

**PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC EDUCATION:  
A SURVEY OF THREE OKLAHOMA  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

By

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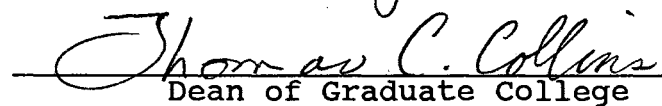
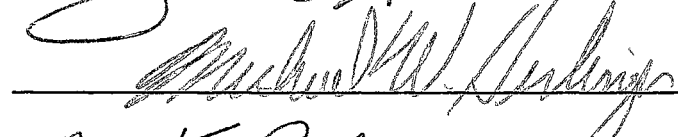
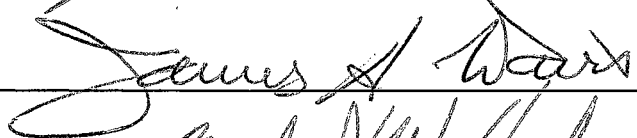
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## CHAPTER ONE

### WHAT IS PARENT INVOLVEMENT?

Johnny is a six year old first grader who lives in a large urban city and lives with his only parent, his mother. Johnny's mother is a high school dropout who works two jobs trying to make a living for Johnny and his three year old sister. Johnny's mother does not have sufficient time to help Johnny with his homework and rarely attends any school activities or parent conferences. Even though Johnny is trying his best in school, his teacher feels that he might have to repeat first grade again because of his slow understanding of subjects.

Oftentimes, Johnny's teacher becomes frustrated because Johnny does not bring back his homework signed and rarely does Johnny's mother communicate with the teacher about Johnny's progress and achievement. Johnny's teacher has become frustrated at the lack of involvement by Johnny's mother, even with the external circumstances. Johnny's teacher believes that some parent involvement and concern might help Johnny become the type of student he can be.

Carolyn is a seven year old second grader who goes to an elementary school in the suburbs of a large city. She has a mother and father who have graduated from high school and her

father has some college, but no degree. Both her parents work, but her parents realize the importance of encouraging and motivating their children to do well in school. Carolyn's parents schedule time on several days during the week to help Carolyn on her homework.

Carolyn's parents also attend parent-teacher conferences as often as possible and keep in contact with Carolyn's teacher about Carolyn's progress. Carolyn's parents expect her to have a better career and future than they have. Carolyn's parents realize the importance of education towards a successful career and want to make sure they do their part in helping Carolyn achieve at her potential. Carolyn and her teacher appreciate their involvement and help in Carolyn's education.

These two examples represent the different types of parent involvement that a school can have. Because of the different family structures in American society, and the different demands today on parents (especially single parent families), parental involvement takes many different roles. Elementary schools in the same town or city can have different levels of parent involvement because of the different neighborhood environments and the different families that attend the schools. Parents view schools and the educational process differently, and as this study will discuss later, the differences in the role and importance of education can impact whether parents become involved in their child's school.



Therefore, parent involvement is a broad subject area with vast research and many discrepancies as to what type of parents get involved.

Definitions of parent involvement vary as much as the rich diversity of the research concerning parent involvement. Definitions range from getting parents involved in school activities (i.e, parent-teacher conferences, classroom volunteer, attending field trips, etc...) to informing and involving the parent. Research argues that parents cannot become involved unless they know what is happening inside the school system. It is important to allow parents to become involved, but to also understand what they are getting involved in (Lareau, 1989; Morrison, 1975).

Obtaining parent involvement is similar to the theory of more participation in the electoral process. Some experts argue whether it is good for the American political system for voters to cast an uninformed vote. These experts argue that it does the political system no good to participate if they have no information about the major issues or candidates. Morrison's viewpoint is similar about parent involvement. He states that parents must be knowledgeable about the school system and its goals, objectives and activities to truly be involved. Therefore, Morrison defines parent involvement as the parents being informed about the school and then becoming involved in the school's activities.

Not only must the parents be informed about the school,

but many times the parents must be taught how to become involved. This is another part of defining parent involvement. Epstein (1987), Becker (1982) and Van Galen (1987) all defined parent involvement as including parental guidance and assistance in the completion of the child's homework at home. As this study will reveal in more detail later, many parents have no idea of how to assist their child in completing school assignments. Often times this assistance involves examples for parents on how to assist their child and even parent-teacher conferences that discuss setting time aside to help the child. Therefore, teachers and schools must provide knowledge of how to assist parents in their child with school assignments.

This study takes a combination of several parent involvement definitions and provides a general definition of parent involvement. Parent involvement is the process of advising and informing parents about their child's school and its activities, while providing a variety of opportunities for parents to become involved both at school and in the home. This transferring of information that leads to increased activity brings about another aspect within parent involvement. If involvement depends on good communication and a good transference of information, then parent involvement could lead to better informed parents. Therefore, informed parents produce involved parents, which produce more informed parents. As the parents become more involved, they find out more information about the school system, the educational

process and the school officials. Even though this study will not delve into parent involvement this deeply, this notion of involved parents becoming more informed is critical to understand. Overall, this study will support the premise that informed parents lead to involved parents.

Since this study's definition of parent involvement has been established, it is important to get a clear view of the American family to understand the research concerning parent involvement. The demographics of the American family have changed drastically from the times of "**Leave it to Beaver**" and the "**Brady Bunch**." No more does the ideal family consist of a mother, father and two children. Of the 48 percent of families that have children under 18 years of age, 25 percent are in single parent families (U.S. Department of Education, 1993). Married couple families have decreased from 70 percent in 1970 to 56 percent in 1989 (Kaplan, 1992). Thirty percent of the families have the main householder under 25 years of age (Kaplan, 1992). In addition to more single parent families, more white single young females (age 15-24) are having children than ever before. In 1950, these females averaged about twelve births for every 1,000 unmarried women. In 1990, these females averaged 60 births for every 1,000 women (five times as many) (U.S. Department of Education, 1993). The American family has taken on a different meaning than what it used to be several years ago. Schools now must face the different types of families (i.e, married, single mother,

single father, divorced, etc...) and must be knowledgeable about getting each type of parent involved.

The increase of single parent families has brought about the question of the time that the parent has at home to spend with the child. Parent involvement brings about the allocating of time to assist the child with assignments and problems, as well as having time to attend school activities and meetings. The U.S. Department of Education found that nearly 60 percent of single mothers are employed and have children under six years of age. In addition, the Department of Education found that 75 percent of single mothers work and have children between the ages of six and seventeen. This situation brings about a possible problem for schools and their parent involvement programs. How are schools going to make activities and meetings accessible to these parents that work and want to be involved? Hopefully, this study will answer or propose an answer to this question.

Another demographic of the American family consists of the families' income level. The income level in single parent families is much lower than in married couple families. The Department of Education found that around 70 percent of female headed families make under \$20,000 a year, compared to only fifteen percent of married couple families. Only fourteen percent of female headed households made over \$30,000 (U.S. Department of Education, 1993). The poverty rate among female headed households runs around 60 percent compared to only 21

percent of all families that live in poverty.

The educational level of the family is extremely important when discussing parent involvement. As the study will reveal, research is abundant on the importance of the parents educational level and the extent of parent involvement. In 1989, 21 percent of main householders in families had dropped out of high school and only four percent had one or more years of college (Kaplan, 1992). Research shows that many females that give birth to a child during high school must drop out in order to find employment.

Divorce rates have dramatically increased which has led to a change in the composition of the American family. In 1992, there were about 1.2 million divorces in America and about one million children involved in those divorces (Department of Education, 1993). These divorces have led to an increase of stepfamilies that children are around. These stepparents are new people that the child is not used to being around and many not feel comfortable with.

The traditional American family has gone from a two parent, two child family to a family of single parents, children living in poverty and an increase of stepfamilies. Schools must realize and accept this "new" definition of traditional family or parent involvement programs will be ineffective. This description of the American family will provide the reader an understanding behind the research that will be discussed later and whether parent programs are

adjusting to the new family concept.

The groundwork has been laid for the research concerning parent involvement. The study has provided a general overview of the American family and has introduced a picture of what the schools must examine within their community to have good parent programs.

The remainder of this study intends to present an intense literature review of three areas of parent involvement: 1) parent involvement from the administrators' viewpoint. What must administrators do to enhance parent programs? What are certain elements that they must examine to have a large amount of parents involved?; 2) parent involvement and the teacher. Research reveals several key factors involved in good teacher-parent relationships. How is the teacher's attitude important when dealing with parents? What are some innovative ideas that teachers can use to encourage parent involvement?; 3) parent involvement and the home. What must be done to improve parent-child interaction in the home. Does the new concept of the American family hurt time spent at home? Through research and a case study done over three elementary schools, this study intends to develop a framework that reveals that parent involvement is a triangular relationship (see Figure 1). All three sides of the triangle must work together to make parent involvement useful and effective. The three sides consist of perception, communication and information. All three must be intertwined within the school system to improve parent

programs. One side cannot and will not be effective on their own. As the study will discuss later, these three sides contain many intricate details to making each side be productive in a school's parent program.

In addition, a survey and examination of three elementary schools in Claremore, Oklahoma, will be used to view their parent programs and discuss this triangular relationship. Hopefully, the case study and survey questions will enhance the reader's knowledge of how to make parent involvement better. It needs to be noted that SES variables will not be emphasized or analyzed within this study. Even though SES variables have been shown to be important in determining the extent of parent involvement, this study looks beyond the general area of socioeconomic status.

This survey intends to reveal that three important variables are essential for successful parent involvement. The first variable is accessibility. The level of involvement depends on how accessible the administrators and teachers are to the parents. The second variable is communication. Communication between the school and the parent is the key to having informed parents. The final variable is perception. Perception is examined in two manners: how the parents perceive the school and how the teachers perceive parents. The manner in which the school and parents are perceived will effect parent involvement. Therefore, this study will examine the importance of these variables in Claremore schools.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE FUNCTION OF SCHOOLING AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT

#### The "True" Function of Schooling

The American Dream is based upon liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Early on in American history, the school system became a very important part of the "American Dream." Former President George Washington once stated that the advancement and promotion of manufacturing, technology, agriculture and education were as important as national defense (Educational Policies Commission, 1946). Washington knew that American democracy was based on the knowledge and intellect of the people where the power was entrusted. Thereby, the schools were given the primary responsibility to educate the American people about the ways of the government and society.

The nation and its leaders finally recognized the importance of an informed public. The schools had the function to teach the public in the area of arts, literature, science and anything necessary for a productive citizenship. The schools were to produce a public that could enhance the quality of life. As Daniel Selakovich (1984) states, the schools were to teach the "American Ideology." However, the question then was raised, "What is the American Ideology?" This question is still being debated and answered in various



ways in today's schools.

So, what were the main functions of the school? A main function was that of preparing the public to make intelligent decisions about the direction and leadership of the country. Remember, the founding fathers instituted the electoral college to prevent a non-experienced and stupid person from becoming President. The electoral college became a buffer against an uneducated electorate. Therefore, the schools were to enlighten the public as to the importance of being informed about the political issues and candidates within the government (Educational Policies Commission, 1946). George Washington realized the importance of an educated public when he stated that government needs an informed electorate if the public officials are to follow public opinion (Educational Policies Commission, 1946).

An extension to the knowledge about the political system was the fact that the schools were supposed to educate people about looking out for the good of the country instead of the advancement of self. Many popular leaders such as Andrew Jackson and Will Rogers proclaimed the need for public good to take priority over selfishness. Horace Mann once stated that "if national problems are to be solved, then everyone must lay aside their pride, selfishness and contempt...." (Educational Policies Commission, 1946).

Another function of the school was to produce a person who could fit into the traditional roles of society. A person

was not considered educated unless that person could contribute something towards the enhancement of society. Schooling was to provide each person the necessary skills and knowledge to take on a particular job or place in society. Therefore, society was better off because of the contributions of the person. Cubberley (1919) often argued that if education is to be compulsory, free and equal, then each person should be able to have the same knowledge base and the same opportunity to make his life better as well as helping the society become better.

A final function of the school was to produce a "well rounded" person. This person should have a decent value system, understand the basics of schooling (i.e, reading, writing, arithmetic, etc...), know how to communicate ideas and knowledge, and understand how to adapt to changes within society. As anybody might realize, this function is still trying to be accomplished. The main problem with this function is that there are different ways on how to achieve this. In addition, the American society is much more diverse and advanced than hundreds of years ago.

This "well rounded" student should have a common knowledge that allows him/her to know what is right and wrong, to keep themselves and their families in good health, to continually understand how to become more productive, and to teach their children in the same manner. In other words, this person should be the "ideal" citizen that causes no problems

and improves the lives of people around them, as well as society (Educational Policies Commission, 1946).

When comparing the original function of schooling to the educational system today, there is a vast difference. Are schools accomplishing the objectives that were set out for schools years and years ago? Some people (i.e, parents) would argue that their child is not given equal opportunity to learn. Some parents would argue that their child is not receiving the fundamentals of education that the child needs to be productive in society. Understanding the "true" function of schools is imperative to understand the nature and reasoning behind parent involvement. Today, more and more parents are becoming involved for the very reason that they do not believe the school is fulfilling their objective.

### **History of Parent Involvement**

In order to better understand the importance of parent involvement and the role of the school in the process, it is important to examine the role of the school and parents in American society. The early part of educating children involved the home environment being the most influential element. In early society, the family and community were the main educators because of the intense need to survive and be accepted by others within the community (Berger, 1991). Families were expected to teach their children how to read,

write and become good citizens of the community (Berger, 1991). Memorization and recitation of songs, poems and Bible scriptures were required by parents and churches. Those children who had undereducated or illiterate parents suffered from a lack of stable and sufficient education. Eventually, these children were less able to survive and become prominent in society (Pyszkowski, 1989).

In these early families, education was taught by actions and words. Since no schools were available—at least not to the common family—children saw their parents as examples of what they should be as they mature and parents provided a "living" example for their children. The quality of time spent with the children proved to be very effective learning tools. With the absence of television and other recreational activities, the time spent between parents and children were extremely important. Kellaghan et. al (1993) found that 87 percent of a child's waking time is spent around the parents. Therefore, parental influence is important.

As education, in general, and the methods of educating became important, researchers revealed the importance of the family in the child's education. One of the first educational philosophers or researchers was John Comenius. Comenius wrote a treatise that emphasized the parents **active** involvement in their child's education when they are young. Comenius stressed the easy influence that the environment or any type of influence can have on a child at a young age. He believed that

education began at home and the school supported the core learning that took place in the family (Berger, 1991).

John Locke was another philosopher that stressed the importance of family involvement in education. He wrote that ideas and education developed from experience and the best experiences came from the family. It is up to the family to provide the right type of environment to allow the child to learn from experiences. These experiences would eventually develop the child's mind to a mind of thought, analysis and examination (Berger, 1991).

Another educational researcher was Johann Pestalozzi, often referred to as the **"Father of Parent Involvement."** Pestalozzi believed strongly that the environment of the child influence his level of education. This is why he was active in helping poor, undereducated families become involved and excited with their child's education. Pestalozzi provided methods of using concrete objects (i.e, beans, apples, games, etc...) to help parents teach their children. He thought group interaction, cooperation and self experience were essential to productive learning (Pestalozzi, 1951). Pestalozzi saw the importance of the mother not only to nourish the "physical" child, but also the "mental" child.

A final researcher was Friedrich Froebel who was known as the **"Father of Kindergarten."** Froebel saw the mother as the first educator of the child and conducted research to assist mothers in educating their children at home. Froebel provided

a method in which the mother, through interaction and communication, educated the child while at the same time, helping the child grow and develop (Berger, 1991).

One of the most important factors in the history of the school and the parents came about with the Industrial Revolution. Several things occurred that made schools more important in the child's educational endeavors. First of all was the advanced education needed for the new jobs that came about within the work force. Jobs were more complex and involved machinery. Families were hard pressed to educate their children correctly to properly prepare them for the new industrial work place (see Berger, 1991; Kelleghan et. al, 1993 and Gammage, 1982). In addition to the new jobs, families were moving where the jobs were—the suburban areas. The increase of jobs and the more time spent going to work and being at work left families with little time to give to their child's education. Over the past several years, the increased work force make it financially. During the time of the Industrial Revolution, schools became more important to the child's education. More responsibility was placed on the school to train the child in the knowledge and skills that the child needed for future success (Berger, 1991).

As the 1920's came along, the attitudes and characteristics of the younger generation took a turn for the worse. Young people became rebellious towards authority (i.e, families, schools, etc...) and took on a reckless attitude on

life and the future (Berger, 1991). Therefore, the schools and families took a different role in educating the child. They emphasized the need to educate the child in proper citizenship, individual responsibility, and proper manners. To assist schools in doing this, parent programs and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA's) sprang up around the country. Families felt the importance of getting involved because of the severity of the rebellion of the younger generation. In just five years, PTA membership rose from 190,000 to 875,000 to almost 1.5 million in 1930 (around ten times larger in ten years) (Berger, 1991; and Schlossman, 1976). These organizations emphasized the need for improved curriculum, better teaching and improved student achievement. If schools were to be given more responsibility, then parents wanted educated children.

