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AN EXAMINATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND PROGRAMS IN OKLAHOMA PUBLIC SCHOOLS: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND PROGRAMS IN OKLAHOMA PUBLIC SCHOOLS: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family who supported me throughout numerous educational, professional, and personal steps in my journey. I appreciate everything that you have sacrificed to help me fulfill this dream. I will be forever grateful for your love, understanding, and encouraging words. Thank you for being such an incredible family. I am blessed to have each of you!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements iv

List of Tables viii

Abstract x

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction 1

Background of the Problem 3

Problem 8

Purpose 9

Significance of the Study 9

Research Questions 11

Limitations 13

Definition of Terms 14

Summary 17

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction 19

Historical Background of Parental Involvement 19

Historical Framework of Federal/State Requirements for Parental Involvement 24

Historical Framework of Research 31

Parental Involvement in Rural, Suburban, and Urban Schools 41

Summary 42

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction....45

Quantitative Research Questions....48

Qualitative Research Questions....50

Mixed Method Research Questions....50

Design of the Study....51

Population and Sample....53

Instrumentation....54

Purpose....57

Procedures and Response Rate....57

Parental Involvement Documentation and Interviews....59

Data Analysis....61

Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Data....63

Summary....63

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction....65

Quantitative Sample and Descriptive Statistics....65

Statistical Results of the Survey Data....68

Results of the Interviews....89

Qualitative Research Questions....89

Themes....90

Summary....100

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction....110

Discussion of Results....111

Development of Parental Involvement Policies, Practices,

And Programs....140

Analysis of Mixed Methods....143

Implications and Recommendations....147

Recommendations for Future Research....151

REFERENCES....154

APPENDICES....171

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

1. Survey Response Rate 59
2. Identification of the Respondents 66
3. School District Student Population 67
4. School District Types 67
5. Receiving Title I Federal Funding 68
6. Method Used to Communicate with Parents 69
7. Methods Used to Inform about Title I Programs 70
8. Communication Provided in Languages other than English 70
9. Translators During Parent Conferences 71
10. Translators during Individual Meetings 71
11. Translators Requested by the Parents 72
12. Translators during Title I Meetings 72
13. Percentage of Parents Volunteering in Schools 73
14. Workshops or Courses for Parent Involvement 74
15. Number of Workshops or Courses held by Districts the Previous Year 75
16. Workshops or Courses Provided in Different Languages 75
17. School Districts Providing Information for Home Learning Activities 76
18. Written Homework Policies 77
19. Workshops for Parent and Children Learning Activities 78
20. Support Programs 79
21. Districts Linking Parents with Social Services 80
22. Percentage of Parents Active in PTA 81

23. Parents Involved in District Council.....82

24. Parents Involved in Individual School Site.....82

25. Parents Involved in Title I Planning 83

26. Written Parent Involvement Policy.....84

27. School District Program supporting Involvement Policies.....84

28. District Training of Staff to work with Parents 85

29. District Budget for Parental Involvement 86

30. Student Performance Report Cards.....87

31. Notification of Failure to Meet NCLB Guidelines 88

32. Sample Sizes – Demographic Data.....89

33. Qualitative Themes from each Superintendent.....91

34. Summary: Themes – Data Sources 102

ABSTRACT

This study examined superintendents' or designees' perceptions in light of NCLB (2002) and to understand parental involvement through the lens of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002). The central problem was that despite parental involvement legislation, implementation and effectiveness of policies, and programs varies among school districts. A secondary problem was the lack of agreement when defining parental involvement. Parental involvement was defined in NCLB (2002), but superintendents questioned the types of involvement and the development of parental involvement policies, programs, and practices that met NCLB (2002) mandates.

A sequential transformative mixed methods study investigated these problems, using superintendents' or designees' perceptions from 167 surveys, document analysis, and three interviews. Quantitative questions examined if Epstein's Framework (1992, 1995, 2002) and NCLB (2002) guidelines were used in district parental involvement policies and programs. Qualitative questions examined NCLB's (2002) influence and development of parental involvement policies, practices, and programs in rural, urban, and suburban districts. Mixed methods questions involved implementation challenges of parental involvement policies and integration of the quantitative and qualitative findings.

Findings suggested that superintendents or designees perceived that Epstein's Framework (1992, 1995, 2002) and NCLB (2002) guidelines were used in most responding suburban and urban districts while rural districts indicated more limited results. Further qualitative investigation found suburban and urban superintendents facing challenges in understanding the types of involvement and complying with NCLB (2002) guidelines, but parental involvement policies and programs existed. After examining Title

I documents and interview notes, it was evident that the rural superintendent did not have a clear understanding of parental involvement and had limited compliance with NCLB (2002) guidelines. Five themes emerged from the interviews and documents: compliance, communication, parent volunteers, parent resources, and decision-making. All themes were present in urban and suburban districts, but limited in the rural district.

The findings provide implications for legislators, Title I directors, school boards, superintendents, educators, and parents. Stakeholders in all school districts must support, understand, and implement parental involvement mandates. Legislators must increase district funding for parental involvement. Departments of education should develop and monitor district policies that measure components of parental involvement.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Study

Introduction

> Existing research has illustrated that parental involvement with schools can make a significant contribution to improving schools and student achievement; however not enough is known about parental involvement to inform practice. The lack of clarity and agreement about what and who is included in the concept of parental involvement creates a challenge for researchers who seek models that are practical and yield measurable results. (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002)

Current public schools involve parents and families in many different activities. Some researchers (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002) highlight activities that happen at school, such as participating in Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and volunteering in classrooms. Researchers have also emphasized activities that take place at home, such as helping with homework and discussing school issues (Baker & Soden, 1998; Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002). The array of activities included in the definition of parental involvement makes it difficult to compare models of parental involvement. Analysis of the findings of multiple studies is also a challenge faced by researchers (Baker & Soden, 1998).

With the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2002), the commitment to improve the education of all students has become a national priority. No Child Left Behind (2002) focused attention on the roles of the family and community in preparing students for the challenges of the future. Research indicates that the active participation

of parents contributes to quality education for students (Fan & Chen, 2001; Finn, 1998; Henderson & Berla, 1994). Studies have shown that parental involvement can have a positive impact on students' achievement (Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993; Sanders & Epstein, 2000; Simon, 2000; Trusty, 1999). Parental involvement can make an important contribution to student achievement but has proven to be a challenge for researchers who seek to inform practice (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002).

No Child Left Behind (2002) includes a myriad of mandates for schools receiving federal funding. Parental involvement is one component of No Child Left Behind (2002) that schools must adhere to if they receive federal funds. Parental involvement requires commitment, leadership, as well as a collaborative effort with parents. While this mandate may seem direct, it does not account for the complexity of schools and parent communities. No Child Left Behind (2002) has prompted schools to examine how policies, practices, and program designs affect parental involvement (National PTA, 2000). Creating highly involved parental involvement policies, programs, and practices within a school district is a complex process regardless of size. Research indicates that both parents and educators agree that involved parents make a significant difference in the educational process (Epstein, 1992, 1994, 1995, 2002; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; National PTA, 2000). Educators and parents often disagree on how to implement a parental involvement program (National PTA, 2000).

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of superintendents or designees in light of No Child Left Behind (2002) and to understand parental involvement through the lens of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002). A sequential transformative mixed methods design was chosen as the most

appropriate model for this study, due to the two distinct data collection phases, one following the other; the integration of the results during the interpretation phase; and the use of a theoretical perspective which guided the study (Creswell, 2003).

First, superintendents or designees in 540 school districts were surveyed and data from the surveys and documents submitted were analyzed. Second, interview questions were developed based on the surveys and documents. Third, rural, suburban, and urban superintendents were interviewed and documents provided were examined to gain a deeper understanding of perceptions of parental involvement in school districts. Finally, the surveys, interviews, and documents were integrated in the interpretation phase of the study.

Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) served as the theoretical perspective, in the study. The framework was used in the development of a survey instrument of Oklahoma superintendents or designees. The framework included six key components: communication, parenting, student learning, volunteering, school decision-making, and community collaboration. The transformative strategy gave voice to superintendents' and designees' perceptions and advocated for clearly defined parental involvement policies, programs, and practices that met NCLB (2002) guidelines in school districts.

Background of the Problem

Legislating Parental Involvement

Federal policies in education have a long and varied history. Parental involvement policies were formally developed in response to social changes in the 1960s (Rutherford, Anderson, & Billig, 1995). Since 1965, with the inception of Head Start, and the passage of

the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), legislators have understood the need for parental involvement in schools (Epstein & Hollifield, 1996; Rutherford, Anderson, & Billig, 1995). Title I of the ESEA was an effort to empower impoverished communities to solve their own educational problems as well as to provide funding for disadvantaged children (Snider, 1990). By 1978, federal legislators required parent advisory councils at the school and district levels. Title I parental involvement reforms in 1981 gave parents and community members limited responsibility as "advisors" (Rutherford, Anderson, & Billig, 1995). Most state and local education agencies chose to minimize parental involvement without federal requirements (Nardine & Morris, 1991).

The 1988 Hawkins-Stafford Amendments to the ESEA reinstated federal parental involvement requirements in the form of parental involvement policies (Rutherford, Anderson, & Billig, 1995). Goals 2000: Educate America Act, the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (IASA) and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994, which promoted school, family, and community connections, indicated knowledge gained through research, educational policy, and school and classroom practice (Epstein & Hollifield, 1996). Guidelines for school, family, and community partnerships were outlined in the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (IASA) and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994. These laws formalized parental involvement research and practice. The federal policy makers who wrote these laws used language that required educators to involve parents in schools and in their children's learning process. These laws were intended to strengthen parental involvement from preschool to high school (Epstein, 1995). Over the past 30 years, in spite of federal requirements, formal parental involvement policies and programs had not been developed

or had not been systematized in a large majority of states, school districts, and school sites. States, school districts, and school sites had lacked staff, funding, and professional development that would enable the development of parental involvement programs (Epstein & Hollifield, 1996).

Goals 2000: Educate America Act, IASA, and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act provided guidelines for states, districts, and schools. These laws had four important components, which were to help schools establish parental involvement programs. The first component, federal funds, was to be used for staff and program development and parental involvement activities (Epstein, 1995). The second component was flexibility, which allowed local education agencies to design parental involvement programs to meet their needs (Epstein, 1995). The laws' third component was one of coherence. Integrated parental involvement programs were emphasized that unite children, parents, and schools. These programs, unlike earlier attempts at parental involvement programs, were not to be fragmented and were not to separate children and families in categorical programs (Epstein, 1995). The final component, commitment, was illustrated through multi-year funding to states, districts and schools (Epstein, 1995). It was well understood that it took several years to develop and implement a parental involvement program that became part of the district or school practice (Epstein & Hollifield, 1996).

The 1994 Educate America Act, IASA's, and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act made it possible for schools to develop formal parental involvement programs that met local needs, but as of the late 1990s, a vast majority of states used limited funding, staff, and professional development for parental involvement programs (Baker & Soden, 1998). Why did the 1994 laws not lead to a greater number of parental involvement

programs? Researchers suggest that the laws were not well understood and were poorly implemented by educators (U.S. Dept. of Education, 1997). Superintendents or designees may not have known of the need for parental involvement to improve student achievement. The laws lacked continuity across grade levels. At the elementary level, parent teacher conferences were emphasized under Title I, but few guidelines for parental involvement were included for middle and high schools. School leaders at the middle and high school levels were not compelled to develop a parental involvement program, if the legislation was read literally (U.S. Dept. of Education, 1997). Finally, a lack of consequences under these 1994 laws led to the demise of strong parental involvement programs. The federal laws relied on states and districts to enact similar guidelines, supplementary funds, and consequences for failure when developing integrated parental involvement programs.

Goals 2000 was a voluntary piece of legislation allowing legislators to allocate funds for some goals, while ignoring other goals. Title I included many ideas about parent partnerships, but educators only had to take minimal steps to comply with the mandates. Federal funds provided under Title I, for parental involvement programs were limited. Schools that received more than $500,000 in Title I funds were required to spend at least 1% of that allocation on parental involvement programs (Epstein & Hollifield, 1996). States and school districts were not mandated to invest additional money to support parental involvement programs. The 1994 laws provided opportunities for school leaders to design, implement, and improve parental involvement programs, but the laws did not guarantee that states, districts, and school sites would do so.

Building on the 1994 amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 was the largest federal effort ever made to improve K-12 education (Ferguson, 2009). The law's basic premise was that the public would hold educators, policymakers, school board members, and parents accountable for improving education (Public Education Network, 2001). No Child Left Behind mandated that all students achieve proficiency in core subjects. It also required school districts to test student progress on an annual basis, and held schools accountable for closing the achievement gap between high and low performing students (Public Education Network, 2001). If a school did not improve, parents could request another more effective school for their children. No Child Left Behind mandated that parents and community members become involved in raising student achievement (Ferguson, 2009; Furger, 2005).

No Child Left Behind's provisions for engaging families and community affected states and schools across the United States. Over 90 percent of America's school districts receive funding for more than 40 federal educational programs and support services under NCLB (Public Education Network, 2002). No Child Left Behind updated the federal Title I program and its requirements for involving parents in schools and school districts. Title I parents were to be included in discussions involving how children would meet state academic standards. Under NCLB Sections 1111 and 1118, every State Education Agency (SEA), Local Education Agency (LEA) and school was required to work to build and maintain home/school partnerships. These sections provided detailed steps that LEAs and schools must take to develop parental involvement policies and increase parental involvement programs. In addition, parental involvement activities must

be coordinated with other federal programs such as Even Start, Head Start, Reading First, Family Literacy Program, and Limited English Proficient (LEP) programs (NCLB, 2002; Public Education Network, 2002).

Problem

Despite federal and state legislation requiring districts and schools to develop parental involvement policies and programs, the implementation and effectiveness varies tremendously within and across districts. Parental involvement can be an important factor in improving schools and student success; however, despite promising models and growing evidence of the benefits of parental involvement, policymakers, state education agencies, school districts and school sites are still not demonstrating maximum support for parental involvement practices (Furger, 2005; Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002). Federal funding under NCLB has provided limited dollars for Title I parental involvement requirements, 1% in districts receiving over $500,000 in federal funds (Department of Education, 2002). Stakeholders are asking for more research and evidence that parental involvement is taking place in school districts across the nation (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002).

A secondary problem was the lack of consistent agreement on what is meant by "parental involvement" or "family and community connections" or "school-family partnerships" (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002). No Child Left Behind (2002) provided a definition of parental involvement, but questions remained for superintendents or designees on understanding the many types of involvement; the challenges of each type of involvement that must be met to involve families; and the different results for students, parents, practices, and school climates (Epstein, 2002). The need to clarify these concepts

was essential so that researchers and practitioners could effectively implement and measure the impacts of this involvement.

Purpose

While parental involvement is viewed by policymakers, state education agencies, school districts, and school sites as being important in strengthening student achievement, few schools have gone beyond the minimum requirements of parental involvement under NCLB (Furger, 2005). The purpose of this sequential transformative mixed methods study was to examine the perceptions of superintendents or designees in light of NCLB (2002) and to understand parental involvement through the lens of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002). In the first quantitative phase of the study, a survey of superintendents' or designees' perceptions of components of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) which included: communication, parenting, learning at home, volunteering, school decision making and community collaboration and NCLB (2002) guidelines were analyzed. The researcher also examined school district parental involvement documentation provided by superintendents or designees. In the second qualitative phase, the experiences of a rural, suburban, and urban Oklahoma superintendent and school district documentation provided an understanding of parental involvement policies, practices, and programs.

