Reeves and Mr. Brandon Graham from Western Michigan University, Department of Educational Leadership. This research is being conducted as part of the dissertation requirements for Mr. Brandon Graham.

This research will be conducted through the use of surveys. The survey tool that will be used in this study is comprised of 30 statements regarding dimensions of parental involvement and 4 demographic questions. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and will require about 15-20 minutes of your time. Your replies will be completely anonymous, so do not put your name anywhere on the form. You may choose not to answer any question and simply leave it blank. If you choose not to participate in this survey, you may either return the blank survey or you may discard it. Returning the survey indicates your consent for use of the answers you supply.

There are no known risks to your involvement in this study. All involvement will be based solely on voluntary participation. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, I may be reached at: (616) 457-1402 Ext. 3247. I am conducting this researcher under Dr. Patricia Reeves who may be reached at: (269) 387-3527. You may also contact the Chair of Western Michigan University’s Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at (269) 387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at (269) 387-8293 if questions or problems arise during the course of this study.

This consent document has been approved for the use for one calendar year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

If you wish to participate in this study, please return your completed survey in the included address stamped envelope to:

Jenison Public School
Attn: Joyce Allerding
8275 20th Ave.
Jenison, MI 49428

Sincerely,

Brandon W. Graham
Dear Teachers,

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled "Middle School Teacher and Parent Perceptions of Parental Involvement" which has been designed to examine how teachers and parents currently view parental involvement at Jenison Junior High. This study is being conducted by Dr. Patricia Reeves and Mr. Brandon Graham from Western Michigan University, Department of Educational Leadership. This research is being conducted as part of the dissertation requirements for Mr. Brandon Graham.

This research will be conducted through the use of surveys. The survey tool that will be used in this study is comprised of 30 statements regarding dimensions of parental involvement and 4 demographic questions. Your participation is not mandatory, simply voluntary, and will require about 15-20 minutes of your time. Your replies will be completely anonymous, so do not put your name anywhere on the form. You may choose to not answer any question and simply leave it blank. If you choose not to participate in this survey, you may either return the blank survey or you may discard it. Returning the survey indicates your consent for use of the answers you supply.

There are no known risks to your involvement in this study. All involvement will be based solely on voluntary participation. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, you may be reached at: (616) 457-1402 Ext. 3247. I am conducting this researcher under Dr. Patricia Reeves who may be reached at: (269) 387-3527. You may also contact the Chair of Western Michigan University's Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at (269) 387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at (269) 387-8293 if questions or problems arise during the course of this study.

This consent document has been approved for the use for one calendar year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

If you wish to participate in this study, please return your completed survey in the included address stamped envelop to:

Jenison Public School
Attn: Joyce Allerdings
8375 20th Ave.
Jenison, MI 49428

Sincerely,

Brandon W. Graham
October 21, 2008

Dear HSIRB Review Committee,

On behalf of Jenison Public Schools and the Board of Education, I have given permission to Mr. Brandon W. Graham to conduct research concerning the perception of parents and teachers of middle school students at Jenison Junior High School. In my evaluation of Mr. Graham's study I do not see any negative impact on the teachers or parents that will voluntarily be involved in this research.

Mr. Graham has been given authority to evaluate responses from 700 parents and 30 teachers in regards to their views of parental involvement at Jenison Junior High School. The anonymous responses from the subjects to the survey tool, Parent and Teacher Surveys and Community Involvement in the Elementary and Middle Schools, that Mr. Graham will employ for his research, will give valuable information to him and our school system as he works to improve this important aspect of education.

I endorse Mr. Graham's research and will allow him to conduct this study within Jenison Public Schools. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, I can be contacted at (616) 667-3236.

Respectfully,

Mr. Thomas TenBrink
Superintendent of Schools
Jenison Public Schools
Appendix E

Permission to Use Studies
July 25, 2008

To: Brandon W. Graham
From: Joyce L. Epstein, Lori J. Connors, Karen Clark Salinas, & Steven B. Sheldon
Re: Permission to use:

- Parent and Student Surveys on Family and Community Involvement in the Elementary and Middle Grades. (2007) S. B. Sheldon & J. L. Epstein

This letter grants you permission to use, adapt, or reprint the surveys noted above in your study.

We ask only that you include appropriate references to the survey and authors in the text and bibliography of your reports and publications.

Best of luck with your work.