The increase of parent organizations brought about schools and parents coming together in innovative ways. For example, in 1984, the Chicago school district and its parents created "school councils" for each school in Chicago. The main idea behind these councils was to increase parental involvement and control over the particular schools (Johnston and Slotnik, 1985). The people on the councils were elected from the voters within each school neighborhood and each council was made up of six people, half of them being parents. When the first election came around, the election had 4,500 candidates file for 3,000 positions. Essentially, Chicago

school officials believed that education would improve if parents were given control over their schools. These councils hired the teachers and principals and thus increased the involvement of parents throughout the city.

Another example occurred during the early 1970's when a group of eleven families in Salt Lake City opened up an alternative elementary school to improve their child's education and increase parent involvement. These eleven families hired their own teacher for the 21 children who attended, and rented space for the school building. Twelve years later, in 1983, 150 parents were participating in this alternative school and 200 children are now attending with 21 teachers. Because of the program's success, parents report a three year waiting period for children wanting into the school's kindergarten program (Johnston and Slotnik, 1985). These two examples reveal the increasing involvement of parents in their child's education.

One other reason for the increased parent involvement is the declining education in the areas of science and math. In addition, the knowledge of American children is lower than those children in other industrialized nations (U.S. Department of Education). Parents have also increased their involvement because of the need for more training and knowledge to be competitive in the American work place.

In addition to the rise of parent organizations, state and local support for parent programs increased. Many programs



around the nation received financial support from local or state taxes or from private foundations (Berger, 1991). Many universities received financial support to provide education for prospective teachers on sustaining parent involvement. The abrupt change of attitude from the younger generation caused families and schools to be concerned about the need to emphasize the need for excellence in education.

During the 1930's, the White House held a conference on the need for parent associations and the positive affects these associations could have on a child's education. Specialists at the conference stated the following need for more parent involvement:

"educational associations and departments should study the possibilities for organizing parent education as part of the system of public instruction. In addition, associations should study the obligations and opportunities for parent education" (Berger, 1991, page 63).

During this time of increasing parent involvement, the emphasis was on the importance of educating parents to become involved in the schools. Many states produced goals and objectives for parent involvement. Pennsylvania created goals that included bringing experts/specialists to schools to inform the school system on ways to involve parents. Pennsylvania also included forums and seminars between parents and school officials to discuss concerns and issues (Berger, 1991). Essentially, schools wanted to inform parents on how they could help their child's learning.

The final segment concerning the history of parent

involvement came with the socialization of America's schools (Ecksel, 1992). This socialization period was looked upon as the schools becoming more involved in other areas of society besides education. In other words, the schools accepted the responsibility of trying to educate the "whole" person. The socialization of American schools has produced more responsibility by the school system to educate the child in more ways. One of the main reasons for this is the fact that many parents work and do not have sufficient time to educate their child as in the past. However, research indicates that if too much responsibility is left to the schools, then the learning ability of the child might be decreased (Ecksel, 1992; Kaplan, et. al, 1990). Kellaghan et. al (1993) argues that the central role of the home is still to educate and develop the child to be a responsible citizen and a societal producer.

Goodlad (1984) indicates that schools now serve four functions: 1) **academic**, where the school tries to transmit intellectual and thinking skills to students; 2) **vocational**, where schools train students to acquire certain skills for the demanding work place; 3) **social and civic**, where the school helps prepare each child to adjust to the complex society we call "America;" and 4) **personal**, where the school develops the child's individual talent and abilities.

Schools have had to take on the problems of sex education, AIDS education, counseling, drug education, teen

pregnancy and other problems to assist children in learning about these issues. However, the public school does not have the same type of relationship or influence that parents have. The school does not often know the environment that the child lives in or the type of family that the child lives around. Ecksel (1992) argues that teachers teach these subjects according to the way they learned and their personal beliefs. Therefore, the manner in which the teacher conducts their classroom may not be suitable to educate certain children (see also Abelson, 1979 and Bussis, et.al, 1976). For example, research has proven that abused children often regress in school and do not participate in class activities or discussions. These abused children may not associate with other children and may become a "loner" within the class. If the learning environment cannot adjust to these children, then learning will be difficult (Main and George, 1985 and Ecksel, 1992). Other examples include children that are having problems at home or are under extreme stress. These distractions can cause the child's learning at school to be below average. Therefore, it can be difficult for the school to conduct its four functions with these children (Wine, 1971; Nottleman and Hill, 1977). Therefore, the social, intellectual and emotional development of each child can be limited.

In addition to more responsibilities, schools became more dependent on state and federal monies. Because of the added

responsibilities, local schools needed more funds to implement these programs and their curriculums. However, along with these funds, came more control from the state and federal levels. This meant that parents have lost some input on certain areas of the local school. States have implemented harsher curriculum standards and graduation standards to help students become more knowledgeable.

The history of parent involvement has seen the education of children transfer from the home to the school. This transfer has recently led parents to become more involved to make sure schools are doing their job of educating children. However, more important than parents being involved is the manner in which the school (i.e, administrators and teachers) involves the parents and communicates with them. In other words, how do administrators, teachers and parents work together to create and implement a successful parent involvement program?

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATORS IN PARENT INVOLVEMENT

#### School Administrators and Parent Involvement

The school administrators are probably the most important part of a successful parent involvement program. Even though the interaction is mainly between the parents and teachers, the administrators help develop the program and carry out the implementation. Without the support and backing from the administrators, the program may not be successful. Joyce Epstein (1987) states that it is the administrator's responsibility to create or support policies to inform parents, teachers, staffs, and the community about the school's parent program. Therefore, the administrator's role in parent involvement has several functions.

The first function for the administrator is to have a written statement or school policy concerning parent involvement. David Williams and Nancy Chavkin (1989) found that one of the essential elements in successful parent programs were written policies. A successful program begins with a clear policy statement. Williams and Chavkin found that written policies legitimized the program in the minds of the parents and teachers. The policy revealed the school's commitment and importance of parent involvement. In addition,

the policies clarified any misunderstandings that parents or teachers might have concerning the role of parents in the school. Some of the policies stated how parents were to be involved and how teachers should encourage parent involvement.

Kindred et. al (1990) provides several examples of written policies about parent involvement. The first policy comes from a school district in the Dallas area. It reads as follows:

"The Board is committed to an ongoing public relations effort designed to help improve the programs and services of its schools. This effort will rely on a two-way communication process involving both internal and external public, with a goal of stimulating a better understanding of the role, objectives, accomplishments, and needs of the district" (Kindred et. al, 1990).

The following is the policy established by the Tulsa Public Schools:

"The Board believes an effective two-way communications program is vital to active and constructive participation of staff, students, parents, and community in the decision making process. The Board believes that staff, students, parents, and community are entitled to complete, accurate and continual information about school policies, regulations, programs, operations, finances, achievements, goals, problems, needs, and other information which schools are required by federal and state laws and regulations to make available.

All feasible forms of communications, including personal, print and electronic, will be used to supply this information" (Kindred et.al, 1990).

These examples of written policies reveal several important elements. The first element is that each policy revealed the reasons for adopting such policies. The parents, teachers and

everyone involved understands why Tulsa Schools want to invite parents to participate. The reason is that Tulsa Schools believe that those within the community should know and be informed about the school and its activities (Kindred et. al, 1990). Research on management and leadership emphasize the need for people in leadership positions to clearly state why they are doing something (Kouzes and Posner, 1987; Burns, 1989). Many times employees, staff and others involved have no idea why something is done. Clear and concise policies, such as the ones written above can negate misunderstandings.

Clear and concise policies also create another critical component of a successful parent involvement program. This is communication. Herman and Yeh (1983) argue that communication is the key to keeping parents informed and involved. Research reveals that many parents do not even know what their school is doing or what their child is being taught because they are never informed (Lareau, 1989 and Clark, 1983). How can parents become involved when they have no idea what is going on? Herman and Yeh (1983) found that when there is clear communication between the school and parents, the school's reputation is increased in the parents eye. Therefore, the parents speak positively about the school and less conflicts occur. Good communication of a clear and concise policy is crucial to getting out the message that parent involvement is important to the school.

A second element consists of the school committing itself

to taking action to get parents and others involved. As the Tulsa School policy stated, they are going to take whatever means is necessary to get information out to the community about school activities. In other words, no parent or staff member should be left out in the dark. Administrators must make sure that these policies are not written to show that they have done something. Action must come with the written policies.

A final element is that of the manner in which schools will involve the community and parents. The Dallas School District emphasized the need for better two-way communication to implement better parent involvement. The Dallas policy also stated that more involvement between external and internal publics is needed. These examples provide parents exact methods by which the school wants to enhance parent involvement. Again, it shows the parents that the school is serious about parent involvement.

Kindred provides several advantages to schools having written policies. One advantage is that policies show everyone that the school does desire a relationship with parents and the surrounding community. Second, written policies encourage parent involvement. More parents might become involved if they realize that the school is trying to provide an incentive. Third, policies provide a guarantee that the school will look outside its public when making certain decisions. Parents often feel relieved at this openness because they have less of



a feeling that decisions are being made behind closed doors. Finally, policies provide parents stable ground if they feel like the school is neglecting or ignoring their involvement.

Another essential part of an involvement program is administrative support. As Kouzes and Posner (1987) point out, leaders should model the way for followers. This modeling consists of providing direction for the program, taking responsibility for the implementation of the program, and stating clearly what the goals and objectives are. Williams and Chavkin (1989) found that administrative support was the second most popular element of successful involvement programs.

Kouzes and Posner devote an entire chapter in their book to how administrators must set the example in trying out new programs or ideas. Essentially, the leader must "walk the walk and talk the talk." Teachers and staff, as well as parents, want the administration to uphold their end of the bargain if they encourage a parent involvement program. Kouzes and Posner suggest some key characteristics of setting a good example. One is that the administrator must truly believe that the idea or program is worthwhile. If the school administrator does not really care about parent involvement, but only creates a program because of pressure, then how successful will that program become? The administrator must believe that parent involvement is essential in the education of the child.

A second characteristic is that good exemplary leaders

state clearly what they want out of the program. Teachers and staff should have no problem knowing where the administrator stands on parent involvement and should know that they have the administrator's total support (Kouzes and Posner, 1987).

A final characteristic of exemplary leadership is that when critical situations arise with the program, the administrator attacks it head on. The administrator does not step back, but is clear about what must be done. Sometimes, administrators will not be aggressive when a problem arises concerning parent involvement because of their lack of interest in the program. However, an intense and quick approach to problems shows that the administrator is serious about successfully implementing the program (Kouzes and Posner, 1987). Exemplary leadership begins when an administrator's actions supports his/her statements.

Ellen Goldring (1990) conducted a study and found that school principals show support for parent involvement in three ways. The first way is through socialization. Educational socialization, as described by Goldring, refers to the school informing and encouraging the parents about the importance of education and the educational objectives of the particular school. The process of socialization takes place by the school trying to persuade parents that what the school is teaching and producing is correct. Principals try to convince parents that the goals and objectives established by the school produce the best education that can be offered (Goldring,

1990).

The next area of support is through coalition forming. This plan strives for complete cooperation between the school and the parents in every aspect of parent involvement. Coalition forming includes a large amount of parent participation in the formation of policy and the actual decisions. Goldring argues that principals see parents as potential allies and desire their help in the child's education.

The final area is that of buffering and cooptation. This process consists of principals trying to decrease and dissuade parent involvement. Many times this dissuasion is due to the parents lack of knowledge or plain lack of interest. Buffering and cooptation is usually achieved through controlling the school's PTA and creating strict procedures in the parent involvement program. The school dominates the development of parent involvement and dissuades participation from parents in any type of important decision (Goldring, 1990).

Administrative support can be supplied in other ways. One way is that of monetary support. How can teachers and other school officials be expected to carry out parent involvement when the school system does not make it a budgetary priority? There is an old saying that implies that where the money is spent, there are the priorities. Kouzes and Posner (1987) argue that programs or ideas will not work unless there is support from the top. The reason for this is that if workers

do not receive support or encouragement from the top echelon, then the workers begin wondering if the top administrators really believe and are interested in the program. Essentially, no support or encouragement from the boss transfers into the staff and teachers not carrying out the program.

Another factor in administrative support is sufficient materials and resources. These resources include meeting space, training, seminars in parent involvement, equipment, and any materials needed to implement a successful program (Williams and Chavkin, 1989). Many schools provide development seminars and training for their teachers to assist them in getting 100 percent parent involvement. There is also training on how to handle and resolve conflict with parents. The Albuquerque Public Schools' Parent Center trains school staffs and education majors about parent involvement and offers training for parents on how to become involved (Williams and Chavkin, 1989). Overall, administrators must provide school resources to help their teachers encourage parent involvement in their classes.

The final characteristic of administrative support is encouragement. Kouzes and Posner (1987) argue that encouragement for leaders consist of many factors. One factor is that of listening when teachers or staff members have concerns about the program. Kouzes and Posner argue that active listening is the key source for much of the inspiration and encouragement. Listening not only shows the teachers and

parents that the administration cares, but it might open up new ideas and ways to solve problems.

Another important factor is meeting individually with people at various times. The one-on-one contact reveals that the administrator values and cares about the individual's input and opinions. As Kouzes and Posner point, individual meetings often improve the prospect of settling disputes or conflicts between the teacher and parent or the parent and the school.

A final factor is that of rewarding successes and helping people back up when failure occurs. Administrators should not emphasize the conflicts between parents and the schools, but use these conflicts to build trust in the parents. Compromise and collaboration can be successful problem solving methods when administrators focus on what good can come from a difficult situation. Oftentimes, communication between the school and parents reveals that both sides want to achieve the same objective.

Research has also been conducted about the administrator's role in the knowledge of the community environment surrounding the school. Parent involvement programs and involvement, itself, will be different from one school to the next. Therefore, administrators must know the environment that the parents live in.

The administrator must know the income level and educational level of the parents in the school. A recent

conversation with a elementary school principal revealed that a knowledge of the environment affects the success of parent involvement. The principal stated that parents in this school only participate if they want to. The principal went on to say that the school and teachers could do everything for parent involvement and the parents would still not participate. Therefore, the principal had quit encouraging teachers to get parents involved. The principal knew the environment and realized what would and would not work.

Goldring (1990) conducted a study that examined the affects of the parent's income and educational levels with the administration support of parent involvement. Goldring found that administrators take an active position in parent involvement when income levels are higher and parents education is higher. The reason for this is that parents have a better knowledge of what happens in a school system, thereby making it easier for the school to work with parents. Goldring found that administrators tended to dissuade lower income parents from involvement because they did not understand what was going on within the school. These parents did not have a clear picture of how the educational process worked. Therefore, the administrators saw these parents more as a problem than a benefit.

Martin Haberman (1992) argues that schools must know the context of their surrounding community. Haberman argues that schools and teachers about the influence that the environment

can have on children. Haberman makes several key points in his study as to what schools can do in impoverished areas. First, schools can be sensitive to the different cultures and pressures that children have to face. Schools need to be educated about the effects of environment on socialization and growing up. Nowadays, there are much more influential elements in society than school. Second, Haberman states that schools need to work with the different community organizations and agencies that assist children. These organizations and agencies can help schools understand more about the children and their social activities. Third, schools should understand the economic conditions of many of the lower income families. Milbrey McLaughlin and Patrick Shields (1987) state that schools need to be more helpful in getting low income parents involved. McLaughlin and Shields argue that schools and teachers have a premeditated opinion that low income parents automatically discourage their child's education. But that is not always the case. Many times the parents do not understand how to become involved. Haberman (1992) reveals one more element that schools need to understand about low income parents. This element is how to approach these parents. Haberman states that administrators and teachers who cannot interact with the parents should not be teaching in the school. School officials need to be able to interact and communicate with the parents. As research reveals, communication is a major factor in successful parent

involvement. Overall, it requires a good knowledge of the community environment to have a successful program in a low income area.

Goldring also found that administrators in higher income and higher education environments provided more resources and money for parent involvement programs. Parents were also more involved in certain decisions within the school system. Furthermore, high income parents tended to have high achieving children, which meant that parent involvement was not always needed as it might be in a lower achieving environment. Administrators tended to have less conflict because student achievement was good.

The final concern for administrators is the aspect of professionalism and the personal touch. The question is often asked, "Should administrators be professional or personable in the way they deal with parents?" Jane Lindle (1989) did a study about the professionalism of administrators when dealing with parents and found that most parents do not like the professional nature of administrators. Lindle found that parents preferred a more personal touch from administrators. The dislike for professionalism stems from the attitude that parents feel like they are being patronized and "talked down" to.