Significance of the Study

A study of parental involvement as defined by Joyce Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) in Oklahoma schools is important for several reasons. First, existing research has shown that parental involvement contributes to improved schools and student achievement (Epstein, 1992; Jordan, Orozco, & Averett,

2001); however, more studies were needed to understand how parental involvement policies and programs were put into practice in schools. This study used Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) to examine Oklahoma superintendents' or designees' perceptions of parental involvement. Second, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) parental involvement guidelines have become part of Title I laws, but policymakers, state education agencies, local education agencies, and school districts were not providing widespread support for parental involvement practices (Furger, 2005; Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002). This study focused attention on parental involvement policies, programs, and activities. Third, this study highlighted an understanding of parental involvement by three superintendents in urban, suburban, and rural Oklahoma school districts, illuminating the various factors that contributed to the development of parental involvement programs and practices. Fourth, this study provided valuable results due to the sequential transformative mixed method design. The study's sequential approach made it easier to understand the complexity of developing parental involvement policies and programs under No Child Left Behind mandates. Epstein's conceptual framework was the transformative guide used to understand superintendents' or designees' perceptions of parental involvement. The mixed methods design utilized both quantitative and qualitative approaches to illicit insight into superintendents' or designees' perceptions of factors, which promote or constrain implementation of parental involvement policies. The data were also integrated to determine how the qualitative findings explained the descriptive statistical results addressed in the quantitative phase.

Research Questions

This study used a sequential transformative mixed method design to investigate the problems identified by the researcher, resulting in two quantitative, two qualitative, and two mixed method research questions.

Quantitative Research Questions

1. According to superintendents or designees, are the following components of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement being used in Oklahoma rural, urban, and suburban public school districts?
    a. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Communication* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?
    b. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Volunteering* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?
    c. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Parenting* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?
    d. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Learning at Home* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?
    e. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Community Collaboration* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?
    f. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Decision Making* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?
2. According to superintendents or designees, do rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma school district parental involvement policies and programs meet NCLB guidelines?

a. Do Oklahoma school districts have written parent involvement policies, programs, and staff training?
b. Do Oklahoma school districts allocate Title I funds for parental involvement programs?
c. Do Oklahoma school districts provide annual student performance report cards detailing the performance of the school district and individual schools?
d. Do Oklahoma school districts notify parents if Title I schools fall into the *needs improvement, corrective action, or restructured categories?*

The quantitative phase of the study was used to determine the qualitative research questions in the second portion of the study. The influence of NCLB (2002) on parental involvement policies, practices, and programs was analyzed to create a clearer picture for the researcher and to gain greater understanding for schools as they continually strive to meet the federal guidelines and involve parents. The following qualitative research questions emerged from the survey of public school leaders and parental involvement policies and programs submitted from school districts.

Qualitative Research Questions

1. How does NCLB (2002) influence parental involvement policies, practices, and programs within rural, urban, and suburban school districts?
2. How do rural, urban, and suburban superintendents determine and develop the components of parent involvement, policies, practices, and programs?

Mixed Method Research Questions

1. From superintendents' or designees' perspectives, what factors promote or constrain the implementation of parental involvement policies in Oklahoma rural, urban, and suburban school districts?
2. How do the qualitative findings explain the statistical results addressed in the quantitative phase?

Limitations

1. Responses and survey completion were voluntary. Only participating superintendents or designees data could be included in the sample.
2. The findings are generalizable only to the population used in the study.
3. The sample of the study was limited to superintendents or designees. Parents, teachers, and students are important components of parental involvement, but data were not collected from these stakeholders.
4. There is a potential for bias based on the role of the researcher who served as an administrator in a suburban school district.
5. There is potential for different interpretations due to the qualitative nature of the research in the second phase of the study.
6. Limited data could lead to inconsistencies in the data analysis and less conclusive findings.
7. The mixed –mode survey design: web-based and mail may lead to questions about whether respondents give the same answers to each mode (Dillman, 2000).

Definition of Terms

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)

This is a federal law affecting K-12 education. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 is the most recent reauthorization of the ESEA (U.S. Dept. of Education).

Highly Qualified

Teachers who are highly qualified under No Child Left Behind (2002) must have a bachelor's degree, state certification or licensure, and proof that they know each subject they teach. Middle and high school teachers must demonstrate competency by having a major in the subject taught, credits equivalent to a major in the subject and passage of a state-developed test. An alternate method of demonstrating competency is by building a HOUSSE – which consists of a combination of teaching experience, professional development, and knowledge in the subject garnered over time in the profession, an advanced certification from the state, or a graduate degree.

Local Education Agency (LEA)

An LEA is a public board of education or authority that maintains administrative control of public schools in a city, county, school district, or other political subdivision of a state (U.S. Dept. of Education).

Limited English Proficient

These are students whose second language is English and are not at grade level in reading and writing English (NCLB, 2001; Public Education Network, 2002).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001

NCLB is a federal law, which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The law provides a framework through which families, educators and communities can work together to improve teaching and learning.

Parent

The term “parent” includes the natural parent, legal guardian, or other person responsible for the child (such as grandparent or stepparent with whom the child lives or a person legally responsible for the child’s welfare) (Section 9101 (31), ESEA, 1965, NCLB, 2001).

Parent Involvement Framework

Joyce Epstein’s research-based model of six types of parent involvement used to develop a comprehensive program of school, family, and community partnerships. The six dimensions of involvement are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community (Epstein, 1992, 1995, 2002).

Parental Involvement as defined under No Child Left Behind Act, 2001

Participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student learning and school activities, which include:

1. Ensuring that parents play a vital role in their child’s learning;
2. Encouraging parents to be actively involved in their child’s education at school;
3. Ensuring that parents are full partners in their child’s education and are included, if appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the child’s education.

Parental Involvement Policy

This refers to a policy that explains how the school district or school site supports the role of parents in the education of their children. Every school district and school site

that receives Title I money must have a parental involvement policy (RMC Research Corporation, 1996).

Parent-School Compact

This type of written agreement outlines the shared responsibilities of parents and schools as partners in working to improve student achievement (NCLB, 2001; Epstein, 2002).

Rural

This refers to the National Center of Education Statistics locale code which is Census Bureau-defined as territory that may be as close as 2.5 miles from an urban cluster or as territory more than 25 miles from an urbanized area. Locale codes rely less on population and county boundaries and more on the proximity of an address to an urbanized area. (Schneider, 2006)

State Education Agency (SEA)

The SEA is the agency responsible for supervising the state's public schools (U.S. Department of Education).

Suburban

This refers to the National Center of Education Statistics locale code, which is Census Bureau-defined as territory outside of a principal city and inside an urbanized area with population of less than 100, 000 to 250,000 or more. Locale codes rely less on population and county boundaries and more on the proximity of an address to an urbanized area. (Schneider, 2006)

Title I

Title I is a U.S. Department of Education supplementary program for K-12 students who are behind academically or at risk of falling behind. In order to receive Title I funds, identified schools must have 40% of the student population eligible for free or reduced school meals. Title I is intended to supplement, not replace, state and district funds. Schools receiving Title I monies are to involve parents in decisions regarding spending and reviewing progress. Title I used to be named Chapter One (NCLB, 2001).

Urban

This refers to the National Center of Education Statistics locale code, which is Census Bureau-defined territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with population of less than 100,000 to more than 250,000. Locale codes rely less on population and county boundaries and more on the proximity of an address to an urbanized area. (Schneider, 2006)

Summary

Improving the education of all students became paramount with the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2002). No Child Left Behind (2002) focused attention on the roles of the school, family, and community in preparing students for the challenges of the future. Research has indicated that the active participation of parents contributes to quality education for students (Fan & Chen, 2001; Finn, 1998; Henderson & Berla, 1994). Studies have suggested that parental involvement can have a positive impact on students' achievement (Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993; Sanders & Epstein, 2000; Simon, 2000; Trusty, 1999). Parental involvement can make an important contribution to student achievement but has proven to be a challenge for researchers who seek to inform practice (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002).