Lindle found that much of the dissatisfaction from parents come from the school officials not being respectful and supporting. Parents know that professionalism cannot



disappear, but parents believe that a personal touch-especially in informal meetings-is much better for better school-parents relations. Lindle concludes her study by stating that parents want a "partnership" relationship between the schools, where the schools work together with the parents for what is best for the children.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN PARENT INVOLVEMENT

#### Teachers and Parent Involvement

Just as the administrator is very important in starting parent involvement, the teacher is the most important in implementing parent involvement. A parent involvement program can be set up in a school, but if the teacher does not make the necessary effort to encourage involvement, then the program will not be successful. Research finds that most teachers want and try to encourage parent involvement. A 1984 Gallup Poll asked teachers to identify the biggest problem facing public schools presently, and teachers ranked parent involvement at the top. In addition, the teachers were asked to identify what they believed would increase student achievement and the teachers said parent involvement (Ost, 1988).

Donald Orlosky (1992) found that one of the teachers main concerns was to strengthen their parent involvement program. Annette Lareau, in her extensive study of parent involvement during the early 1980's, found most teachers in her schools, wanted parents to be more active with school and home activities. These teachers wanted parents to be at more school conferences, engage in more reading activities with their

children, and communicate more often with the teacher. Therefore, the research is abundant with evidence showing that the teachers want parent involvement. However, it is important to examine the role of the teacher in the classroom and education before discussing some of the major factors that contribute to a good teacher-parent relationship.

Philip Gammage (1982) examined research about the teacher's role in the school and found many different opinions. Gammage found that the teacher should have the ability to transmit knowledge to the child, assist the child in the socialization process, discipline the child and teach the child to be responsible, and help the child with problems that the child might encounter within society (i.e, drugs, sex, road safety, etc...). More and more of these types of responsibilities are being put on the teacher. So not only does the teacher teach, but the teacher must be a parent, disciplinarian and counselor. Gammage also states that the teacher needs to not only know the principals of their area of interest but a wide range of knowledge that will help the child with other areas of knowledge. In other words, Gammage is saying that the teacher must teach the child a wealth of general education.

Gammage (1982) goes on to argue that the transmission of knowledge is affected by the means of transmission. Gammage argues that the type of teaching method used by the teacher will indicate how serious the teacher takes educating the

child. In turn, this attitude will result in the method of how the teacher deals with parents. Gammage states that good transmission of knowledge involves methods and techniques that facilitate clear and concise understanding of the subject. Using the right techniques and methods consists of knowing the students in the classroom. If the teacher does not know the different types of students, then certain students will miss out on the transmission of knowledge. Carol Gestwicki (1992) argues that the teacher must adjust their teaching to include all the different students in the classroom. If different methods are not incorporated students learn less, which could lead to mad parents and a bad relationship between parents and teachers.

Other researchers also discuss the role of a teacher in education. Elkin (1960) described the teachers role as one of authority, discipline, knowledge and achievement. Elkin believed that the teacher should instill and exemplify certain middle class characteristics such as respect, neatness, politeness and citizenry. Wilson (1962) looked at the teacher as a socializing agent that helped students prepare for the future. Teachers would essentially "socialize" students into society, in order to be more productive citizens. Westwood (1967) stated that the teacher's role was that of a transmitter of knowledge and values. He believed that the teacher was an individual that passed on the values and beliefs of society at that time and the behavioral patterns of

society. In other words, children should be instructed as to what to expect in terms of societal norms and traditions. If children did not know these traditions and values, then Westwood claimed that the children could not function adequately in society. Therefore, the role of teacher has dramatically changed over time into a role with many responsibilities. A teacher is now expected to educate the child not only with subject matter but with knowledge about life, responsibility and values.

Greenwood and Hickman (1991) also reveal several roles of a teacher in a parent involvement program. The first consists of wanting the parent to be an audience for the teacher and the students. Supportive teachers want parents to inform them of any deficient educational skills that their child might have, in order for the teacher to better deal with the student. Remember it is essential in good teacher-parent relations for the teacher to know the students and their backgrounds. Teachers also want parents to critique them of how effective their teaching is for the child. The teachers want to know if the parent sees any acquired learning taking place in the child. Finally, teachers want to be informed of the educational activities that the child is doing outside of school (i.e, museum trips, reading at home, help with homework, etc...).

Another role consists of the teacher allowing the parent to volunteer in the classroom. The teacher will encourage

parents to serve as tutors, help run errands, or grade papers and tests. This role gives parents a bird's eye view of how the class is structured and the type of learning going on in the classroom. Schools have even begun to bring parents in for a class to teach certain subjects. These parents are experts in the field and provide the students with first hand experience of the subject.

A third role consists of the teacher consistently encouraging the parent to continue the educational process at the home. Greenwood and Hickman argue that the teachers should continually send materials home, along with progress reports, of the educational activities that the child is doing at home. The authors revealed four activities that were deemed most important for parents to involve their children in: 1) reading with their children; 2) signing papers and folders; 3) preparing materials; and 4) summer learning at home. It is vital that the teacher constantly encourage parents to get involved with their child's education at home. Research has proven that involvement at home increases a child's achievement and his likelihood of attending college (see Conklin and Dailey, 1981).

The final role is that of the parent being a learner of the educational process. This role requires the teacher to provide information to the parent about alternative educational methods for the child. It also allows the teacher to inform the parent of any special tracking groups that might

exist. It also gives the teacher a chance to explain the political process within the school if there is a complaint or concern. This is very important since many parents are unaware of what goes on inside their school system. The increasing responsibility of the teacher has led to the most important factor concerning the relationship between the teacher and the parent. This factor concerns the attitude of the teacher. The attitude of the teacher affects many factors in the teacher-parent relationship. However, the attitude probably affects the accessibility of the teacher and the communication process the most. If the attitude of the teacher is not right, then accessibility and communication will be absent in the parent-teacher relationship.

Accessibility is described as the ability of parents to meet or talk with the teacher at various times. Accessibility is where the parents feel comfortable talking with the teacher and getting involved in their child's education (Ost, 1988; Epstein and Dauber, 1991; Gestwicki, 1992).

Several researchers have found that the teacher's attitude is of great importance to parent involvement, accessibility and communication (see Ost, 1988; Dempsey et. al, 1987; Gestwicki, 1992; Epstein and Dauber, 1991; Epstein, 1986; Rich, 1987). David Ost argues that the attitude of the teacher should be one that fosters a community relationship between the teacher and parent. This community relationship then creates a good environment of successful achievement for

the child. Epstein and Dauber (1991) found that the teacher's attitude has a significant effect on the level of involvement for the parent. More positive attitudes produced more parent involvement. Therefore, the teacher's attitude affects several other factors that are important for a teacher-parent relationship in a parent involvement program.

Teacher efficacy was another factor that increased accessibility and communication with parents. Teacher efficacy is the method by which the teachers feel comfortable in their job and know the profession of teaching. In other words, teachers know how to involve parents and also how to dissolve conflicts between parents (Hoover-Dempsey, et.al, 1987). Teacher efficacy produces better informed parents and better ideas for parent involvement. If the teachers know how to get parents involved, then the teachers will give parents ideas and offer encouragement and help for parents to get involved at home and school. Hoover-Dempsey (1987) reported that schools with better teacher efficacy had more parents assisting their child at home than other schools.

Gestwicki (1992) argues that teacher efficacy involves a partnership between parents and teachers. Gestwicki argues that parents will be afraid to approach a teacher if the teacher seems demanding and wants control. The reason for this hesitation is because the parents feel threatened. The parents believe they should have some input since it is their child. Gestwicki claims that teachers who have an attitude of



partnership will create better parent accessibility for themselves. In addition, a partnership provides more input, ideas and less conflict.

Another factor contributing to teacher accessibility is that of the educational level of the teacher. Hoover-Dempsey (1987) found that many parents (from lower SES neighborhoods) would not get involved in school or home activities because they felt threatened by the teacher's education. Those schools that were in lower income areas and had teachers with post college degrees saw less parent involvement than those schools in high income areas (Hoover-Dempsey et.al, 1987). Gestwicki provides a cure for the threat of a more educated teacher. Gestwicki claims that a teacher should possess a humility with their job. Teachers should find novel, out of the ordinary and creative methods to deal with parents from all avenues of life. Gestwicki calls this humility the attitude of "approachability." This "approachability" includes giving parents the idea that they will not be scorned or ridiculed for talking to the teacher or giving suggestions. Instead, the teacher will listen and possibly consider the ideas. However, the teacher will always welcome parent suggestions and comments. Essentially, Gestwicki claims that teachers are never so educated that they cannot learn anything more.

Herbert Walberg (1979) found that parents can also feel accessibility limited if the parent (usually the mother) feels threatened about the teacher taking the maternal role over

with the child. Walberg claims that mothers can become inferior to teachers if they believe that their child likes the teacher more than the mother. The parents' accessibility to the teacher is threatened because the mother feels that she has lost touch with her child.

Walberg also contends that teachers can be less accessible if mothers feel that they are terrible mothers. The increase of employed women leads to less time spent with children and less time that the children are around the mother. Walberg contends that the mother might begin to feel inferior with her maternal duties. Therefore, the mother feels threatened to get involved with school activities because of what the teacher might think.

Gestwicki (1992) argues that communication time between teachers and parents is essential to active parents. Gestwicki claims that communication needs to be flexible and fit in with convenient times with parents. Of course, there are several forms of communication: notes, informal talks, and parent-teacher conferences. The notes from teachers are a vital part of involving and informing parents. Teachers need to constantly keep parents abreast of student progress, problems, or asking parents to assist their child in homework.

Joyce Epstein (1986) found that 58 percent of the parents stated that rarely or never received notes from teachers during the school year. An additional 30 percent never received any ideas or assistance on how to help their child

with homework. Reginald Clark (1983) found that many African-American parents wanted to be involved in their child's education but never received any assistance from the teacher on how to assist their child. Lareau (1989) found the same attitude from many parents in her study. Parents wanted to be involved but did not know how or in what areas. Lareau also found a different story from the teacher's vantage point. Teachers stated that they consistently sent notes home, but never received any response from the parents. Many teachers even stated that their most frustrating thing about parents was that notes sent home would not be signed. Elizabeth Useem (1992) found that only 25 percent of low income parents were aware that their child was placed in a tracking system at the school. This led to the parents not being able to do anything about the placement of their child, because these parents lacked the confidence to think that things could be changed.

Gestwicki calls informal discussions essential to increasing parent involvement. Gestwicki suggests that more teachers need to invest time in informal discussions. These informal discussions can take place when the parent is dropping off their child or when the parent is picking the child up. These informal discussions make the atmosphere much more comfortable for parents and teachers alike. They make the parents feel more comfortable to approach and discuss problems or issues with the teacher. It also allows the teacher to know

that he/she can be easily approached.

Orlosky (1992) refers to these informal discussions as "teachable moments." These teachable moments refer to the teacher making the most of an opportunity with a parent. It is not only a learning experience for the parent, but also for the teacher. These teachable moments instruct the parent as to the educational well being of the child.

Eugenia Berger (1991) lists several key components of effective communication with parents-both informal and formal. The first component is giving total attention to the speaker. Listening is the key to effective communication. Teachers should not always think that they must control the communication flow. Give parents a chance to voice their concerns. A second component is to clarify what the parents say. Teachers should always make sure that what they heard is actually what the parent meant. Many times, misunderstandings cause conflict that could have been avoided. A third component consists of respecting the parent and their opinions. Even if the teacher disagrees with the parents concerns, the teacher should not embarrass or degrade the parent. This causes the parent to close up and lose confidence in the accessibility of the teacher.

A fourth component is to emphasize that no one is at fault. Research reveals that many parents feel threatened because of the authority status of the teacher. If fault is placed on the parents, especially when there is no one to

blame, then parents will lose confidence in their ability to communicate with the teacher. This can lead to less involvement. A fifth component revolves around being a conflict resolver. Berger (1991) believes that the teacher should never get into an argument with the parent. It is unprofessional and often leads to losing the parents trust and involvement. Berger claims that parents can take the argument as offensive to their parental authority. Parents look at the teacher as thinking that the teacher knows more about their child than they do. Discuss the child's problems and do not get into a shouting match. Finally, Berger believes that the teacher should become allies with the parent. Show the parents that you want them involved and communicate this with the parent.

The final technique that the teacher usually communicates with is the parent-teacher conference. This technique is probably the most popular of all the communication techniques. Often times, the conference is the most effective. Parent-teacher conferences take very careful preparation if the conference is to be successful. Researchers virtually agree that parents who attend these conferences will usually be the parents that will be involved (see Lareau, 1989; Epstein, 1986; Wolf and Stephens, 1989; Berger, 1991). There are several elements that teachers need to implement in preparing for the conference to make it a successful one.

Wolf and Stephens (1989) found that teachers need to

target parents that have children who are not achieving well in school. Wolf and Stephens claim that teachers should pay special attention to parents that are not usually seen at school functions, their children come to school in mental or emotional distress, and whose children have chronic behavior problems. These are the parents that teachers need to contact early and often and urge them to attend conferences. Lareau (1989) found that many parents who attend conferences are the parents with children that have no achievement problems. Teachers should even be flexible and open about the scheduling of the conference to make sure that parents can attend.

After the teacher has targeted the parents, the teacher needs to communicate the need for the conference, the preferred time and a positive invitation to attend. Berger (1991) suggests that you provide the parents a choice of times and even let them choose where to meet. This makes the parents feel that their opinion and involvement is really needed. In the invitation state the purpose of the conference and emphasize that the conference is an informal way to communicate concerns and bring suggestions into the open.

Susan Swap (1993) describes the next stage of the conference as preparing the agenda. Swap emphasizes the importance of the agenda stage. If the teacher does not prepare adequately, then the tone and setting of the meeting might not go properly. Usually, the teacher has the responsibility to provide an open atmosphere of communication,

where the parent feels comfortable opening up to the teacher. This all takes place in setting the agenda. The teacher should know not to begin the conference with problems or conflicts, but casually discuss external issues with the parent. Swap believes that teachers should "ease" into the purpose of the conference. Swap even suggests beginning a conference showing the parent some of the positive things that the parent's child has done.

As the conference begins, the most important part of the conference takes place. This consists of the two-way communication between the teacher and parent. The communication process consists of several elements. The first element is to know who you are talking to. The teacher should be knowledgeable about the parent (Orlosky, 1992; Swap, 1993; Berger, 1991; Wolf and Stephens, 1989). If the teacher knows the type of home environment and socio-economic status that the parent comes from, then the teacher can begin to build rapport. The building of rapport can make the parent more comfortable with confronting the teacher about concerns. Swap gives several examples of bad communication during conferences. One example is that of a disgusted African-American mother who thought the teacher downgrading her daughter's educational ability by recommending that the daughter be placed in a special education class. The mother felt that the teacher was misjudging the daughter's ability and did not know the daughter well enough to see her

abilities.

Another example was that of a teacher getting angry during a conference because a parent complained that the curriculum was not challenging enough for the parent's child. The teacher was insulted by the remark and replied back that she felt that the curriculum prepared the child for the next grade in school. Swap uses these examples to emphasize that communication is vital because of the short time and the feelings that can generate in that short of a time. Even when parents attend a conference ready to go to battle with the teacher, the teacher must be able to keep the anger under control. As Berger puts it, the teacher must be sensitive to the parents feelings even if the teacher disagrees with the parent.

Orlosky (1992) describes communication between the teacher and parent as one of three relationships. The first type is that of a closed relationship. In this relationship, both the teacher and parent are suspicious of each other and protective of what is said. There is a lack of trust between the teacher and parent and both feel that any talk of the truth will lead the other participant to angry feelings. Orlosky describes this relationship as one of doubt, mistrust and distant.

The second type is an open relationship where honesty, clarity and trust abound. The teacher and parent feel comfortable conversing with each other and do not feel



threatened or insulted when discussing problems or concerns. Both parties know that the other is only trying to help the child involved and improve the child's educational ability.

The final type is a transitional relationship. This involves one participant being closed and the other participant trying to be open and honest. Usually, the person that is more in control and demanding will change the other person to their own style (Orlosky, 1992). This relationship can cause some tense and uncomfortable moments in a conference because both participants are trying to communicate problems and concerns to the other.

Orlosky (1992) and Wolf and Stephens (1989) provide teachers some tips for successful parent-teacher conferences that can lead to more productive conferences and eventually more involved parents. The first tip is to have a mutual respect for the parent. Just like the teacher wants to be respected by the parent, the same is true for the parent. Orlosky states that mutual respect is the force behind a strong and stable relationship between a teacher and parent. Orlosky believes that the first impression is extremely important because the parent receives the perception of the school and teacher from the first impression. Remember that research has shown that parents like teachers who have a balance of being personable and professional.

A second tip is to be empathetic with the parent. Essentially, the teacher needs to share the emotions of the

parent. The teacher needs to understand where the parent is coming from and identify with the message that the parent is trying to convey. A good parent-teacher relationship begins with the parent believing that the teacher actually cares for the child and the child's environment.

A third tip is to be organized and prepared for the conference. Organize the agenda into understandable categories and discussions so the parent does not feel uncomfortable. The conference should have an open atmosphere of communication and this begins with the structure of the conference. The teacher should be specific, clear and provide examples to help the parent understand the problem (Wolf and Stephens, 1989). Teachers should not overwhelm parents with a "laundry list" of problems or information. Keep it short and simple and to the point.

A final tip is for the teacher to obtain information about the parents or the child. The teacher should not have the attitude that he/she is the expert and that the parent cannot provide any insight. Many times it is just the opposite. Do not be evasive. Do not try to avoid criticism or constructive comments (Wolf and Stephens, 1989). Remember that a good parent involvement program consists of a partnership between the parent and teacher. Each participant knows the role they play and are willing for the other participant to play that role.

Parent-teacher conferences are very important to the

success of parent involvement. Research overwhelmingly agrees that conferences can lead to more parent involvement, if they are handled correctly. However, if the conferences go awry, then the conflicts between the teacher and parent can decrease involvement and harm the program overall.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE ROLE OF THE PARENT IN PARENT INVOLVEMENT

#### The Family, Home and Parent Involvement

Most of the research on parent involvement focuses on the factors that encourage or discourage parents to involve themselves in their child's education. These factors include the style of parenting, socioeconomic status, home activities, family socialization and family structure. However, some research has examined the way in which parents view parent involvement and their role in their child's education.

Donna Wissburn and Joyce Eckart (1992) provide a hierarchy of parent involvement to determine the different levels at which parents involve themselves. The first level is that of **spectator**. The spectator parent believes in the autonomous authority of the teacher and school administrator. The parent feels that it is not his/her job to interfere with the education of the child. The parent looks at the teacher as an expert and one that knows what he/she is doing (Wissburn and Eckart, 1992). There are many reasons for parents being at this level. The first is that the parents do not have time to really become involved in school activities. A second reason is that parents do not feel that they have the knowledge and skills to successfully communicate with teachers or

administrators about problems or ideas. A third reason is that parents have a negative perspective on public schools. Wissburn and Eckart describe these parents as ones who had trouble when they were kids in school. Therefore, they generalize their experiences to include all schools.

Even though a person might argue that parents being spectators would lead to less trouble and stress, the opposite is true. Wissburn and Eckart found that teachers became discouraged and frustrated that parents were not involved. Annette Lareau (1989) found that parents were upset when parents were not involved. Teachers get upset because there is no external help when the child is struggling or failing. Teachers have no input from the family on how to help the child do better. Therefore, the teachers can only sit and watch the child achieve less than desired.

A second level of involvement is that of parental support. This level consists of the parents being involved in certain school activities, but only at their convenience. However, when the parents help in these certain activities, the teacher can expect a good and thorough job to be done. These specific tasks are simple and usually can be done at home. Some of the tasks include: 1) making sure the child attends school regularly and on time; 2) seeing that the child completes homework; 3) reading and responding to all important communication sent by the teacher and; 4) reinforcing school behaviors at home. Parents at this level believe that

education is a vital part of the child's life and is committed to assisting the teacher as best they can to accomplishing the essential aspects of education.

The third level of involvement is that of engagement. Engagement is full participation and involvement. Involvement from volunteering in the classroom to being active on the PTA. These parents want to observe the impact of the school on their child and also want to be an active part in their education (Wissburn and Eckart, 1992). These parents help teachers with distributing information about activities, attend workshops, meet frequently with the teacher, help with homework at home, and volunteer for classroom duty or school events.

The engagement level also has its problems. Parents at this level can often be demanding of the teachers and the school because they are very concerned about their child's education. These parents expect the school to be accountable for every decision and action taken. Therefore, teachers can become threatened and even feel that they have no authority over these parents. As Wissburn and Eckart point out, it is very important that parents' and teachers' attitudes be compatible at this level.

The final level of involvement is decision making. Essentially these parents control their schools and have an interest in the education of the entire student population. Parents at this level get involved in decisions, policies and

setting policies. They are very active in setting educational outcomes to make sure they are satisfactorily educating their children. These parents also like to be creative, take risks and try new ideas to improve education (Wissburn and Eckart, 1992).

The decision making process at this level is often a joint effort between parents and administrators and both sides are open minded, accepting of criticism, and willing to learn from each other. According to Wissburn and Eckart, usually there are few power struggles at this level because everyone knows the mission that must be achieved. Overall, school bureaucratic power declines and accountability increases.

Annette Lareau (1989) found in her study that working class and upper class families viewed parent involvement differently. Lareau found that working class parents viewed their part of involvement as "separation." The working class families felt their role was to leave much of the education up to the school. Many of these families would fit into Wissburn and Eckart's spectator stage. These working class families did not have the confidence to try and challenge the school. Lareau found that many of these families did not know how to help, but once they did, they tried their best to help their children. The working class families helped with the essentials of education: responding to information sent home by the teacher and attending some of the parent-teacher conferences. However, these families did not feel it was their

duty to become active in school events or to question the teacher's decision or authority.

On the other hand, upper class families looked at involvement as an "interconnectedness." This interconnectedness refers to the belief that schools and parents should and ought to work together. Education should be a partnership. Lareau found that upper class families were eager and willing to get involved in school activities, as well as home activities. These families attend conferences on a regular basis, are not afraid to approach the teacher or school about problems, and emphasize education in the home. The family is an integral educator for the child. Lareau received a comment from one family who was asked what their role in their child's school was. The family responded that they tried to encourage their child to do better and encouraged other parents to become more involved. These parents made the point that they did not have much extra time to dedicate to school activities, so they saw their role as an encourager and a help for increased involvement.

Lareau found that three elements provided the basis for this interconnectedness to be successful in a school. The first element consists of providing clear and concise information. Lareau found that the interconnected parents received more information from their school than those families that considered themselves as separated from the school. The information consisted of more than just progress



reports and coming events. The information introduced parents to the teachers, administrators and staff of the school. In other words, parents knew something about the teacher who was teaching their child and the people who were working to make the school run properly. Parents also received information about possible problems that teachers sensed with the parents' child.

The second element is the constructive criticism that took place at this school. When problems occurred, parents and/or teachers would approach the problem with the right attitude. Very few feelings were hurt and communication between the school and parents was one of respect and caring. Confrontations were approached and dealt with in a professional manner. As Lareau pointed out, very few parent-teacher conferences consisted of shouting matches.

The final element is that of an attitude of partnership. Lareau revealed that the school and parents knew their role in the school. Both parties saw education as a shared enterprise that took the cooperation of both parents and teachers to successfully educate children. The teachers and parents respected each others' roles and did what was possible to enhance the roles and provide the best education.

### **Parenting Styles and Achievement**

An important factor in educational achievement in the home is the parenting style and the relationship between the

parent and the child. As Reginald Clark (1983) states:

"the child's own success and knowledge can be determined by the parents upbringing, the parents' current support networks, and the parents satisfaction with the home environment with the child."

Clark identifies several elements that can affect the achievement of the child. However, many of these elements relate back to the parenting style of the parents. The parenting style often will determine the type of peers and neighborhood environment that the parents will allow their children to be around. Clark found that those parents who gain respect from their children and care for their children had more influence than the neighborhood environment, even when the environment was lower class and rough. Clark revealed that successful poor black children had frequent dialogues with their parents, parent encouragement of academic pursuit and success, and consistent limits and discipline for the children's behavior.

Clark also goes on to emphasize the need for good parenting in the home and parental support during the early years of the child. Since the child spends most of the first five to six years in the home, it is vital for the parents to prepare the child for the school environment. Bobbitt and Paolucci (1986) reveal that the parents must realize the influence and advantage the home and parents play in the way the child is brought up. Bobbitt and Paolucci indicate that families with good parenting styles create learning opportunities early on with the child and begin teaching them

moral, spiritual and social values. The authors also found that the families that actively engaged themselves in educating their child spent more family time together, had better support networks for their children, and cared for their children more. Research indicates that if the parents are unable to develop cognitive skills, responsibility, interaction and social skills for the child, then a difficulty could arise in the child during the early school years (see Clark, 1983 and Bobbitt and Paolucci, 1986).

Sanford Dornbusch and others (1987) found that parents exhibited three different types of parenting styles. The first consisted of an authoritarian style. This style has the characteristics of the parent attempting to shape, control and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of their children in relation to a set of standards. In this style, parents emphasize obedience, respect for authority, tradition and preservation of order. A consistent verbal give and take between parent and child is often discouraged (Dornbusch and Wood, 1989). Diana Baumrind (1983) found that authoritarian parents produced children with very little social skills and low levels of independence. This is because the children relied on the parents for every decision and did not question or interact very much with adults or older people. Therefore, when the children were on their own and decisions or circumstances in society were not similar to the situations or standards at home, the children did not know what to do.

The second style of parenting is permissive. This style allows the parent to be more tolerant and accepting of the child's behavior and impulses. Permissive parenting also allows for considerable self-regulation. Dornbusch and Wood (1989) also describe permissive as parents not really engaged or interested in helping their children with increasing their maturity. Permissive parents use little punishment, make very few demands on their children, and might even be persuaded to allow the child to make the decision in some circumstances. Baumrind (1983) found that the children of permissive parents were immature, lacked adequate responsibility, had little self-reliance, and relied often on impulse decisions. These children lack the discipline many times to be attentive in the classroom and might not take the authority of the teacher seriously. Therefore, the child's achievement drops because of the inability to realize the importance of education and the commitment needed.

The final style of parenting is authoritative. This style expects the child to be mature and act accordingly, strictly enforces rules and regulations and constantly encourages the child's independence and individuality (Dornbusch et.al, 1987). Authoritative parents encourage open communication and involvement in family decisions. These parents also recognize the rights of the children and how these rights fit into the structure of the family. Authoritative parents tend to be found in upper class families with more education than usual.

Dornbusch and Wood conducted a study to find out the effects of parenting style on achievement. Their study revealed some significant results. The authors found that authoritarian and permissive resulted in lower grades and achievement overall. The authoritative style was positively associated with student achievement (.08 for males and .13 for females). Even a mixture of authoritarian and permissive styles resulted in lower achievement. Dornbusch also found that Asian children performed better in school with authoritarian parents, while blacks and whites performed far less better with authoritarian parents.

Dornbusch and Wood also found that single mothers showed more permissive parenting styles, while higher educated parents used authoritative parenting more often. Dornbusch and Wood also found that permissive and authoritarian styles correlated with the age of the child. For example, parents with older children used less of an authoritarian style than they might have during the younger years of their children. Therefore, parenting style is somewhat indicative of a child's educational attainment.

### **SES and Educational Attainment**

One of the most researched and significant factor concerning educational attainment is that of socioeconomic status (SES). The SES factors include income, occupation

(which includes hours at work and time of work shift), social status and education. Benjamin Bloom (1986) found that ten percent of the affect on a child's achievement can be solely attributed to the influence of SES.

The first factor of SES is that of income. Chubb and Moe (1990) found that those families in successful schools and that contain successful students earn approximately 35 percent more than those parents in low achievement schools. For example, 54 percent of parents in low performance schools made less than \$20,000 and only ten percent made over \$25,000. On the other hand, 81 percent of the families in high performance schools made over \$20,000 (46 percent making over \$25,000), while only 18 percent made under \$20,000. Chubb and Moe also reveal that only one-third of low performance school parents made more than the national median income of \$21,071, while only one high performance school averaged less than the poverty line of \$8,382.

Christopher Jencks (1979) found that income of parents influenced educational achievement and future success. Jencks found that a person's income increased 8 percent with an extra year of elementary or secondary education. Jencks especially noted the significant income increase between the first and last years of high school and college as much as twice the average income. The increased income that comes with increased education produces a home environment that encourages academic achievement more than a home that has not gone that far in the

educational spectrum. Therefore, Jencks posits that achievement will be higher in families of higher income.

Herman and Yeh (1983) found a significant correlation between parents' income and student achievement. In their study, the SES variable had the greatest influence on achievement (correlation of .52). The reason they found for this high correlation was that wealthier parents encouraged their child more and wanted to push their child to do better. On the other hand, lower income parents felt satisfied with the school's educational system, and rarely encouraged their child to strive harder in their education. Reginald Clark (1983) also found this same attribute in some of lower class families in his study. Clark found that some low income children had less encouragement from home, less concern about academic failure and much less communication with the child's teacher.

Ann Milne (1986) also found that higher income families pushed their child more, spent more time with their child at home, and usually did not seek employment during the early years of their child's life. Russell Hill and Frank Stafford (1974) found that high SES mothers spent three times as much time with their children as did low SES mothers. Hill and Stafford also found that more resources were invested in high SES children because of the ability for these families to make the financial commitment. Therefore, high SES children began school often ahead of other children academically.

Milne (1986) and Lareau (1989) suggest that the father's income, which is directly connected to the father's occupation, has a significant impact on the child's achievement. Milne (1986) found that the loss of a father's income was the main variable that contributed to the child losing motivation for school and decreasing academic performance. Lareau (1989) contends that the father's income and his occupational status affects the child's achievement, as well as the father's rate of participating in school activities. Those fathers with lower incomes and lower occupational status (i.e, assembly-line workers, cement workers, construction workers) felt inferior to teachers and administrators, who they perceived as highly educated people who knew what they were doing. Therefore, fathers would not get involved in school activities or conferences in fear of being embarrassed in front of their child.

Jencks (1979) and Clark (1983) also contend that the father's income and role in society play a huge part in the child's achievement and academic outlook. Both authors argue that the child sees their father and his income as what to expect out of hard work and education. Clark contends that it is up to the father to encourage his child to become better and to go further in the child's educational endeavor. Clark found that boys were much more influenced by their father's income than girls.

The Condition of Education Report, released by the U.S.



Department of Education, in 1993 found that low income children start school later, stay in one grade longer and therefore, graduate later than the average child. Overall, low income children who are above the typical age for their grade increases 9 percent in first grade, to 19 percent in fourth grade, to 30 percent in seventh grade. Eventually, these children lose confidence in their ability to ever finish school and begin a career. In addition, between October 1990 and October 1991, 11 percent of children from low income families dropped out of school compared to only one percent from high income families. Thirty percent of low income children 19-20 years old had dropped out and not finished high school, compared to three percent of high income children.

A second factor within SES is that of the parents educational levels. Chubb and Moe (1990) found that those parents in high performance schools had one to two additional years of schooling compared to parents in low performance schools. In addition, more than two times the parents in high performance schools have a college degree than those parents in low performance schools. For example, Chubb and Moe found the average years of education in low performance schools equals that of a high school diploma, while high performance parents have an average of two additional years of college education (14.0 years). The U.S. Department of Education found that students with parents who obtained more education received higher proficiency scores in science (Condition of

Education, 1993). Jencks (1979) and the U.S. Department of Education (1993) both argue that the more education a person receives, the better possibility of a higher paying occupation that person has. Overall, Chubb and Moe found educational attainment, along with income, to be the most influential factors in school achievement and involvement.

Elizabeth Useem (1992) also found parent's educational attainment to be influential in the placement of students in a particular math group. She found that those parents with less education had their child placed in the remedial math group, while those with more education had their child placed in the accelerated math group. For example, 89 percent of the fathers who had children in accelerated math groups had advanced degrees. In addition, Useem reveals that 70 percent of the mothers had advanced degrees. On the other hand, almost half the fathers and forty percent of the mothers with children in the remedial group had no schooling past high school.

This correlates with other research discussed that reveals that lower educated parents tend to not get involved in the decision making process of their child. These parents tend to be less aggressive towards the teacher and usually believe that the teacher is the authority in the education field. Therefore, lower educated parents might be more apt to allow their child to be placed in a remedial class, if the teacher suggests this be done. Useem points out that only

twelve percent of lower educated parents even thought about going to discuss their child's placement with the teacher. Only twelve percent believed that they could change the placement of their child. In addition, lower educated parents do not understand the intricacies of the school system or do not know the type of work the child is doing (Useem, 1992).

Useem goes on to argue that lower educated parents did not seem to know that there was a tracking system at the school, and many did not even understand that their child was in a "remedial" group. Many of the lower educated parents only paid attention to the grades the child received, instead of examining the type of work being brought home and completed. Only 25 percent of the parents knew that the school had a tracking system, and many stated that they were not even contacted by the teacher about the placement of their child (Useem, 1992). Useem's study points out the evident gap of knowledge and communication between the school and parents about the placement of the child in the school.

Reginald Clark (1983) found that parents with more education provided a better educational environment for their children in the home. Clark found that the children were more educationally motivated to do well in school. Highly educated parents also provided better instruction and experience as to the importance of education in the child's life and future. The parents were more supportive and involved in the child's school activities because the parents understood the

importance of the education. Clark also found that highly educated parents gave "pep talks" to their children to reinforce the importance of schooling and grades. Clark essentially found that highly educated parents relayed the goal of education to be a way out of poverty and to achieve a certain status within society.

Annette Lareau (1989) also found that the parents educational attainment was correlated with parent involvement. Similar to what Useem found, Lareau revealed the unwillingness of lower educated parents to begin a relationship between the home and school. Lareau found that when teachers requested meetings with lower educated parents, attendance was much lower than attendance with higher educated parents. Two reasons for this discrepancy stand out. First of all, lower educated parents believe that the teachers and school officials know what they are doing since they are perceived as "professional and well educated" workers. Therefore, lower educated parents usually took the teachers decision about their child's education as the best thing for the child. Secondly, lower educated parents believed that school and the home environment should be separated. Again, with the parents uneasiness about conversing with school officials, these parents felt that school news should stay within the school and not be carried into the home environment. As stated earlier, these parents' lack of involvement leads to them never being around any school activities or school-related

people.