Current public schools involve parents and families in many different activities (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002). The array of activities included in the definition of parental involvement makes it difficult to compare models of parental involvement. Analysis of the findings of multiple studies is also a challenge faced by researchers (Baker & Soden, 1998). The focus of this study was to examine the perceptions of superintendents or designees in light of No Child Left Behind (2002) and to understand parental involvement through the lens of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002).

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Parental involvement literature has expanded from 1970 -2009. This chapter is divided into the following five sections: (a) historical background of parental involvement, (b) historical framework of federal/state requirements for parental involvement, (c) historical framework of research (d) rural, urban, and suburban parental involvement research relevant to Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) and (e) summary.

Historical Background of Parental Involvement

The importance of parental involvement in American culture is not a new concept (Berger, 1991; Epstein, 2002). However, *how* parents are involved in their children's educational process has changed significantly over the past three centuries. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, schools were controlled by parents and the local community, not only by deciding on the curricula but also in the hiring and firing of teachers (Epstein, 2002). Parenting was supplemented by instruction and curriculum in schools (Berger, 1991; Lightfoot, 1978).

In the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a different pattern of parent-school relations occurred. Parental authority within schools began to diminish and local school control could be seen in the increased authority of state, county, and district superintendents. Local school boards began to replace city government in managing the schools (Button & Provenzo, 1989). More responsibilities were given to the superintendent and school district structures were established. Parents were no longer

needed to maintain a school, select the curriculum, or hire the teacher; trained professionals were relied upon to do these tasks. During this time, parents became further alienated from the school, in part by the expert knowledge that teachers had received through degree programs and certification requirements (Coyote, 2007). Up to this time, it was thought that anyone could teach (DeMoss, 1998; Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

This progressive era and industrial revolution led to the deterioration of home-school-community relations, and a "we-they" mentality began (Henry, 1996, p. 5). Schools and homes were viewed as being in opposition. Parents were expected to prepare their children for school by teaching values and responsibility, while the school was responsible for instructing students in coursework (Lightfoot, 1978; Connors & Epstein, 1995; Powell & Diamond, 1995; Epstein, 2002; Coyote, 2007).

After World War II, parental involvement shifted away from an oppositional exclusive style to an equal inclusionary role (DeMoss, 1998). *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in1954 not only noted the end of legalized public-school segregation, but also symbolized the first time a parent sued a school district and won (Sarason, 1995; DeMoss, 1998). Parents began to seek out legal remedies in the courts and through legislation.

During the 1960s, educational theorists and the federal government began to endorse the passage of legislation supporting such programs as Head Start, Home Start, and Follow Through (Berger, 1991). Although federal programs that tried to link home and school were popular in the public's eye, little funding was directed toward attainment of this goal.

The Head Start program targeted lower-income families with dependent children. Both child development experts and the federal government viewed strong cohesive home-school partnerships as essential (Berger, 1991). Berger (1991) emphasized the importance of an alliance between parents and schools that comes not only from the recognition that schools are in need of supportive parents to achieve success, but that schools are integral to parents and families. Berger (2007) contended that three major changes in educational thought emerged during the 1960s.

> First, that the inclusion of parents allowed for insight into children's educational needs and thus empowered parents to make educational decisions. Second, cultural awareness and diversity became more accepted in schools across the nation. Third, the *parents* were an essential component in education and training which affected their children. (p.78)

Empowering parents was believed to lead to improved lives of children and an increase in educational achievement (Lewis & Nakagawa, 1995).

Programs such as Head Start continued into the 1970s and 1980s. Parents began to be more vocal about public education, especially in the area of special education. In 1975, Congress passed Public Law 94-142, (Education of Handicapped Children Act), now codified as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which marked the first time parental involvement was federally mandated. In order to receive federal funds from IDEA, states were required to develop and implement policies that assured a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all children with disabilities. The state plans demanded consistency with the federal statute, Title 20 United States Code Section 1400 et.seq.

The 1980s was an age of accountability and restraints were placed on schools' collaborative efforts such as home-school-community partnerships and site-based management. Pressure began to mount to move back to complete community control. Parents, who were aware of resistance from educators, called for more state and federal legislation. The U.S. Department of Education as well as the National Association of State Boards of Education, along with various professional specialty associations took leadership roles in developing frameworks of successful parent-school collaboration programs (Berger, 1991; Coyote, 2007).

By the 1990s, legislators as well as parents were increasingly demanding accountability from public education. Both entities encouraged federal legislation in the areas of national standards, standardized testing, and school-home-community partnerships. There was also growing recognition among developmental, sociological, and educational theorists that both the home and school were critically responsible for the socialization and education of children (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

The 21st century has continued to be an era encouraging parental involvement. Decades of research left little doubt that parents played a significant role in the children's academic success (Ceballo, 2004; Jeynes, 2005; Marschall, 2006; Spera, 2006). Federal legislation encouraged partnerships to increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children (Goals 2000). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the updated Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) both signified the level of importance that the federal government placed on parental involvement.

In a 2006, Appleseed Foundation report entitled “It Takes a Parent,” parental involvement elements of The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 were examined by a consortium of 16 state and local organizations, in 18 school districts in six states. Three conclusions emerged from the study, based on research and interviews with educational leaders and 24 parent focus groups. First, despite federal mandates and parental involvement research, school districts, and individual school sites had not entirely encompassed parental involvement as a primary student achievement strategy. The Appleseed Foundation (2006) suggested that this lack of widespread parental involvement in schools had been the result of several causes:

- The lack of clear and meaningful assessments by which effective parental involvement policies and programs could be measured.
- Limited awareness and training on how to involve parents.
- A concerted effort to meet the accountability components of NCLB, such as testing and teacher quality, rather than parental involvement (Appleseed Foundation, 2006).

Second, there was still a need for existing parental involvement mandates to be fully understood, supported, and implemented. The Appleseed report (2006) recommended that state, district, and school leaders work to implement the laws that presently exist. Third, a number of promising parental involvement practices and models emerged during the study. The Appleseed report (2006) concluded that many parents did not receive clear and timely information about their children and their schools; that poverty, language, and cultural differences are barriers to parental involvement; and school leaders do not uniformly value that parental involvement as an accountability strategy.

Parental involvement continues to be studied by researchers, educators, and parents who understand that parental involvement is an essential element in the success of students and schools. High achieving schools recognize that parents are a necessary component of the educational process. Schools and teachers are still being encouraged to move parental involvement policies, programs, and practices from the side to the forefront of their achievement strategy (Appleseed, 2006).

Historical Framework of Federal/State Requirements for Parental Involvement

In 1965, with the passage of the Civil Rights Act, the federal government took a stand to help impoverished families with children through the Head Start program. The inclusion of parents in the Head Start program provided insight into their needs and included parents in decision-making (Berger, 1991). Parents on advisory boards became common in other federally funded programs such as Home Start, Title I, and those emanating from Public Law 94-142 in the 1970s. Parents of handicapped children were also included, under Public Law 94-142 of 1975, in the development of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

In 1978, educational amendments required the involvement of parents in Title I schools in substantial ways. Parents were to be involved in the establishment of programs; they were to be kept informed and permitted to make recommendations on the instructional goals and progress of their children. Parents were also to establish district and school advisory councils. The 1978 amendments were viewed by parents as the most comprehensive and far-reaching parental involvement legislation thus far, but within the next 8 years, Title I parental involvement requirements would begin to decrease (NCPIE, 2007). In 1981, federal involvement in elementary and secondary schools was curtailed,

which led to cuts in funding. With the passage of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA), Title I was merged in the new law and was renamed Chapter I, which removed the requirement of parental involvement, but continued to recommend parental involvement (Berger, 1991).