Finally, Pyszkowski (1989) reveals that higher educated parents offer more concern and have access to more educational resources for their child. These parents realize the benefit and importance of education to their child's future. Pyszkowski states that these parents start their child's educational adventure at home early in the child's life. Therefore, many of these children are better prepared for school than other children. Various researchers have indicated the importance of early education in the home. These researchers find that interrelationships can be formed and a positive environment for learning can be constructed (see Schlossman, 1986; Bobbitt and Paolucci, 1986; Griffore and Bubolz, 1986). Bobbitt and Paolucci (1986) found that 59 percent of the knowledge learned by preschool children could be attributed to the home. These researchers believe that the home provides children the experiential and practical learning that might be difficult to achieve in the school environment.

Pyszkowski also found that highly educated parents reinforce their child's confidence frequently and provide the child with resources necessary to continually build cognitive faculties. Finally, Pyszkowski finds that highly educated parents are more knowledgeable about the educational process and the politics of the school. The children are very aware that their parents will influence the school to provide them the best education possible.

A final contributing factor to the influence of SES on parent involvement is the parents' occupational status. Annette Lareau (1989) studied the affect of the parent's occupational status and found some interesting relationships. The main relationship revealed that the type of occupation of the father indicated how frequently the father would interact with the school and participate in school activities. For example, in the two schools studied, Lareau found that the lower income school had fathers in lower status occupations. These fathers rarely became involved because of their perception of teachers. As Lareau states: "the parents saw teachers as professionals, having a specialized body of knowledge that they had acquired through training." These parents compared their occupation with the teacher's and came to the conclusion that teaching was a more prestigious occupation. Therefore, they did not interact with the teacher or become very involved in school activities.

Interviews with these parents revealed that occupational differences produced a negative relationship between the home and school. Even though the school had not done anything, the parents automatically felt that the teacher was alienating himself/herself from the parents. Therefore, negative perceptions about the school and education were created. This negative perception transferred to a decrease in educational motivation and encouragement from the parents. Therefore, student achievement decreased.

Reginald Clark (1983) also found validity in the influence of occupational status. He found that the type of occupation produced a perception about the quality and importance of education. Clark found that lower status jobs produced beliefs that education did not really bring prosperity, therefore, why should a person try to obtain a great amount of education? This belief transferred to their children in the form of less encouragement and emphasis on grades and achievement.

Elizabeth Cohen (1989) found that parents with a high status occupation had higher educational aspirations for their children than those with lower status occupations. For example, only 44 percent of children with parents in manual occupations were planning to attend college. In addition, those children with mothers in high status occupations attended college more frequently than those in lower status occupations (74% to 38%, respectively). Cohen also found that middle class occupations led to better student achievement and involvement, than those in lower status occupations. For example, 60 percent of the children with parents in middle class occupations or higher were planning to attend college.

Some researchers have found that the occupational status of the different parents can have different affects on the children. For example, Judith Blake (1989) found that the father's occupational status affected the achievement and involvement of the son more than the daughter. Ann Milne

(1989) found that the mother's occupation can have a negative affect on the early learning of a child. Milne found that children whose mother worked during the early years of the child's life had a negative impact on achievement. In addition, the mother was less involved in school activities at this time. The main element that contributed to this negative impact on the child was the mother's lack of time for activities with the child at home or school (Milne, 1989). Milne points out that the lack of time is not specifically correlated to less achievement, but what takes place during the time spent with the child.

The schedule of the parents job can be significant in showing the affect of parent involvement on achievement. Parents with lower status occupations work longer hours and have less control and flexibility with their schedule. On the other hand, higher status occupations allow for more flexibility and autonomy. The flexibility allows these parents to rearrange their work schedule to attend their child's school activities or spend more time with their child at home (Lareau, 1989). As a consequence of work flexibility, a home-school interconnectedness evolves that can be positive and beneficial for the child. However, Lareau found that the long working hours of many parents do not offer this home-school relationship. Therefore, these parents' environment only contains associates and relationships between the occupation and the home. Overall, there is sufficient research to uphold



the contention that SES does contribute to parent involvement.

### **The Home and Parent Involvement**

The home environment might well be argued as the most significant influence on a child's educational achievement and a parent's involvement. Griffore and Boger (1986) argue that the family, home learning activities, and the social networks developed through the home influence the early learning of the child. There has been numerous research done and statistics provided to show the importance of home activities, family structure and number of people in the family on parent involvement and student achievement. It has also been a common assumption throughout this research that the more involved the parents are with home activities, the more involved the parents will be in school activities.

First of all, several studies reveal the extent of home activities and their relation to parent involvement. The Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) found that many students did not discuss school activities, school classes, or school topics with their parents (62 percent). The study also found that only 26 percent of parents ever checked their child's homework. In addition, the OERI found that 57 percent of parents rarely (once or twice a month) helped their child with homework. This lack of involvement at home led to little involvement in school activities. For example, OERI found only half of the parents had attended one meeting during the school year. The study revealed that half of the parents

admitted to never contacting the school about their child's academic progress. Nearly two-thirds did not contact a school official to discuss the academic track their child was pursuing (OERI, 1990). Finally, one-third of the parents were active members of their local parent-teacher organization (i.e., PTO).

Another study released by the U.S. Department of Education in July, 1993, revealed the extent of home activity. The report, called **Prospects**, found that parents in lower neighborhoods read less to their children during the first grade year than those parents in less impoverished schools. However, the report does reveal that as the child became older, the parents engaged in more reading activity at home. In addition, the report indicated that the parents in poorer schools help their child more with homework than parents in wealthier schools. For example, 76 percent of the parents in the poorest schools helped their child with homework on a daily basis, while only 57 percent of parents in wealthy schools helped their child with homework daily. This statistic seems to go against other research discussed in this study, but goes along with what Reginald Clark found in some of his poorer households in his study. Clark (1983) found that some poorer parents were as active or more active at home and school than wealthier parents. Clark argues that these parents want their children to achieve more than they achieved, therefore, they motivate and encourage their children to take

education seriously.

Other evidence in the **Prospects** report revealed that poorer parents have less access to educational resources in their home. For example, only 44 percent of lower income parents have access to a daily newspaper, 48 percent to a regular magazine, 56 percent to a set of encyclopedias, 34 percent to a typewriter, and 14 percent to a computer. This compares to wealthier parents who have access to most of these educational resources. For example, at least two-thirds of all wealthy parents have access to every educational resource listed in the study (i.e, newspaper, magazines, encyclopedias, calculator, dictionary, etc....) except for computers and typewriters (Department of Education, 1993).

One final home environment factor is the amount of time spent on homework. The **Prospects** study found that almost half (46%) of children in poor schools spent less than one hour on their homework, while 80 percent of wealthy school children spent more than one hour on homework. The study also found that the longer the poorer child had to spend doing the homework, the rate of completion decreased.

A study released each year by the U.S. Department of Education called **Trends in Academic Progress** relates the same message as the **Prospects** study. The Department of Education found that materials and resources in the home played an important part in the math, reading and writing proficiency of students. More home resources produced higher scores for

students. For example, more reading material allowed students a greater variety of material to practice with outside of the school. Therefore, these children were academically ahead in their reading potential than those with less reading resources at home.

Clark (1983) reveals several main areas in the home environment, that if not paid attention to, can affect the child's achievement in certain areas of school. The first area consists of parental encouragement for achievement. Research indicates that positive encouragement towards education improves the child's achievement, as well as their likelihood to attend college (see Chubb and Moe, 1990; and Lareau, 1989). Roslyn Mickelson (1990) found that blacks with more positive attitudes towards education were more involved and gave their children a better outlook on schooling. She found these children to be more optimistic about school and how education can bring about occupational rewards.

Judith Blake argues that parent expectations for the child also influences parent encouragement. She found if parents placed emphasis on grades and doing well in school, then the motivation was in the home to try hard in everything the child did in school. This also led to parents becoming more involved in their child's school activities. Lareau (1989) found that the most important factor on educational encouragement was the parents values and beliefs about education. If educational values were high and stable, then

more encouragement was found in the home.

The second area is that of parental guidance through the child's educational adventure. Clark defines this as the parents knowledge about their child's placement and progress in the school system. Bloom (1986) found that academic guidance was significant to student achievement and parent involvement. He states that when parents are knowledgeable about the school and their child's progress in the school, then the parents are better able to assist the child with homework, projects and difficulties at home. Lareau (1989) found that when parents took on the job academic guidance, rather than a school official, the student's achievement increased.

The third area is the quality of home activities. This refers to the time taken for the family to do an activity together, whether it be school related or for entertainment. The U.S. Department of Education found that the more hours spent watching television, the less the child achieves in school (see also Bloom, 1986). Benjamin Bloom argues that the change in the work ethic has altered family time. Since it is almost a necessity for both parents to work outside the home, there is less time for family activities at home. Many parents allow the television to be the "babysitter" while the parents relax from their day's work. Garner and Raudenbush (1991) also found that when families do not find activities to do, then the child begins developing social networks within the

neighborhood to take up his/her time. The authors argue that the type of interaction and association with these social networks can positively or negatively affect achievement (see also Bloom, 1986). Research verifies the need for families to spend more quality time with their children, whether it be at home or participating in school activities.

### **Conclusion**

Research is abundant concerning the issue of parent involvement and its importance in the education of children. However, parent involvement goes further than just the parents influence. Parent involvement extends to the administrators and teachers within the school. These officials are the people who begin the program and are often responsible for the successful implementation of the program. The research has revealed the important components of the relationship between administrator-parent and teacher-parent. The research has also revealed the importance of certain elements within parent involvement. These elements consist of communication, flexible meeting schedules, the parent's perception of the school and the teacher's perception of the parent. In addition, home activities, parental encouragement, and numerous SES factors play an important part in parent involvement.

Overall, research concludes that several factors are important in successful parent involvement programs. These factors are important and require the cooperation of the

administrator, teacher and parent. Without good cooperation, openness, and communication between these three groups, parent involvement cannot be successful within a school system.

## CHAPTER SIX

### METHODOLOGY AND HYPOTHESES CONCERNING PARENT INVOLVEMENT

#### Methodology

This study and the data obtained in this study were extrapolated from the three elementary schools in the Claremore school system. These three schools are Westside, Claremont and Stuart Roosa elementary schools. Westside has a student enrollment of around 500, while Claremont has an enrollment of around 580 and Stuart Roosa has a population of around 200. Overall, the Claremore school system has a student enrollment of around 3,500. The study examined first and fourth grades in these three schools and the extent of parent involvement in these two grades. Overall, there were 429 first and fourth graders in these schools. Claremont had the largest group of first and fourth graders, followed by Westside and Stuart Roosa. Claremont had 12 classes of first and fourth graders, while Westside had 10 classes and Stuart Roosa had four.

The Claremore school system has a Superintendent, and three assistant superintendents. The school system employs 250 certified personnel and 150 support personnel. The school system also has an Alternative Learning Center for potential dropouts or those who have already dropped out. The school



system also has programs and facilities available for educating and serving handicapped students. Table 1 reveals certain school characteristics and academic characteristics of the Claremore school system.

Claremore is a city 30 miles northeast of Tulsa on Highway 66. Claremore is a city of around 16,000 people and is the county seat of Rogers County. Claremore is the home of Rogers State College, the Will Rogers Memorial and the J.M. Davis Gun Museum. Claremore is a family town and a town of many younger families and younger people. According to the 1990 Census, the average age in Claremore was 33 years old. In addition, Claremore is considered by many of its townspeople as a city of mixed employment. The town of Claremore is going through a transition in the type of people moving into the town. In the past, Claremore has been an isolated town, but recently, Claremore has expanded to be more of a commuter center for people working in Tulsa. The city limits have expanded towards Tulsa and more people are moving to Claremore, while commuting to Tulsa. Surveys were given to the teachers in these three schools and to the families, and most of them described Claremore as a town of mixed employment. Mixed employment consists of a variety of industrial and business opportunities. Claremore has several factories in its industrial park, as well as being the home to several businesses in its downtown area. Therefore, the families in this survey come from a wide range of different occupations,

which can lead to different perceptions about parent involvement and education.

Another factor which makes Claremore a good place to conduct this type of research is the emphasis the town puts on its school system and the sports program. Like any small town, the school is many times the "hub" of activity. The administration of the school likes the Claremore system to be thought of as a progressive school, trying to move forward and provide better education through a more efficient means. One of the administrators stated that they have tried to provide more avenues for parent involvement and participation as a way to make their school system better. Therefore, the Claremore school system should provide an adequate view of parent involvement in a "normal" American town.

Three surveys were created to ask questions of administrators (i.e, principals and superintendents), teachers, and parents of first and fourth graders. As stated above, 429 surveys were sent to the families in these three schools, while 8 surveys were sent out to the administrators, and 63 surveys to teachers. The surveys sent to the administrators were brief and to the point. The administrators consisted of all the three school's principals and assistant principals. In addition, the Claremore superintendent and three assistant superintendents were asked to participate in the study. The survey questions asked the administrators to describe their parent involvement program, their parent-

teacher organization (PTO) program, and whether their school was involved in community events in any way. One final topic of discussion on the survey was whether the administrators felt that parents were involved in the decision making process of the school system. A copy of the administrative survey is found in the Appendix. All eight administrators answered and turned in their surveys.

The surveys handed out to the teachers asked several questions about the parents of the child and the manner in which they involve their parents. First of all, every teacher in each of the three schools were given surveys, even if they did not teach first or fourth grade. The reason for doing this was to get an overall perception of the type of parent involvement program in the Claremore school system, as well as to find out the successes and failures of the current parent involvement program.

The survey asked the teacher to provide some demographic data on the parents of their students, as well as the academic level of their students (i.e, were they at the proper reading level for their grade?). Most of the questions asked the teachers to state how many parent-teacher conferences they held, did they keep the parents informed of the child's progress, and how many school activities were the parents involved in. Teachers were also asked if they would make any adjustments to their meeting schedule if a parent could not make the regularly scheduled meeting. A final important

question asked the teacher whether they are encouraged by the school system to involve their parents. Overall, 45 of the 63 teachers (71 percent) answered and returned the surveys. A copy of the teacher survey is also in the Appendix.

The final survey was given to 429 first and fourth grade families in the three Claremore elementary schools. First and fourth grades were selected because of research study conclusions verifying that parent involvement decreases significantly between the first and fourth grades. These surveys asked the families for basic demographic data, as well as an description of the parent involvement program at their particular school. Then the questions focused on the parents' perception of the school and its officials, the flexibility of the teacher in meeting with the parents, the quality of information sent by the school to the parents, the extent of activity by the parent at school and in the home, and any perceived problems in the parent involvement program. Other questions also dealt with the educational resources the families had at home and how they rated their school's parent involvement program. Overall, 273 of the 429 parents (64 percent) answered and returned the surveys. A copy of the family survey can be found in the Appendix.

The surveys were given to all the respondents involved and information was given about the respondents anonymity. The respondents were given almost two weeks to answer the survey and return it to the school in a sealed envelope. The surveys

consisted of closed ended questions that were simple to understand and straightforward. Some questions on the teacher and family surveys gave the respondent a chance to state their opinion about the parent involvement program or some aspect of the program. Even though some respondents did not answer some questions, most surveys were returned completely answered.

The survey results were analyzed by using crosstabs, pearson correlation and regression analysis to determine the validity of the hypotheses, as well as the various factors important to parent involvement. Overall, there were fourteen variables formed and they are as follows:

V01	"School"
V02	"Recept"
V03	"Inform"
V04	"Meet"
V05	"Home"
V06	"Confer"
V07	"Active"
V08	"Progres"
V09	"Homeact"
V10	"Diction"
V11	"Compute"
V12	"Hours"
V13	"Problem"
V14	"Encour"

Most of these variables are self-explanatory, but some of them will be described. Variable 4 ("Meet") refers to the teacher being willing to meet outside of school hours if the parent could not meet during the regular school hours. Variable 5 ("Home") refers to the teacher having made a home visit in the past or willing to make a home visit if needed. Variable 7 ("Active") refers to how active the parents are in school activities (i.e, field trips, classroom volunteers,

extracurricular activities). Variable 12 ("Hours") refers to the amount of hours per week that the parent helps his/her child with school work. These variables should reveal the importance-or lack thereof-of the following hypotheses.

The three factors that are being examined (i.e, perception, communication and information) had several questions on the parent surveys that were combined to conduct statistical analysis. The perception factor consisted of the "reception" variable, the "meet" variable, the "problem" variable, and the "encouragement" variable. The communication factor consisted of the "conference" variable, while the information factor consisted of the "inform" variable, and the "progress" variable.

### **Hypotheses**

There has been much research and analysis done about parent involvement in the public schools. However, much of the research has focused on the socioeconomic status (SES) of families and the school system. Past studies have examined the type of neighborhood, the income status of the family, the number of children in the family, and the occupation of the parents. However, less emphasis is placed on the importance of the parent's perception of the school and the communication that takes place between the school and the parents. Essentially, this study looks at three main factors that might affect the success of a school's parent involvement program.

These three factors create what the study has called "The Parent Involvement Triangle" or the P.I.T. (see Figure 1). This triangle is similar to the Iron Triangle often referred to in the political arena. The Iron Triangle consists of three parts of government that are interdependent on each other. For each part to be successful, every part must be functioning properly. The Parent Involvement Triangle follows the same philosophy. The three parts to a successful parent involvement program are school perception, communication and information. Essentially, if parent involvement is to be successful, then parents need to have a good perception of their school and its program. However, this perception depends on the information received by the parents, which, in turn, involves the successful flow of communication between the school and parents. Therefore this study and its hypotheses and results will focus on these three parts of the triangle.

These three factors were instituted into the surveys by creating questions that dealt with these three parts. The **School Perception** variable consists of two questions asked parents about whether the school and its officials are receptive to parent involvement and whether the school and its officials encouraged parent involvement. These questions should provide adequate evidence to reveal whether the parent has a positive or negative perception of the school. The **Communication** variable consists of several questions dealing with how many meetings are available for parents to attend,

and the teacher's flexibility to communicate with the parent outside of school hours (i.e, at the parent's home). In addition, does the teacher communicate to the parent the objectives of the class or the teacher's expectations for the student. The final variable of **Information** deals with questions that discuss the teacher's ability to inform the parent of student achievement and school activities that are coming up. These three variables will provide a good perspective as to the success of parent involvement in school activities.

These three variables lead to several hypotheses that this study will try to verify and prove through its results.

#### **HYPOTHESIS I: School Perception Affects Involvement**

This hypothesis argues that a parent's perception of the school will determine if the parent is heavily involved in activities at school or at home. If the parent believes that the school wants he/she involved, then the parent will become active in school activities and the education of the parent's child. However, if the school discourages parent involvement, then the parent will become frustrated and create a cynical view of the school and its educational process. The school must provide a good atmosphere of parent involvement, in order for the parent to believe that they are needed in the child's education.



**HYPOTHESIS II: Communication between School and Parent Affects Involvement**

This hypothesis argues that effective communication between the teacher and parent is vital to successful parent involvement. Research indicates that parent-teacher relationships have had communication because a parent or teacher might be threatened by the other. Research shows that teachers who deal with highly educated parents feel more threatened because the parents understand the school system and want to be as involved as possible. Teachers often feel that these highly educated parents do not respect the teacher as a professional, and therefore, the teacher does not communicate as well as needed. The teachers feel like they cannot do their job as well because of these highly involved parents. As a consequence barriers are created in parent-teacher communication.

**HYPOTHESIS III: Informed Parents Are More Involved**

This hypothesis argues that parents who know when school activities are scheduled, who know when PTO meetings are, and know what their child is doing in school are more likely to be involved. Research has shown that uninformed parents are usually unaware of what their child is doing, which leads to an inability to assist their child's learning process. The lack of information leads to parents being unable to help with homework and being unable to help in activities in school. If parents only knew what they were supposed to do, parent

involvement might be better.

**HYPOTHESIS IV: School Problems Affect Parent's Perception of School**

This hypothesis argues that parents that have consistent problems with the school will develop a negative perception of the school. This negative perception will lead to decreased involvement in school activities. If the parent does not like the teacher and the manner in which the teacher is teaching, then problems might arise that could cause the parent to create a negative perception of the whole school.

**HYPOTHESIS V: Teacher Encouragement Affects Involvement**

This hypothesis argues that teachers who welcome parent involvement will have more parents involved and a better involvement program. Research shows that parents want to feel welcome since it is their child who is being taught. Parents want to be a part of their child's education and do not want to be discouraged from becoming involved. Therefore, if the teacher provides a good atmosphere for involvement and an exchange of ideas, then more parents will become involved.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### The Results of Claremore's Parent Involvement Program

The very first indication of the type of parent involvement program in the Claremore school system was when meetings were arranged with the principals of the three schools to discuss the survey and receive final approval. Two interesting items of information came about in the meeting. First of all, all three principals listed what schools were best in parent involvement. All three principals said the same three schools in exact order: Stuart Roosa, Westside and Claremont. After looking at the results of the surveys and the comments from the principals and parents, the principals were correct in their listing.

The second item of importance was the attitude of the principals to conducting this survey. Westside and Stuart Roosa did not mind and even suggested that incentives (i.e, candy or popcorn) be given to the class that returned the most surveys. However, Claremont schools were reluctant to conduct the surveys, and the principal even stated that he was not going to "force" his teachers to become involved. The principal stated that his teachers already had too much to handle and participation in the survey was not going to be advised or suggested. Right off the bat, there was a hint as

to the quality of involvement programs at the three schools.

Before examining the results from the parent surveys and validating the study's hypotheses, it is important to notice the comments and responses by the administrators and teachers. Overall, the administrators had nothing but good things to say about Claremore's parent involvement program. Every administrator listed the parent involvement program as good or excellent. The superintendent's each commented on how often they inform the parents of school activities, PTO meetings, and school wide issues. Even though each administrator thought that parents are informed, only one of the three schools had a written statement concerning parent involvement (Stuart Roosa). The Claremore school system does not have a written statement about parent involvement. As research has revealed, a written statement is important because it allows parents to actually see how the school or school system feels about parent involvement. It is usually easier for parents to become more involved if they know the school's philosophy about parent involvement.

One superintendent commented that she thinks parents are asked about their input to school decisions during many occasions. She commented that parents' suggestions are included on playground equipment, fundraising activities, and how to get other parents involved. Another assistant superintendent made the counter remark that often times parents do not feel a part of the school and more needs to be

done to provide an atmosphere of camaraderie. The assistant superintendent also stated that when Claremore parents do get involved, they do not go past their boundaries. In other words, parents know what situations to become involved and what situations to allow the teacher to handle. Therefore, this leads to less confusion, chaos and jealousy in the parent-teacher relationship.

Each superintendent commented that the school system and each individual school keeps parents informed of activities and issues within the district. Each administrator stated that newsletters or calendars go out regularly throughout the year to parents (8-12 times a school year), while individual schools send out a monthly newsletter to parents. The principal at Stuart Roosa also commented that the school has a homework hotline number that parents can call to get their child's homework for the week. This allows the parent to know what the child needs to do at home.

All the administrators stated that they use their school facilities for community events and activities. This allows the school to be involved in the community and to encourage and enhance their reputation within the community. The school does not need to be separated from the community, but needs to be part of the city.

Finally, every administrator stated that they believe that the parents are involved in the decision making process. The administrator's listed the access of PTO organizations,

curriculum development, school bond planning committees, educational issues committees, committees consisting of parents and teachers, and suggestions on school improvements. This access to decision making is important because it allows parents to feel that they "own" a part of the school. This follows the literature that has examined the benefits of "citizen-controlled" schools. This literature states that schools that are citizen controlled are often better than other schools. The reason being is that the citizens are more involved and have something to gain from becoming involved.

The teacher surveys revealed several key factors in parent involvement that are essential to understanding before examining the importance of the parent responses. Most of the teachers rated their school's parent program as good or excellent. This is important to know because if the teacher does not feel that the program is successful, then there usually is less enthusiasm for involving parents. As leadership literature states, the followers must believe in the plan or program for success to be possible. The enthusiasm for a good program is more evident by the overwhelming parent participation rate in school activities. Again, if the teacher is enthusiastic about the program, then the enthusiasm will transfer to the parents.

Another aspect of parent participation is the attendance at parent-teacher conferences. Again, teachers from all three schools reported an excellent or good attendance rate at these

conferences. Most teachers reported that they have two parent-teacher conferences in a school year, while a few stated they held five or more. The attendance rate at these conferences is extremely important because it is at these conferences that communication between the parent and teacher can be enhanced. It is also at these conferences where the parent receives information and can discuss any perceived problems that might be arising.

One very important part of the teacher survey was the question concerning the type of activities that parents took part in. These activities were divided into three groups: field trips, classroom activities, and extracurricular activities. The astounding finding about parent involvement in the schools was that 25 percent of the parents stated that they did not take part in any school activity. Reasons ranged from work conflicts to not knowing about the activity. Other than this fact, teachers reported parents being involved in a wide range of activities. These activities included helping with crafts and supervision in the class, organizing parties for the class, volunteering for sporting activities, sponsoring a field trip, and making special presentations to the children. The variety of activities reveals that Claremore teachers can rely on parents to volunteer and assist with different activities. As research has revealed, teachers need to use parents where they feel comfortable and can be productive. These elementary teachers are doing this by

getting different parents involved with different activities; activities that fit the parent's talents and likes.

Another important part of the findings was how the teachers encouraged parents to become involved. Most of the teachers stated that they encourage involvement by sending information to the parents and keeping them abreast of their child's progress and activities going on in class and at the school. Many teachers stated that they send out notices regarding parent-teacher conferences and often encourage parents to attend. All the teachers send out information on open houses for parents to come and see their child's work and to discuss any particular item with the teacher. Even though most teachers encouraged participation through the transfer of information, some teachers stated that they asked parents to volunteer in the class and assist their child with homework. A first grade teacher at Westside elementary stated that she has asked for parent volunteer to help the children with the school's Reading Club. The parent would volunteer to help the child read a book to reach a goal of reading so many books within a certain period of time. One fourth grade teacher at Westside commented that she encourages involvement by having a parent folder that she sends to parents on a weekly basis with information and a class newsletter. A fourth grade teacher at Claremont sends a bi-weekly progress to parents over the child's progress and work habits. This informs the parent where they can be of assistance in improving the



child's learning. A Claremont second grade teacher stated that she tries to involve parents in the class' weekly show and tell.

When the teachers were asked about their flexibility with meeting parents, most teachers stated that they would meet outside school hours and many stated that they would make a home visit if necessary. A first grade teacher from Claremont stated that she had met with parents outside of the regular school hours three times in the past week. Even the few teachers that stated they would not meet outside of school hours commented that they encourage parents to call them about problems after school hours. Therefore, every teacher provides parents the opportunity to contact them in some way outside of regular school hours.

The importance of teacher flexibility reveals a possible link to a positive perception of the school by the parents. If the parents see that the teacher is doing everything he/she can to keep the parents informed and involved, then the parents will gradually develop a positive perception of the teacher and the school. Eventually, this leads to more involvement in school activities and home activities. One comment made by many of the female elementary teachers was that a house visit would only be made with another school official for safety reasons.

The question concerning the educational attitudes of involved parents compared to those parents that are not

involved provided some worthwhile comments. Most teachers stated that the attitudes are different among the two types of parents and even the achievement of the student is different. A first grade teacher from Westside commented that the more that a parent is involved, the more the parent understands the job of the teacher and the importance of education. These parents are eager to help and they appreciate the job of a teacher even more. Another Westside first grade teacher commented that involved parents are more positive towards the school and education, while those not involved create a cynical view about the school and the teacher. The parents become very defensive towards the teacher and refuse any help or suggestions that the teacher might offer.

A Westside fourth grade teacher commented that uninvolved parents see the school and the teacher as a "babysitter." These parents feel that the school is using up the child's time until the parents get off work. Another fourth grade teacher commented that involved parents place a high priority on education, are better parents and have a more stable home life. These parents want their child to succeed. A first grade teacher from Stuart Roosa commented that those parents not involved are this way because they see the teacher as the professional and that parents have no room to get involved in something that they do not know about.

These differences in attitudes agree with the research that has been presented in this study. Research indicates that

uninvolved parents have a negative attitude towards schooling and its officials, while they also see education as the sole responsibility of the teacher. On the other hand, involved parents see the importance of education and want to do their part to help.

The final segment of the teacher survey presented some interesting results. This final segment asked the teachers about any perceived problems in the school's parent involvement program. The results were mixed with some teachers saying that there were problems, while others responded that the program seemed to be going just fine. The comments from many of the teachers were fascinating. A fourth grade teacher from Westside commented that some parents tried to take over the class and criticize the method in which the teacher taught subject material. Most Westside teachers commented that parent involvement was great because of the parent volunteer room that has been set up at the school. This volunteer room is the size of a regular classroom and allows parent volunteers to go into the room and view a basket/folder for the class that they are volunteering for. If the teacher knows ahead of time that the parent is coming, the teacher leaves a list of things for the parent to do and the parent begins doing these tasks. This volunteer room allows the teacher and parent to communicate without interrupting class to discuss what needs to be done. The volunteer room has all the supplies and materials that are needed to do the necessary tasks (i.e, copier, transparencies,

laminator, construction paper, posterboard, etc....).

Another benefit of this room is that it acts as a lounge area for the parents. Parents can become acquainted with other parents and discuss what activities are going on in different classes. It allows a chance for parents to become more excited about education and possibly steal some ideas for their own classroom. Every teacher that responded to this question discussed the success that this volunteer room has brought to the school's parent involvement program.

Another big problem stated in the Claremont schools was the fact that the parent involvement program was not organized or well publicized. Several teachers commented that the program could be better and more parents involved if there was organization. The lack of organization might be due to the fact that the administration of the school is not particularly concerned about the extent of parent involvement. The organization and publicity must be encouraged from the top or else it is going to be a futile effort.

The results described in the teacher and administrative surveys provide a good foundational basis for the analysis done concerning the parent surveys. While the teachers and administrators find the involvement program pretty good, with few problems, the parents might see it in a different manner. Some of the responses from the administrators and teachers also help validate certain hypotheses made about the parent's perception of school and the importance of communication

between the school and the parent. Many administrators and teachers felt that parents were well informed about school activities and student achievement, which led to better parent involvement. Therefore, it will interesting to see what the parents have to say and to see whether the study's hypotheses will be validated.

The results of the parent surveys reveal much information about the study's hypotheses and which parent involvement factors significantly correlate with parents being active. Table 3 reveals the specific variables and how they correlate with other variables. Table 3 provides a picture that the parent's perception is very important in determining involvement. Some of the most interesting correlations consist of the parents perception of the school being positively associated with the parents being informed (.1925), the teachers being flexible with their meeting times (.2562), the number of parent-teacher conferences parents attend (.4155), and how active the parents are in school (.3643). In addition parents perception is also positively associated (.2275) with the number of hours spent at home helping the child. These positive correlations support the hypothesis stated that the parents perception of the school affects the degree of parent involvement. Table 3 shows that if parent perceptions are positive, they will be more informed, attend more conferences with the teacher and spend more time assisting their child with homework. What parents think of their child's school is

possibly foremost to the degree of involvement they take part in.

Table 3 also reveals that the parent's perception does not explain that much of how active parents are (only five percent). Therefore, even though perception does help with other involvement factors, it is not a driving determinant of parent involvement.

Table 4 reveals the analysis of another important factor—the parents being informed. This variable is again positively associated with several other variables. Table 4 shows that parents who are informed have teachers who are flexible with their meeting time (correlation of .3092), allowing working parents to stay abreast of their child's education. If teachers were not flexible with their meeting times, then these working parents might not have the adequate information on their child's progress or how they might be able to help. In addition, informed parents are more likely to attend conferences (correlation of .3077). Again, because of the conferences being scheduled around the parents work schedule, these parents are able to attend and communicate information with the teacher. As one of the study's hypotheses stated, more informed parents should create more involved parents. Table 4 indicates that there is a positive correlation between informed parents and involved parents (correlation at .2161). Finally, Table 4 reveals that more informed parents spend more time helping their child with school work (correlation at

.2415). This positive correlation connects with parent involvement research that argues that parents cannot assist their child with school work unless they have an idea of what the child is doing (see Clark, 1983). Informed parents know the progress of their child, and understand where their help is needed.

Table 4 also presents another important finding. Even though informed parents has a positive relationship with many other variables, it does not explain much of the variance in parent involvement (only seven percent). However, informed parents has a significant T relationship when compared to the activity of parents (.0100). Overall, informed parents do tend to lead to active parents, but it is not a major influence in determining how active the parents really are.

Table 5a indicates the importance and correlation of parent problems with school officials and encouragement that the parents do or do not receive. Table 5a reveals that problems with school officials is positively associated with meetings and conferences (.1602 and .2481, respectively). Many times problems arise at these parent-teacher conferences because of several reasons. As research argues, teachers are sometimes threatened by discussing problems or educational issues with highly educated parents. On the other hand, many parents believe that the teacher does not want them to become involved and the parents feel shunned. Therefore, a wall is built up between teachers and parents and nothing much gets

accomplished at these conferences (see Berger, 1991; and Gestwicki, 1992). In addition, problems can arise from more involvement (correlation of .2011). As parents become more involved, they might try to begin taking over some of the teacher's usual tasks. This leads to the teacher feeling threatened and discouraging the parent's involvement.