Although Chapter I parental involvement requirements were eliminated in the 1980s, states such as Arizona and Connecticut as well as individual public schools responded to the need for parental involvement in the education of their children (Education Commission of the States, 2005). Public agencies and professional educators began to support home-school collaboration (Berger, 1991; Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1988; Comer, 1988; Moles, 1987; U.S. Department of Education, 1986). Public schools across the nation developed ideal frameworks of successful parent-school-community collaboration (Henderson, 1987; Schorr & Schorr, 1988). Publications from the U.S. Department of Education, National Association of State Boards of Education, International Reading Association, National Association for the Education of Young Children, and Council for Exceptional Children also provided recommendations for parental involvement.

In 1988, the Hawkins-Stafford Amendments reemphasized specific parental involvement requirements. Section (1016 c) of the law required local education agencies (LEA) to inform parents of parental involvement requirements; develop written policies; make Chapter I LEA personnel available to parents; meet annually with parents; hold parent conferences; and assess the effectiveness of parental involvement programs (NCPIE Update, 2007). The law also required that school improvement plans and school-wide programs include parental involvement (NCPIE Update, 2007).

Parental involvement mandates were also included in state legislation. In 1989, Oklahoma legislators passed a law encouraging public schools to develop and implement a parent education program, which would provide training for parents in language acquisition, cognition, social skills, and motor development of young children (Oklahoma Statute Title 70 10-105.3).

The 1990s proved to be a decade of continued federal parental involvement mandates. The reauthorization of the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (1994) returned Chapter I to its original name, Title I, and focused on expanded parental involvement roles in policymaking and implementation (NCPIE Update, 2007). One requirement was that Title I district and school site policies were to be developed together with parents. School-home compacts placed the responsibility of student achievement on both parents and schools.

State legislatures across the nation also began to recognize the importance of parental involvement in student achievement, enacting legislation designed to increase parental involvement in their children's education both at school and at home. In 1995, Oklahoma parental involvement legislation gave parents the right to inspect curriculum and materials in sex education classes (Oklahoma Statute Title. 70 11-105.1). The Oklahoma Reading Sufficiency Act passed in 1997, required that 3rd graders reading below grade level were to be included in new reading programs. Parents of students reading below grade level were to be involved in the development of the reading plan and program (Oklahoma Statute Title 70 10-105.2).

At the beginning of the 21st century, President George W. Bush increased federal involvement in education with the creation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, in

part a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) (NCLB, 2002). This legislation signed into law in 2002 was the most far-reaching example of federal involvement in public education to date. This act mandated guidelines for the development and implementation of state standards and assessments. Federal funds were provided based on state, district, and school performance on assessments. Under the requirements of No Child Left Behind (2002), students must make "Adequate Yearly Progress" (AYP) in order to meet the performance benchmarks on state mandated testing. All students including those identified as special education, English Language Learners, and low socio-economic status were included in the AYP calculations under No Child Left Behind (2002). Also under NCLB requirements, teachers must be highly qualified in order to be employed by school districts. Numerous articles outlined NCLB's mandates of annual testing and the necessity of highly qualified teachers; however, another important feature required states to establish programs for increasing parental involvement in schools (Epstein, 2002). Schools with student populations that reach or exceed 50% or more on free and reduced lunches qualified for Title I status under NCLB (2002). States, districts, and individual Title I schools had to develop and implement parental involvement provisions in order to receive federal funds (NCLB, 2002). These parental involvement provisions are listed in Appendix A of this study, and in summary include stipulations for:

1. Joint policy writing and clear accommodation of parents in order to encourage their participation in policy formulation;
2. Provision of timely and ready access to information about student achievement, as well as curriculum and assessment;

3. Outlining a shared responsibility for student success, including provisions for parent-teacher conferences, volunteer opportunities, classes in literacy and technology classes;
4. Help in facilitating a child's progress, including providing materials, helping teachers reach out to parents, building parent programs and coordinating efforts for parental involvement in other programs (such as Head Start);
5. Providing full access to parents with limited English proficiency, parents with disabilities, and parent of migratory children, in order to meet all stipulations.
6. Additionally, it outlines optional activities, such as involving parents in training of teachers, providing alternative meeting times, and other support such as transportation and childcare to facilitate meeting attendance, providing literacy training to parents, and developing a district-wide parent advisory council. (Virginia Department of Education, n.d.)

Epstein (2005) further elaborated that in contrast to some other sections of the law, Title I Part A, Section 1118-Parental Involvement improved over time by drawing from research in the sociology of education, other disciplines, and exemplary practice to specify structures and processes that were needed to develop programs involving all families in their children's education. This section was also in contrast to early legislation, which mandated a few parent representatives on school or district advisory councils but left most parents on their own to figure out how to become involved in their children's education across the grades (Epstein, 2005).

Title I, Part A, Section 1118 of the ESEA under NCLB contained the primary requirements related to involving parents in their children's education; outlining state,

school district, and school site parental involvement requirements. Specifically, these requirements promoted shared accountability between parents and schools in order to improve student achievement, public school choice, and supplemental educational services for students in low-performing schools, local control of parental involvement plans or compacts with flexibility to address local needs, and developing parental awareness of practices to improve their children's academic success.

Title I parental involvement provisions added under the NCLB Act (2002) offered parents information about their children's education, the highly qualified status of their teachers, and the quality of the schools that students attend. This information allowed parents to make informed choices for their children, share accountability with their schools, and develop effective academic policies and programs.

State Education Agencies (SEAs) were required to collaborate with parents to develop a state plan with goals and objectives to improve teacher quality through professional development opportunities and to increase the number of highly qualified teachers. State Education Agencies had to establish a peer-review committee comprised of parents, educators, and local education agency (LEA) representatives to review the state's Title I plan before submission to the federal government. State Education Agencies were to provide assistance to school districts and schools in developing parental involvement programs. A state review committee including parents was compelled to examine Title I funded school districts' compliance with parental involvement requirements on an annual basis.

School district parental involvement requirements in Title I, Part A Section 1118 of NCLB identified the responsibilities of the LEA to collaborate with parents. First,

LEAs and parents were required to develop written parental involvement policies that engaged parents, described barriers to parental involvement, and coordinated parental involvement in other programs, such as Head Start, Even Start, Parents as Teachers Program, and State-run preschool programs. Local education agencies were also required to notify parents and the community of this policy and to hold at least one annual meeting to explain and evaluate the content and effectiveness of the policy. Second, at least one percent of the LEAs' Title I funds prescribed development of a parental involvement program. These funds may be used to employ parent coordinators, conduct parenting skills workshops and meetings, provide transportation and childcare, and to make home visits. Third, an annual student performance report card was to be provided to parents and community members with comparative information detailing the performance of the school district and individual school levels, based on state assessments. Finally, parents had to be notified by the school district if Title I schools fell into the needs improvement, corrective action, or restructured categories; defining these terms and explaining what options parents had (Title I, Part A Sections 1111 & 1118).

In summary, the focus of NCLB Title I school requirements was for schools to collaborate with parents at the individual school sites to improve student academic achievement. This was to be accomplished by working with parents to draft a school parental involvement policy. Within this policy, a parent-school compact or agreement was required to be drafted which explained how parents and the school would work together to improve student academic success. Each Title I school was compelled to also notify parents and the community of the parental involvement policy, their rights under Title I, and how they were to be involved in the planning, reviews, and improvement of

Title I programs. An annual meeting was to be held for Title I parents, which explained the policy. Every Title I school was required to submit a copy of their parental involvement policy to the SEA, with comments from parents who disagreed with the plan.