Table 5a also reveals that parent problems with school officials only explains about eleven percent of the variance in parent activity. However, it does show a significant T relationship with the amount of hours spent assisting the child at home. Again, if the parents are having trouble with teachers or other school officials, they might be resigned to not encouraging their child to finish work or do their best.

On the parent surveys, parents were asked to describe any problems that have seen or been involved in at their school. The least amount of problems were at Stuart Roosa. Most of the comments were positive about the acceptance of the teachers and administrators to parent involvement and suggestions. The only complaints came with a couple of parents saying that they thought that the administration of the school system was hard to approach and difficult to talk to. The parents commented that the administration seemed to dissuade parent suggestions and involvement. Other parents commented that some of the problems had to do with teachers and how they handled their classes and dealt with students. One parent at Claremont school stated that the teacher seemed to stereotype their



child and thus, their child is not doing so well in the class. One parent from Westside commented that school officials sometimes treat parent volunteers as intruders.

One main complaint from Westside parents is with the discipline and handling of situations by the principal. Many parents commented that the principal comes down too hard on the children, and does not allow them any socializing time during lunch break. One parent from Claremont commented that her child's teacher was excellent in assisting the child. The parent comments that her child has a disability and often misses many classes. However, the teacher goes out of her way to help the child catch up with the rest of class.

One Claremont parent commented on how much better the parent program at Claremont was compared to Westside. This parent had transferred their child from Westside to Claremont and was amazed at the excellent reception that the teacher gave to the parent. The child enjoys the school more, while the parent is able to involve himself/herself more in the child's education.

Table 5b also shows the significance of the teacher encouraging parents to become involved. The table shows that encouragement leads to better informed parents, better attendance at meetings and conferences and more time spent helping the child at home. These positive correlations reveal that another of the study's hypotheses is supported with regression. If parents are encouraged to participate and are

given positive feedback to be involved, then the parents will become more active in every aspect (i.e, school and home). However, one must realize that even though encouragement is given, parents sometimes feel that their ideas are not given consideration. For example, one parent commented that they are encouraged to participate in meetings and activities, but the teachers and other school officials really do not take parents' ideas to heart. In other words, the school wants you to be involved, but they don't want you to be involved.

Table 2 shows a complete table of the variables and their correlations with all the other variables. Two important items stand out in Table 2. One item is that time spent at home with the child explains 43 percent of parent involvement. This signifies that parents will become more involved at home when they become more involved in the school. Again, this goes back to the importance of the parent's perception. A positive view of the school encourages the parent to become involved in every aspect of his/her child's education. Another item within Table 2 is that parent-teacher conferences explain 57 percent of parent involvement. Again, when parents participate in these conferences, they are able to communicate and become informed about their child's progress and the teacher's objective in teaching their child. This communication time leads a long way to establishing a trust between the parent and teacher as to what the child needs and what each party can do to help.

The data that have been analyzed from the parent surveys reveals that the study's hypotheses are true, but some of them not strong determinants of parent involvement. The findings indicated that while perception, communication and information were important in parents being active, they were not strong determinants of parent involvement. In addition, parental problems with the school had some affect on other variables, but still not a strong connection with explaining much of parent involvement. The only real hypothesis that was supported strongly was that communication is essential to parent involvement. The data showed that teacher conferences was a strong determinant of the degree of parent involvement and also explained other factors such as time spent at home, problems with school officials and perception of the school. Therefore, even though all five were supported in some way, only one hypothesis showed strong effects on parent involvement.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Remember the two children-Johnny and Carolyn-who began this study's examination into parent involvement. Now Johnny and Carolyn are parents and both understand the importance of parent involvement. Johnny attends parent-teacher conferences, open houses and even comes to his child's class to talk about his occupation. Johnny and his wife also try to help their child as much as possible with their child's homework. Carolyn enjoys getting involved in her child's education by assisting the teacher with classroom activities, and helping out with school fundraisers and field trips. Carolyn and her husband have also invested financial resources for books, a computer, and educational games to assist their child's learning process at home. Both Johnny and Carolyn have realized that parent involvement is important to their child's increased achievement and learning, and both are trying to do as much as possible to keep involved in their child's schooling.

After analyzing the survey results, one factor jumps out that seems to go against some of the literature discussed earlier. The difference is that Claremore parents seem to be the important factor in the success or failure of the school's parent involvement program. Even though this should agree with

the literature, it doesn't in one particular area. The literature discussed emphasized the need for the school and its officials (i.e, teachers) to reach out to the parents and bring them in. Goldring (1984) discusses the importance of schools trying to coopt with parents and create a partnership. Kindred (1990) argues that schools need to have written policies to inform parents of the school's perspective on parent involvement. Herman and Yeh (1983) argue that schools need to communicate more with parents to inform them of important activities or events going on within the school. Epstein and Dauber (1991) discuss how the teacher should be accessible to parents, in order to have more involved parents. Leadership research argues that administrators need to show support for parent involvement programs, or the teachers and parents will not be motivated to make the program successful (see Kouzes and Posner, 1987; Burns, 1978). However, the results from the Claremore elementary school showed something quite different.

As discussed, the results showed the parents taking the lead in the success or failure of the parent involvement program. Claremore parents are involved whether the school reaches out to them or not. For example, Westside elementary has a parent volunteer room in its school to entice parents to participate in classroom activities. Westside also does many other events and activities to encourage involvement. However, survey results showed that almost 25 percent of the parents

did not participate in any school activities. Therefore, the extent to which the school tried to involve parents does not necessarily involve more parents.

Claremont elementary school is another good example. The administration and teachers do not encourage parent involvement as extensively as Westside or Stuart Roosa, but parents still become involved. Many parents reported that they felt like intruders when they came to assist in activities, but they were involved anyway. The parents in the Claremore elementary schools seem to force the issue more than the school officials. Basically, if the parents want to be involved, they will become involved, no matter what the school or teachers try to do. Therefore, instead of the school trying to bring the parents into the school, the Claremore parents are bringing themselves into the school when they see it as appropriate.

Another interesting factor was revealed concerning the survey results and the literature concerning parent involvement. Goldring (1984) describes methods in which school administrators try to show support for parent involvement. These methods are socialization, coalition forming and buffering and cooptation. The results have revealed that Claremore schools fall into the categories of Goldring's cooptation and buffering and coalition forming. From the results, Westside and Stuart Roosa try to form coalitions to involve parents in activities and possible decisions.

Westside and Roosa try to "localize" their school, showing the parents that they want them involved. According to some parent reactions, Westside also tries to dissuade certain parents from becoming involved. Some parents commented that they felt left out of school activities because the teacher never asked them to be involved, or the school officials tried to dissuade them from getting involved. Therefore, schools can become "segregated" in their involvement programs.

Claremont Elementary falls into Goldring's buffering and cooptation category. Many parents commented about the lack of leadership and organization in the school's parent involvement program. Some parents commented that they felt like intruders when they came to speak to the teacher or principal about concerns. The parents also commented that they had no idea of how to become involved because the school did not establish good communication to the parents. According to research, this lack of communication can be an example of trying to buffer parents from getting involved. Therefore, these three elementary schools fit quite nicely into Goldring's categories of parent involvement.

After examining the relation of the results to the literature review on parent involvement, the results must be examined in relation to the study's hypotheses. This study's main argument was that informed parents lead to involved parents, which leads to better informed parents. If a person takes this argument and applies it to the theoretical basis

for education in America—that citizens should be knowledgeable and informed citizens—then the study's argument leads back to one of the fundamental foundations of American education.

Parent involvement helps Americans become more knowledgeable in two ways. First of all, parents become involved and they begin learning and understanding how the educational process works. As stated earlier in the study, many teachers in the Claremore school system did not feel threatened by the involvement of parents. In fact, teachers felt comfortable with parents because many teachers made the comment that parents knew their boundaries and did not intrude on the job of the teacher. Parent involvement allows the parent to get on the "inside" of the school system and view the learning process first hand. Therefore, parents become more knowledgeable and informed about the learning process. The informed parents leads to the second way. Informed parents could possibly use the information that they receive from the teacher, in addition to their own knowledge, to teach and assist their children outside of school. Research within this study has shown that when parents know the academic standing of their child, and understand how the school functions, then the parents are able to assist the child with school work at home. Therefore, successful parent involvement programs helps accomplish on the fundamental objectives of American education: to have an educated citizenry.

The next question becomes "How does the school go about



getting parents involved?" The surveys taken at the three Claremore schools reveals a good method which needs to be instituted to create better parent involvement. One question that was asked all the school administrators was whether Claremore schools had a written parent involvement statement. Every administrator responded that Claremore had no written statement of parent involvement. This is probably one area where the Claremore administration needs to make a change. A written statement sent out to all elementary parents stating what the schools believe about parent involvement, defining parent involvement, and encouraging parent involvement could be a vital step towards increased involvement. Much of the leadership research emphasizes the need for the administration/management/leaders to take the first step in trying to accomplish a goal (see Kouzes and Posner, 1987 and Burns, 1978). If Claremore schools are seriously wanting to develop more parent involvement, then the school system needs a statement encouraging the involvement. Kindred (1990) found that schools with written statements had better communication between the school and parents because each party involved knew their responsibility. In addition, Kindred argues that a written statement provides accountability for the school. If the school is not providing adequate involvement, then the parents can make the school accountable according to the written statement.

Another area of concern in parent involvement within the

Claremore schools was the comments by many parents at Claremont Elementary that organization, structure and administrative support was lacking in the parent involvement program. Kouzes and Posner (1987) and Burns (1978) found that administrative support was important to the success of any program. Williams and Chavkin (1989) found that administrative support was very important in parent involvement success. The administrative support was good for Westside and Stuart Roosa, while there was less support and excitement from Claremont. Just by talking with the school officials at Claremont, there was a lack of excitement or concern for parent involvement. However, this lack of excitement about parent involvement might be a realistic perspective from the administrator's viewpoint. The administrators might feel that the school has tried everything possible for active parent involvement, but has not received many benefits. On the other hand, parents might have a point in their frustration. Whatever the correct view is, there seems to be some communication problems between parents and administrators at the Claremont school.

Claremont might want to examine the "Parent Volunteer Program" at Westside Elementary. Even though the survey results did not specifically state that the school's volunteer program was influential in more parents being involved, parents were very high on the program. Almost every survey that was returned had a comment stating the parents' satisfaction and love for the volunteer program. Westside has

a classroom set up for parents to use for assisting teachers in the classroom. This idea is great because it gives the parent a sense of worth and identity in the school. The parents feel welcome and needed because the school has set aside a room for them to help in their child's learning. It is more than just a room, it also has all the necessary office equipment and supplies that a parent would need. Claremont and Stuart Roosa might want to consider creating a parent room in their schools to "attract" parents to become involved.

The study's hypotheses were found to be important factors contributing to parent involvement, but only one factor-communication-was found to be a strong determinant affecting parent involvement. What do these results tell Claremore schools and others about parent involvement? First of all, parent-teacher conferences are very important to having a successful parent involvement program. Teachers who responded on the survey stated that they have 2-3 parent-teacher conferences a year. The teachers might try to have even more conferences since it is found to be an important part to involving parents. With these conferences, parents and teachers are able to sit down in an informal manner and discuss ideas, problems and exchange information to help the particular child learn more. The problem that the teacher must face is to get the as much parent participation as possible. If it is the same parents everytime, and these parents are not the ones that need to be talked to, then these conferences

could be serving very little purpose. Teachers must work on getting a high rate of participation in these conferences.

Research concerning parent-teacher conferences revealed that these conferences provide an avenue of communication that is needed if parents are going to be involved parents. Research found that the time, agenda and communication process of these conferences were important to the success of the conference (see Lareau, 1989; Berger, 1991; and Swap, 1993). Swap argues that the most important part of the conference is the establishment of the agenda. If the teacher is not prepared, then it will show during the actual conference. Lareau and Berger contend that the time of the conference needs to fit the work schedule of the parents. Otherwise, many parents will not be able to attend. The importance of parent-teacher conferences were revealed when teachers said that they had good or excellent attendance at these conferences. Some teachers commented that they were willing to adjust their times, and even make home visits, to meet with parents. This type of flexibility reveals the importance that the teachers place on meeting and communicating with the parents. In addition, regression analysis showed that parent-teacher conferences had the most significant effect on involvement (R-Square of .57). Therefore, the survey results tend to agree with the literature as to the importance of parent involvement.

In addition, Claremore teachers need to make sure that

the conferences are organized in a manner where objectives get accomplished. A conference should not be a meeting just to have a meeting. The conference should discuss items of importance and reveal to the parent where their help could be needed. It should be more than just a "rap" session. As Berger (1991) and Gestwicki (1992) suggest, teachers need to have an agenda but pursue that agenda in an informal and comfortable manner. The authors point out that teachers need their conferences to be as open and clear as possible to allow the parents to discuss matters freely.

With these conferences comes another important factor that was proven in this study, that of the number of hours spent viewing the child doing homework. The study proved that this factor was a strong determinant of successful parent involvement. It was very encouraging to see that all parents stated that they are involved in home activities at least one hour a week with their child. Some parents said that they were involved with their child five or more hours a week. The conferences provide information to the parent as to what the child needs to be doing at home. This information allows the parent to know how to assist the child after school. The learning process should not stop when school is over. Learning is a continual process that has no time boundaries. As Reginald Clark (1983) pointed out in his study, many parents do not help their child at home because they have no idea how to help the child. The child brings homework home and the

teacher does not explain what the child needs to do. Therefore, the parent cannot help their child.

A possible suggestion for Claremore teachers, if they do not do it, is to provide a sheet for each parent at the conference as to how they can help their child at home. A list that contains ideas such as reading, flash cards, multiplication tables, alphabet, counting, etc. At least the parent has an idea on how the parent can continue the learning process in the home. Teachers also need to make sure that they send notes home indicating what the child needs to do and how the parent can be of assistance.

Teachers cannot be afraid to ask parents for their assistance or help. A few parents responded that they would like to be involved, but have never been asked. The school and the officials must take the first step. This is where the conferences and notes home to the parent can be helpful to ask parents for their help.

A final suggestion that is not specifically supported or implied in the study's results, is the need for a seminar or workshop on the importance of parent involvement and how to set up a program. These workshops should be divided into two areas: one for the parents and one for school officials. The workshop for parents would focus on what parent involvement actually means, how to get along with the teacher and other school officials, how to communicate problems and concerns, and how to help the learning process after school hours. Some

of the surveys by the teacher expressed concerns that parents wanted too much control and did not appreciate the difficult job it is to teach children. These seminars would reveal to parents the types of problems that occur in the school classroom and how teachers do not have much power to do anything about the problem. The parents workshop would essentially focus on how to become actively involved without becoming an active intruder.

The school officials' workshop would emphasize the need for organization in the involvement program and provide ideas on how to "attract" more parents into the classroom. Essentially, parent involvement programs are similar to businesses, in that, the school/teacher is trying to attract customers to invest in the product. The teacher is trying to convince the parent to invest in the assistance of the child's education. Therefore, the workshop would provide ideas on getting parents excited to become involved (such as the Parent Volunteer Program at Westside). However, the most important item with a successful program is that the top officials must support the program and show their enthusiasm about parents getting involved. As one parent stated, the school often looks at parents as intruders when they come to the school. This type of attitude will discourage involvement more than encourage it. Overall, parents and school officials must learn what the specific party's functions are in a parent involvement program and then make sure to keep communication

lines open at all times.

This study presented a model called the "Parent Involvement Triangle" (see Figure 1). This study and its results have proven that this model is correct about its equation for a successful involvement program. All three parts of the triangle (perception, information and communication) must work hand-in-hand to develop successful parent involvement. However, the results only proved one specific factor to be important in parent involvement overall. That one element was communication through parent-teacher conferences. The other factors were significant in other areas of parent involvement, but parent-teacher conferences was a strong factor relating to the success or failure of an involvement program.

This survey of the three Claremore elementary schools has revealed a great deal of information concerning parent involvement. Some of the information agreed with past research done over parent involvement, while some results disagreed with past research. So what does all this mean and why was this survey important to conduct? The main reason revolves around the research done by Christopher Jencks in 1979. In his study, Who Gets Ahead?, Jencks found that the home environment and parent involvement were important factors in the future success or failure of children. Jencks found that those children with parents that placed a high priority on education and encouraged education in the home, made more money and were



more successful in their careers. Reginald Clark (1983) also found this correlation in his study. He found that those children in homes where education was a priority and involvement was important, the children were more successful in the future. The reason that parent involvement is important is that education is important in our rapidly changing and advancing society. More and more jobs require more education than high school. Therefore, it is up to the schools and parents to encourage, become involved, and keep continually educating the children. If one of the fundamental foundations of education is to educate the whole citizen, then parent involvement means involving the whole citizenry. That is why schooling in America is often referred to as "community centered." It takes everybody to have an educated citizenry.

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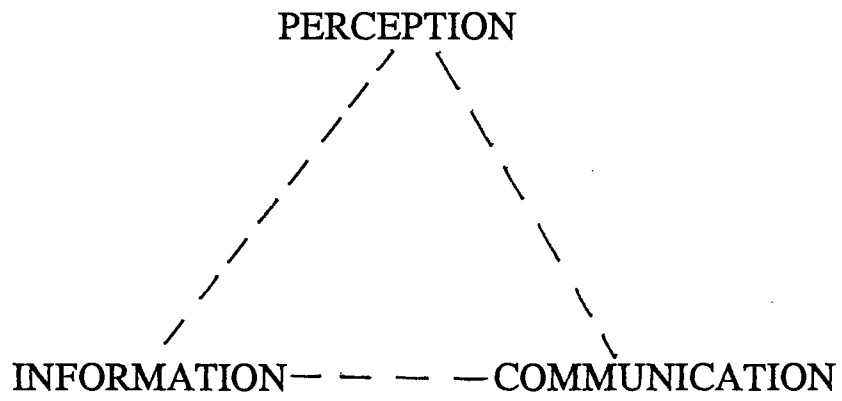
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**APPENDIX**

**FIGURE 1**  
**PARENT INVOLVEMENT TRIANGLE (P.I.T.)**



**TABLE I**  
**CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CLAREMORE SCHOOL SYSTEM**

<b>Enrollment-</b>	<b>3,500</b>	<b>(1994-1995)</b>
<b>Per Pupil Spending-</b>	<b>\$3,300</b>	<b>(1993-1994)</b>
<b>Support Staff-</b>	<b>151</b>	
<b>Counselors-</b>	<b>8</b>	
<b>Classroom Teachers-</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>(1993-1994)</b>
<b>Average Teacher Salary-</b>	<b>\$27,613</b>	<b>(1993-1994)</b>
<b>Dropout Rate-</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>(1993-1994)</b>
<b>Free/Reduced Lunch-</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>(1993-1994)</b>
<b>Minority-</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>(1993-1994)</b>
<b>Special Education-</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>(1993-1994)</b>
<b>Average ACT Score-</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>(1993-1994)</b>

(Source: "District Historical Report: 1990-1993" and "Results 1993: Oklahoma Educational Indicators Report." Oklahoma City: Oklahoma State Department of Education.)

TABLE II  
 PEARSON CORRELATION OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT VARIABLES  
 (n=273)

Variable	RECEPT	INFORM	MEET	HOME	CONFER
RECEPT	_____	.1925**	.2562**	.1297*	.4165**
INFORM	.1925**	_____	.3092**	.1439*	.3077**
MEET	.2562**	.3092**	_____	.3147**	.6554**
HOME	.1297*	.1439**	.3147**	_____	.4833**
CONFER	.4165**	.3077**	.6554**	.4833**	_____
ACTIVE	.3643**	.2161**	.7562**	.3926**	.7555**
HOURS	.2275**	.2415**	.5625**	.4410**	.8203**
PROBLEM	.0619	.0712	.1602*	.3396**	.2491**
ENCOUR	.2349**	.2975**	.7581**	.3767**	.7538**

\*\* p < .01

\* p < .05

TABLE II (cont')

Variable	ACTIVE	HOURS	PROBLEM	ENCOUR
RECEPT	.3643**	.2275**	.0619	.2349**
INFORM	.2161**	.2415**	.0712	.2975**
MEET	.7562**	.5625**	.1602*	.7581**
HOME	.3926**	.4410**	.3396**	.3767**
CONFER	.7555**	.8203**	.2491**	.7538**
ACTIVE	----	.6695**	.2011**	.7656**
HOURS	.6695**	_____	.0875	.6563**
PROBLEM	.2011**	.0875	_____	.1935**
ENCOUR	.7656**	.6563**	.1935**	_____

\*\* p <.01

\* p <.05

TABLE III  
 PEARSON CORRELATION OF PARENT PERCEPTION  
 ON PARENT INVOLVEMENT  
 (n=273)

Variable	Pearson Coefficient
INFORM	.1925**
MEETINGS	.2562**
HOME	.1297*
CONFERENCE	.4165**
ACTIVE	.3643**
HOURS	.2275**
PROBLEM	.0619
ENCOURAGEMENT	.2349**

\*\* p < .01

\* p < .05

NOTE: AFTER RUNNING MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS, IT WAS REVEALED THAT PARENT PERCEPTION HAD A SIGNIFICANT T-VALUE WITH TEACHER MEETINGS WITH A T-SCORE OF 1.561. NO OTHER VARIABLES HAD SIGNIFICANT T-VALUES WITH PARENT PERCEPTION.

TABLE IV  
 PEARSON CORRELATION OF INFORMED PARENTS  
 WITH PARENT INVOLVEMENT  
 (n=273)

Variable	Pearson Coefficient
PERCEPTION	.1925**
MEETINGS	.3092**
HOME	.1439*
CONFERENCES	.3077**
ACTIVITIES	.2161**
HOURS	.2415**
PROBLEMS	.0712
ENCOURAGEMENT	.2875**

\*\* p < .01

\* p < .05

NOTE: AFTER RUNNING MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS, IT WAS REVEALED THAT INFORMED PARENTS HAD A SIGNIFICANT T-VALUE WITH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES WITH A T-SCORE OF 2.596 NO OTHER VARIABLES HAD SIGNIFICANT T-VALUES WITH INFORMED PARENTS.

TABLE Va  
 PEARSON CORRELATION OF PARENT PROBLEMS  
 AND SCHOOL ENCOURAGEMENT  
 WITH INVOLVEMENT  
 (n=273)

Variable	Pearson Coefficient
PERCEPTION	.0619
INFORMED	.0712
MEETINGS	.1602*
HOME	.3396**
CONFERENCES	.2491**
ACTIVITIES	.2011**
HOURS	.0875
ENCOURAGEMENT	.1935**

\*\* p < .01

\* p < .05



**TABLE Vb**  
**PEARSON CORRELATION OF SCHOOL ENCOURAGEMENT**  
**WITH PARENT INVOLVEMENT**  
(n=273)

Variable	Pearson Coefficient
PERCEPTION	.2349**
INFORMED	.2975**
MEETINGS	.7581**
HOME	.3767**
CONFERENCES	.7538**
ACTIVITIES	.7656**
HOURS	.6563**
PROBLEMS	.1935**

\*\* p < .01

## **SURVEY INSTRUMENTS**

**Parent Involvement Administrative Survey**

1. Name of School and Highest Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_  
(if Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent, only  
identify school system)

2. Title of Position: \_\_\_\_\_

3. School Size: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Rate the effectiveness of the school's parent involvement  
program:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Excellent
- \_\_\_\_\_ Good
- \_\_\_\_\_ Average
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fair
- \_\_\_\_\_ Poor

5. Does the school have an active PTA organization? If yes,  
describe its involvement. If no, explain its lack of  
activity.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Yes
- \_\_\_\_\_ No

6. Is the school available for parent visits or meetings  
after hours?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Yes
- \_\_\_\_\_ No

7. Is the school available for community events or community education programs?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

8. Does the school sponsor events within the community?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

9. Are school resources available for community use (i.e., gymnasium, library, sports equipment, etc...)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

10. Does the school provide parents with a school newsletter or a school calendar with information about important dates, holidays and meetings? If yes, how often does the school send these items out to the parents during the school year?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

11. Do you encourage your teachers to communicate frequently with parents about the curriculum, expectations for homework, grading policies, and how parents can help?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

12. Do you offer to sit in at meetings with teachers and parents to mediate any dispute?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

13. Are parents involved in the decision making process of the school district? If yes, explain.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

14. Do you perceive any problems in the school's parent involvement program? If yes, briefly explain some of the problems.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

15. As a general principle, would you like to see more parents involved in school activities?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

16. Does the school have a written statement about parental involvement that is made available to all parents?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

**Parent Involvement Teacher Survey**

1. Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Teacher and Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Which of the following best describes the parents in your school?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ non-professional, unskilled workers
  - \_\_\_\_\_ professional, managerial workers
  - \_\_\_\_\_ industrial, factory workers
  - \_\_\_\_\_ mixed community of workers
  
4. Perception of educational level of parents in school:
  - \_\_\_\_\_ College Graduate
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Some College Education
  - \_\_\_\_\_ High School Graduate
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Less than High School Education
  
5. What percentage of your students are currently working at grade level?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ less than 25 percent
  - \_\_\_\_\_ about 50 percent
  - \_\_\_\_\_ more than 50 percent

6. What percentage of your students participate in organized before school and/or after school programs? Identify the types of programs.

- \_\_\_\_\_ less than 25 percent
- \_\_\_\_\_ about 50 percent
- \_\_\_\_\_ more than 50 percent

7. Rate the effectiveness of the school's parent involvement program:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Excellent
- \_\_\_\_\_ Good
- \_\_\_\_\_ Average
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fair
- \_\_\_\_\_ Poor

8. How many school related activities take place during a school year?

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1-5
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6-10
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11-15
- \_\_\_\_\_ More than 15

9. What is the parents participation rate for these school related activities?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Excellent
- \_\_\_\_\_ Good
- \_\_\_\_\_ Average
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fair
- \_\_\_\_\_ Poor

10. What is the participation rate of parents at parent/teacher conferences?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Excellent
- \_\_\_\_\_ Good
- \_\_\_\_\_ Average
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fair
- \_\_\_\_\_ Poor

11. How many parent-teacher conferences do you hold during the school year?

- \_\_\_\_\_ One
- \_\_\_\_\_ Two
- \_\_\_\_\_ Three
- \_\_\_\_\_ Four
- \_\_\_\_\_ Five or More

12. Please indicate any school based activity in which parents may be involved. (Mark either **Yes** or **No** besides each activity and circle the one activity that provides the most parent involvement):

<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
_____	_____	Parents help on school field trips
_____	_____	Parents provide transportation for sporting events
_____	_____	Parents volunteer to help in the library
_____	_____	Parents help with crafts, music, etc.. under teacher supervision
_____	_____	Parents assist in classroom activities



- \_\_\_\_\_ Parents with special occupations  
(i.e, fireman, police officer,  
etc..) give special talks to  
children
- \_\_\_\_\_ Parents help with after school  
clubs or organizations
- \_\_\_\_\_ Parents help in other ways.  
Please give examples

13. List the various methods you use to encourage parental involvement (i.e, sending homework for parent's help, mailing of parent-teacher conference dates, progress reports, etc...).

(MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Encouraging parental assistance  
on the child's homework
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sending out information on  
parent-teacher conferences
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sending out information on open  
houses
- \_\_\_\_\_ Asking parents to volunteer in  
the classroom
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sending out progress reports on  
a regular basis
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

14. Do you sometimes meet outside school hours with parents that work during the day?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Yes
- \_\_\_\_\_ No

15. Would you make a home visit if this was the only way to meet a parent?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Yes
- \_\_\_\_\_ No

16. Are the educational attitudes of parents involved different than the attitudes of parents not involved? If yes, briefly describe the difference.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes  
 \_\_\_\_\_ No

17. Please indicate your parents attitudes concerning the following statements: (Provide a "yes" or "no" answer to each statement)

Yes	No	
_____	_____	Parents have a greater appreciation of the school's educational program
_____	_____	Parents understand the difficulties of teachers
_____	_____	Parents give greater support to school activities
_____	_____	Parents take greater interest in their child's education
_____	_____	Parents have a good knowledge of the educational methods used in their child's class
_____	_____	Parents find it easier to visit the school and talk to the teacher
_____	_____	Parents find it beneficial to become involved in school activities

18. Please indicate to what extent you have encountered any of the following problems in any attempt you may have made to involve parents. Please record your answers as follows:

1= Significant Problem  
2= Minor Problem  
3= No Real Problem

1	2	3	Presence of parents in the classroom causes behaviour problems in children.
1	2	3	Teachers unwilling to allow parents into their classrooms.
1	2	3	Parents try to take over class from teachers.
1	2	3	Parents are more interested in their own child than the class as a whole.
1	2	3	Parents do not fully understand the objectives of the school and tend to criticize what teachers do.
1	2	3	Parents wish to help in school for the wrong reasons.
1	2	3	Parents are apathetic and unwilling to take the least interest in the school and its activities.

19. Do you see any problems with your school's parental involvement program? If yes, describe the problems.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

20. As a general principle, would you like to see more parents involved in school activities?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

**Parent Involvement Family Survey**

1. Elementary School Child Attends: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Child's Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Number of Children: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Number of Parents Living in the House: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Educational Level of Parents:

**Mother**

**Father**

_____	_____	Less than High School Education
_____	_____	High School Graduate
_____	_____	Some College Education
_____	_____	College Graduate
_____	_____	Post-College Education

6. Income Level:

_____	Less than \$10,000
_____	\$10,000-\$19,999
_____	\$20,000-\$29,999
_____	\$30,000-\$39,999
_____	\$40,000-\$49,999
_____	\$50,000 or more

7. Occupation: **Mother** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Father** \_\_\_\_\_

8. Parent's Work Schedule:

<b>Mother</b>	<b>Father</b>	
_____	_____	Day Shift
_____	_____	Afternoon Shift
_____	_____	Night Shift

9. On average, how many hours a week does each parent work?

<b>Mother</b>	<b>Father</b>	
_____	_____	Less than 30 hours
_____	_____	30-40 hours
_____	_____	More than 40 hours

10. Length of Residence: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Are school officials and teachers receptive to parent involvement?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_\_ No

12. Does the teacher keep you informed of class assignments, activities and teacher expectations?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_\_ No

13. Does the teacher go out of his/her way to arrange meetings around your work schedule?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

14. Has a teacher or school official ever made a home visit to meet with you? What was the purpose of the most recent visit made?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

15. How many parent-teacher conferences do you attend in a school year?

\_\_\_\_\_ 0-2

\_\_\_\_\_ 3-5

\_\_\_\_\_ More than 5

16. List the types of school-related activities you take part in during the most recent school year. (Mark all that apply)

\_\_\_\_\_ School Field Trips

\_\_\_\_\_ Teacher Assistant in the Classroom

\_\_\_\_\_ Assisted in School Plays

\_\_\_\_\_ Assisted with School Open House

\_\_\_\_\_ Guest Speaker in Classroom

\_\_\_\_\_ Volunteered for School/Community Events (i.e, carnivals, bake sales, craft sales, etc...)

\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

17. Does the teacher provide adequate information about student achievement?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

18. Please indicate the types of activities that you and your child take part in at home (Mark all the activities that apply):

**Yes**

**No**

\_\_\_\_\_ Reading to your child  
(How many times a week?)

\_\_\_\_\_ Trips to Museums

\_\_\_\_\_ Trips to the Library

\_\_\_\_\_ Help the child with Homework  
(How many times a week?)

\_\_\_\_\_ Family Night out during the week

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (specify):  
\_\_\_\_\_

19. Does your child have access to dictionaries and encyclopedias in the home?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

20. How many children's books does your child have access to (approximate number)? \_\_\_\_\_

21. Does your child have access to a computer in the home?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

22. How many hours per week do you help your child with their school work?

- None
- 0-1 Hours
- 1-3 Hours
- 3-5 Hours
- More than 5 Hours

23. Have you experienced any problems with school officials or teachers concerning your child? If yes, please explain.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Yes
- \_\_\_\_\_ No

24. Do school officials or teachers encourage parental involvement in the school's decision making process?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Yes
- \_\_\_\_\_ No

25. Rate the effectiveness of the school's parent involvement program:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Excellent
- \_\_\_\_\_ Good
- \_\_\_\_\_ Average
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fair
- \_\_\_\_\_ Poor



**PARENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY CODEBOOK  
AND STATISTICAL MEAN**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Mean</b>
School	Claremont=0 Roosa=1 Westside=2	1.132
Recept	Yes=1 No=0	1.031
Inform	Yes=1 No=0	1.130
Meet	Yes=1 No=0	1.157
Home	Yes=1 No=0	1.684
Confer	Yes=1 No=0	1.385
School Active	Yes=1 No=0	1.253
Progress	Yes=1 No=0	1.044
Home Activity	Yes=1 No=0	1.000
Dictionaries	Yes=1 No=0	1.120
Computers	Yes=1 No=0	1.576
Hours	Yes=1 No=0	1.426
Problems	Yes=1 No=0	1.889

PARENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY CODEBOOK  
AND STATISTICAL MEAN  
(cont')

Variable	Code	Mean
Encourage	Yes=1 No=0	1.223

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VITA

Louis John Newton II

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Dissertation: PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC EDUCATION: A  
SURVEY OF THREE OKLAHOMA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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**OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW**

**Date:** 01-24-95

**IRB#:** AS-95-034

**Proposal Title:** PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF AN OKLAHOMA SCHOOL

**Principal Investigator(s):** William M. Parle, Michael Hirlinger, Scott Newton

**Reviewed and Processed as:** Exempt

**Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s):** Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING.

APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.

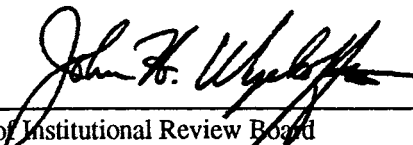
ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

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Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for Deferral or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature:



\_\_\_\_\_

Chair of Institutional Review Board

Date: January 24, 1995

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