Another requirement under Title I in NCLB for schools was that information regarding school programs, school report cards, and state standards and assessments should be delivered to parents. Training of parents, teachers, administrators and other staff was also required under NCLB. Parents were to be given opportunities for literacy and technology training in order to assist their children. School personnel were required to attend training in how to collaborate with parents. Parents must have received information regarding school programs, meetings, and activities in an understandable format and language. The school's student achievement results had to also be distributed to parents, teachers, and the community (Title I, Part A Sections 1111 & 1118).

Historical Framework of Research

As the history and legislation of parental involvement evolved, so did the research. Researchers revealed perspectives and models that influenced the involvement of parents in the education of their children. Selected literature exemplified a wide range of perspectives and models that supported the need for building effective partnerships with parents. Selected literature exemplified three different perspectives: ecological, separation, and social-organizational (DeMoss, 1998) and provided a rationale for the use of Epstein's Parent Involvement Framework (1992, 1995, 2002).

Ecological Perspective

The ecological perspective took into account the external influences that affected the ability of families to enhance learning and development of their children and exemplified the first era of parental involvement ideology (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986; Comer & Haynes, 1991; Dym, 1998; Gordon, 1979). The basic assumptions of this perspective were based on shared responsibilities of institutions that highlighted the coordination and cooperation of schools and families, and encouraged communication and collaboration between these two institutions (Epstein, 1987). This perspective assumed that responsibilities for socialization and education were shared between schools and families. When teachers and parents worked together, common goals for their children were achieved more effectively. Gordon's and Bronfenbrenner's models emphasized the nested and necessary connections between individuals and their groups and organizations (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Epstein, 1987; Gordon, 1979).

Bronfenbrenner's model and Gordon's systems approach.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1986) and Gordon's (1979) ecological models could be placed in a systems context. A systems approach recognized that no one component operated in isolation, that life was reciprocal, that many forces outside the family influenced what happens in a family, and that the family in turn played a role in influencing the variety of social forces (Gordon, 1979). These embedded or nested models viewed a child's development within microsystems and macrosystems. An example of a microsystem was the family in which a child participated, while an example of a macrosystem was defined by the social, economic, and political aspects of the larger society, which affected the child's development (Gordon, 1979; Lunenburg & Irby,

2002). These models viewed the school and family as one dynamic system (Henry, 1996). Gordon's (1979) systems approach outlined two additional levels of parental involvement, the mesosystem, and exosystem. Examples of the mesosystem were neighborhood institutions such as schools, recreation, stores, etc., which affected the family in less direct ways (Lunenburg & Irby, 2002). The exosystem represented an examination of local policies. For example, the availability of social services in a community influenced the quality of family life (Lunenburg & Irby, 2002). When changes in parts of these models occurred, adaptations took take place within microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems and macrosystems (Gordon, 1979; Lunenburg & Irby, 2002). Researchers have used these models to study the contextual and interrelated effects of day care, social support, community conditions, and other factors on children's achievement, other school success indicators, and other aspects of development. Bronfenbrenner's model described complex and dynamic realities of the effects of multiple contexts on human development (Connors & Epstein, 1995).

The strengths of these models existed in the shared responsibilities of families and schools. Parental involvement cannot exist in isolation (Comer & Haynes, 1991). Parents were naturally connected to the school and to the community. Parents provided essential developmental information and past educational experiences regarding their child. The school provided valuable information about the education of the child and available community resources (DeMoss, 1998). Head Start's parent education component was illustrative of this ecological perspective. Parents received education and vocational training, which enhanced the child's academic success. (DeMoss, 1998; Smith, 1995).

The weaknesses of the model existed in the lack of autonomy allowed between schools and families. Teachers' need for professional autonomy was not addressed. Parents' values that were different from the school and/or community were not considered. These embedded or nested models did not distinguish between home and school (DeMoss, 1998).

Separation Perspective

The second perspective, separation theory, contended that the family, the community, and the school had separate responsibilities in education and in the development of children (Lightfoot, 1978). This theory stressed the inherent incompatibility, competition, and conflict between families and schools (Epstein, 1987). This philosophy was common during the early part of the 20th century when schools began to disconnect themselves from the home and community. Educators sought professionalism, which emulated the business community (Button & Provenzo, 1989). Teachers were seen as experts and parents were viewed as non-experts (Adams, 2003; Powell, 1991). The school was in charge of education and the parents were responsible for the child's social development. Separation theorists believed that schools were more objective and parents were more subjective (Adams, 2003; Lightfoot, 1978). Lightfoot (1978) suggested that this perspective should be known as the Worlds Apart Theory.

The strengths and weaknesses of this perspective existed in its need for autonomy. The benefits resided with the gain of professionalism achieved by educators. Business practices transformed public schools, but produced a division between families and schools. This need for autonomy led to an us-against-them mentality in the minds of educators and families (Henry, 1996).

The separation theory gave the responsibility of the child's social development to the family and left the task of education to the schools. This theory separated the social aspects of education and the learning that take place at home (Connors & Epstein, 1995). This division of responsibilities led schools to view students more objectively or dispassionately in terms of student achievement and test scores. Parents, on the other hand, saw their child through the lens of emotional attachment in a more subjective, individualistic manner (Adams, 2003).

This theory did not account for the blurring of responsibilities between public schools, parents, and community in our world today. Public schools have assumed more and more responsibilities that once were assigned to families. Sexuality education, drug and alcohol awareness, violence prevention, and resilience became part of public school instruction and curriculum. Schools were expected to connect with community agencies to provide medical services, welfare assistance, and literacy programs for children.

Social-Organizational Perspective–Epstein's Model

Epstein's (1987, 1992) research suggested a social-organizational perspective of overlapping spheres in which home-school-community partnerships were interwoven. This theory typified a dynamic system, which was dependent on internal and external forces. Time, as well as the age and grade level of a student, determined the amount of overlap between the spheres. The model addressed the professionalism of educators, the autonomy of parents, and the psychological needs of the child (Epstein, 1987). Epstein (1992) used the term "partnership" to describe parent involvement in the model. Parental involvement focused on the parent's responsibilities not the schools, whereas a partnership suggested a collaborative effort (Crotta, 1994; Epstein, 1992, 1995, 2002).

Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992) was used as a guide for school-family-community partnerships in America's Goals 2000 (1994), PTA National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs (1997) and Title I, NCLB (2002) guidelines. This framework guided educators in promoting and establishing comprehensive partnership programs (Epstein, 1992, 1995, 2002). These six types of involvement were parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein, 1992, 1995, 2002).

Parenting activities helped families strengthen their parenting skills, understand child development, and promote home environments, which supported student learning. Schools also gained information from families, which helped educators understand students' backgrounds, cultures, and goals. Parenting activities could include home visits, coordinating services with outside agencies, parent GED programs, family computer classes, and family support groups (Epstein, 2002).

Communicating activities were two-way, increasing school-to-home and home-to-school communications. Memorandums, notices, conferences, report cards, newsletters, phone, email, Internet, open houses, and other forms of communication relayed information to and from families. Among many communication tools, schools may provide interpretation tips for testing reports, conferences with parents, students, and teams of teachers, and parent newsletter columns (Epstein, 2002).

Volunteering activities involved parents and others as volunteers and audiences at the school or school functions to support students and programs. Recruitment, training, and scheduling were components of volunteering activities. Schools could collect information from parents about occupations, interests, and availability to serve as

volunteers. Parents could serve as tutors, translators, or school crossing guards, serve on booster clubs or sponsor extracurricular clubs, or mentor, coach, or lead after-school programs (Epstein, 2002).

Learning-at-home activities contributed to student success by promoting learning activities at home that were integrated with students' class work. Families supported their children by helping with curricular-linked activities, at home, which included interactive homework, goal-setting activities, student-family-teacher contracts for projects, summer reading packets, and student-led home portfolio nights. Schools could choose to have Family Fun Nights, which focused parents and students on curricular activities and promoted conversations about academic subjects (Epstein, 2002).

Decision-making activities involved parents in improving school policies and practices that affected their children and families. Parents were actively engaged in conversations on school improvement committees, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or other parent organizations, Title I and other councils, and various leadership groups. Parents brought perspectives, which may have been different from educators. Identifying and understanding issues that were important to families and making decisions with parent representatives committees which would increase awareness and improve schools (Epstein, 2002).

Collaborating with the community activities resulted in strengthened school activities, programs, student learning, and family practices. These collaborative efforts elicited the resources of community businesses; cultural, civic, and religious organizations; senior citizen groups; colleges and universities; governmental agencies and other groups. Resources provided by community collaboration included businesses

which donated refreshments for parent workshops; television stations that communicated school events; volunteer mentors and tutors for students, and local medical agencies that administered eye and hearing exams.(Epstein, 2002). Collaborating activities also encouraged students, educators, and families to give back to their community.

In 1997, the National PTA created and adopted the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs in support of establishing quality parental involvement programs that enhance student learning and achievement. These standards were based on Epstein's (1987, 1992, 1995, 2002) model of parental involvement. Each of the six standards focused on a different type of parental involvement:

1. Communication – two-way, regular, and meaningful between home and school.
2. Parenting Skills – developed and supported.
3. Volunteering – assistance and efforts are supported.
4. School Decision Making and Advocacy – parents share in making decisions regarding children and families.
5. Student Learning – parents are vital in assisting student learning.
6. Collaborating With the Community – schools, families and students are supported by community resources (National PTA, 2000).

Other methods of parent-teacher relationships have been defined by various assumptions, goals, and strategies. A few of these models may be linked to the prominent Epstein's Parent Involvement Framework (1992, 1995, 2002) such as Swap's (1993) partnership model and Berger's (1991) roles. Swap's (1993) partnership model was similar to Epstein's (1987, 1992, 2002) model, but did not include the range of components found useful within the school-family-community partnership framework.

Eugenia Heyworth Berger (1991) provided six parental roles in her book *Parents as Partners in Education*. The roles focused on what parents' responsibilities were at school, home and in other institutions. The roles included parents as teachers, parents as spectators, parents as employed resources, parents as volunteers, parents as volunteer resources, and parents as policymakers. A weakness of this model was the lack of focus on parent training or education (Lunenburg & Irby, 2002).

Other models, which included parent involvement, exist outside of dominant perspectives. In Cunningham and Davis' (1985) model, parents were considered consumers of educational services. In Chalking and Williams' Parental Involvement Roles (1993), parents were surveyed and data was analyzed based on parent ethnicity, finding that all parents were interested in parental involvement. Hoover–Dempsey and Sandler (1995) suggested that parental involvement options and decisions were founded on several constructs drawn from parental ideas, perceptions, and experiences as well as other constructs drawn from environmental demands and influences. This model assumed that parental involvement was linear in that parents first made a decision to be involved and then moved to the second level to choose an area of involvement. Research written recently has involved the importance for language minority parents to be involved in their children's education to support academic achievement (Crawford, 1989; Lunenburg & Irby, 1999, 2002).

Joyce Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) was used in this study because Epstein's research and model provided the most conclusive and most supported research to date. The ecological and separation perspectives were incorporated in this social-organizational perspective. Epstein's research addressed

strengths and weaknesses of the ecological perspective. Shared responsibilities between families and school and the lack of autonomy between home and school were encompassed in Epstein's Overlapping Spheres Model (1995), demonstrating a connection between family and school. Epstein's research expanded the ecological perspective by including community as the third sphere in the model. Epstein also used the term partnership to denote collaboration between family-school-community. Early parental involvement legislation, which established programs, such as Head Start, was illustrative of the parent education component of the ecological perspective (DeMoss, 1998; Smith, 1995).

Epstein's social-organizational perspective was also influenced by separation perspective's need for autonomy between families and schools. Responsibilities overlapped in Epstein's model with collaboration being essential between family-school-community, but each group maintained its roles in the model. Unlike separation perspective, Epstein's model, formed a partnership between groups in an effort to enhance student achievement.

Separation perspective's influence on legislation was evident in the 1980s. A Nation at Risk (1983) encouraged parents to demand an end to mediocrity in public schools. Parents called for more state and federal legislation mandating accountability, hindering collaboration and partnerships between families and schools. In the late 1980s, Epstein, the U.S. Department of Education, along with various professional specialty organizations, took the lead in developing frameworks of successful home-school collaboration programs (Berger, 1991; Coyote, 2007). Epstein continued to be sought out by legislators and organizations as a parental involvement expert. Epstein, (2006) served

as Director of the National Network of Partnership Schools and the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships, Principal Researcher, and Research Professor of Sociology at John Hopkins University. Epstein has conducted research and worked with schools, districts, and departments of education for over thirty years. Epstein (2006) wrote over 100 publications that focused on school-family-community partnerships. Epstein, in 1996, established the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) that promoted connections of research, policy, and practice for school improvement. Epstein (2006) served on numerous boards and advisory panels on parental involvement and school reform. She received awards for her work on family-school partnerships. These awards included the 1991 Academy for Educational Development's Alvin C. Eurich Education Award, the 1997 Working Mother magazine award for her efforts on family-school partnerships, and co-winner of the 2005 American Orthopsychiatric Association's Blanche F. Ittleson Award for scholarship and service to strengthen school and family connections (Epstein, 2006).

Parental Involvement in Rural, Suburban, and Urban Schools

Although various perspectives, models, and methods of parental involvement in schools have been documented, researchers also began to delve into how parental involvement was shaped by the type of school setting. Rural, suburban, and urban school districts were characterized by their own problems that affected parental involvement (Dee, Ha, & Jacob, 2006; Dougherty, 2006; Flora, Spears, & Swanson, 1992; Jeynes, 2005; Maynard & Howley, 1997; Prater, Bermudez, & Owens, 1997; Sun, Hobbs & Elder, 1994). Some research indicated that small schools were more effective in promoting parental involvement than suburban or urban schools (Dee Ha, & Jacob, 2006;

Meier, 1996; Sun, Hobbs & Elder, & Sun, 1997; Thorkildsen & Stein, 1998). Other research suggested that parental involvement in urban schools influenced student success (Jeynes, 2003; Barnard, 2004). While other researchers noted that little was known about the effects of parental involvement on achievement of urban students (Shaver & Walls, 1998). One study found that suburban parents were more involved in schools as compared to rural and urban parents (Johnson, 1990).

Other studies examined specific components of parental involvement in rural, urban, and suburban schools. In a National Center for Education Statistics (1998) study, researchers related school size to volunteering and parent training. This study found suburban and urban schools were more likely to offer volunteering opportunities and parent training than rural schools. Ingram, Wolfe, and Lieberman (2007) determined causal relationships between components of parental involvement and student achievement in urban schools investigating parenting and learning at home. Rogers and Wright (2008) examined the role of communications technologies in fostering parental involvement in suburban middle schools. Kannapel, Moore, Coe, and Aagaard (1995) studied decision making in rural Kentucky schools to determine if rural decision making councils which consisted of administrators, teachers, and parents, dealt with decisions differently than urban or suburban schools.

Summary

A rich history existed of schools and parents that recognized the importance of educating America's youth. Parental involvement literature dated back to the early beginnings of schools in the United States. State and federal parental involvement legislation improved with time by drawing from research models and perspectives to

specify structures and processes needed to develop programs which strived to involve all families in their children's' education. Schools, parents, and legislators continued to work toward a common goal: the building and sustaining of partnerships between schools and parents. In the 21st century, parental involvement was recognized as a necessary component of public schools.

Parental involvement policies, programs, and practices were influenced by the complexity of schools and parent communities. Location, size, and culture of the school district or school site were noted as contextual factors, which may have influenced parental involvement. The interpretation of state and federal parental involvement legislation was influenced by the way superintendents or designees defined the various roles and relationships of policies, programs, and practices.

The No Child Left Behind Act (2002) required school districts and school sites to develop parental involvement policies and programs, but implementation and effectiveness has varied within and across districts. Despite Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) and evidence of the benefits of parental involvement, maximum support for parental involvement practices by legislators, state education agencies, school districts, and school sites was not provided. (Jordan, Orozco, & Averett, 2002) Even with NCLB's (2002) definition of parental involvement, a lack of consistent agreement on what was meant by parental involvement existed. (Jordan, Orozco, & Averett, 2002).

A sequential transformative mixed methods design was used in this study to examine the perceptions of superintendents or designees in light of NCLB (2002) and to understand parental involvement through the lens of Epstein's Framework of Parent

involvement (1992, 1995, 2002). Survey results, school district parental involvement documentation, and interview transcriptions served as data sources for this study. This study adds to the research examining how superintendents or designees perceive the implementation of parental involvement policies, programs, and practices in school districts.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

> A mixed methods design is useful to capture the best of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The researcher bases the inquiry on the assumption that collecting diverse types of data best provides an understanding of a research problem. The study begins with a broad survey and parental involvement documents to generalize results to a population and then focuses, in a second phase, on detailed qualitative semi-structured interviews and parental involvement documents to collect detailed views from participants. (Creswell, 2003, p. 21)

A mixed methods approach is the best design to address both the qualitative and quantitative research questions in this study. This strategy seeks both explanations and exploration for understanding in more depth. Research claims are also stronger and have a greater impact when based on a variety of methods because quantitative data can be persuasive to policy makers and qualitative research provides stories that can be used for illustrative purposes (National Research Council, 2002; Williams, 2006).

The mixed methods design is less well known than either the quantitative or qualitative strategies that have been used for decades (Creswell 2003). This strategy, first used in 1959, is being used more fully in educational research. The mixed methods approach involves collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study.

Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) and Creswell (2003) suggested that pragmatism is the underlying philosophical foundation of mixed methods research. Mixed methods researchers take from both qualitative and quantitative assumptions in their studies. Pragmatism is pluralistic, drawing from multiple systems of reality and philosophy. Pragmatists do not see the world as a single entity. Similarly mixed method researchers look to many approaches when collecting and analyzing data. Pragmatists look to the consequences of the research; what problem is solved. Mixed methods researchers develop a rationale for the reasons why qualitative and quantitative data need to be mixed in the first place (Creswell, 2003). Thus, pragmatism lends itself to mixed methods research through multiple forms of data collection, different methods, and different assumptions (Johnson & Onwuebbuzie, 2004).

Campbell and Fiske (1959), the originators of the mixed method approach, used multiple methods to study validity of psychological traits (Creswell 2003). Other researchers began using their "multi-method matrix" to examine varied approaches to data collection in a study. Approaches using methods such as observations and interviews were combined with traditional surveys (Sieber, 1973). Researchers recognized that all methods have limitations, but by using multiple approaches, biases in a single method could be addressed. Additional reasons for mixing different types of data emerged as researchers used varied strategies in studies around the world (Creswell, 2003). For example, the findings of one method could help develop the other method (Creswell, 2003; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989), or one method could be integrated with another method to provide insight into different levels of analysis (Tashakkori & Teddlie,

1998). Mixing methods has led to the development of procedural terms such as sequential, concurrent, and transformative (Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

A mixed methods researcher may use sequential procedures to expand or enhance the findings of one method with another method. The researcher may begin with a quantitative method to test a theory or concept and follow with a qualitative method to provide detailed information with a few cases. Instead, the study may begin with a qualitative method to explore a hypothesis and follow with a quantitative method to generalize results to a large sample population (Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

Researchers using concurrent procedures collect quantitative and qualitative data at the same time during the study and then blend the information in the analysis and interpretation of the results. The researcher fits one form of data within another larger data collection method, analyzing multiple or different questions (Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

Researchers using transformative procedures examine quantitative and qualitative data through a theoretical perspective or lens. This perspective provides an overarching outline for topics, data collection methods, and results of the study. Sequential or concurrent procedures may be used when collecting data within this perspective (Creswell, 2003). The two-phase, sequential, mixed methods approach used in this study, allowed the researcher to collect diverse types of data, thus gaining a deeper understanding of the research problem.

Mixed methods approaches combine quantitative and qualitative techniques in a new manner in order to answer research questions not answered in any other way, which

denotes the multiplicity of the components of this study. This mixed methods study examined superintendents' or designees' perceptions in light of NCLB (2002) and to understand parental involvement through the lens of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002). Mixed methods researchers use both qualitative and quantitative assumptions to seek meaning and deeper understanding of complex data and analyses. This study used a mixed method design to investigate the problems identified by the researcher. Accordingly, two quantitative research questions, two qualitative research questions, and two mixed method research questions were developed.

Quantitative Research Questions

1. According to superintendents or designees, are the following components of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement being used in rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma public school districts?
    a. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Communication* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?
    b. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Volunteering* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?
    c. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Parenting* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?
    d. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Learning at Home* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?
    e. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Community Collaboration* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?

f. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Decision Making* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?

2. According to superintendents or designees, do rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma school district parental involvement policies and programs meet NCLB guidelines?
    a. Do Oklahoma school districts have written parental involvement policies, programs, and staff training?
    b. Do Oklahoma school districts allocate Title I funds for parental involvement programs?
    c. Do Oklahoma school districts provide annual student performance report cards detailing the performance of the school district and individual schools?
    d. Do Oklahoma school districts notify parents if Title I schools fall into the *needs improvement, corrective action, or restructured categories?*

The quantitative phase of the study determined the qualitative research questions in the second portion of the study, to examine the perceptions of superintendents or designees in light of NCLB (2002) and to understand parental involvement through the lens of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002). Schools that do not meet NCLB (2002) parental involvement guidelines are breaking the law. The following qualitative research questions emerged from the survey and parental involvement documentation submitted by superintendents or designees.

Qualitative Research Questions

1. How does NCLB (2002) influence Oklahoma's parental involvement policies, practices, and programs within rural, urban, and suburban school districts?
2. How do rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma superintendents determine and develop the components of parental involvement, policies, practices, and programs?

Mixed Method Research Questions

1. From superintendents' or designees' perspectives, what factors promote or constrain the implementation of parental involvement policies in Oklahoma rural, urban, and suburban school districts?
2. How do the qualitative findings explain the statistical results addressed in the quantitative phase?

A sequential transformative mixed methods study was the appropriate means to examine the perceptions of superintendents or designees in light of NCLB (2002) and to understand parental involvement through the lens of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002). Epstein's model was used in the development of a survey instrument of Oklahoma superintendents or designees and included the six components: communication, parenting, learning at home, volunteering, school decision making and community collaboration. The survey instrument asked if the school district had parental involvement policies, programs, and practices in place.

Mixed methods research is pragmatic and uses various types of data collection, different methods, and different assumptions (Johnson & Onwuebbuzie, 2004). Multiple data types were collected and organized into three sets for the mixed methods study. The

data sets included a survey instrument, parental involvement documentation, and interviews. The first data source consisted of a survey instrument, during the 2005 – 2006 school year, to gain information from superintendents or their designees in Oklahoma public schools. Parental involvement documentation collected with survey responses from superintendents and designees in 2005-2006, as well as the documentation provided by the three superintendents interviewed, from 2006 – 2008, served as the second data source. The parental involvement documentation, which included parental involvement policies and program documents, Title I grant applications, and professional development agendas helped support the primary quantitative and qualitative data sources by enhancing or explaining the findings. The third data source, interviews were conducted with a small purposefully selected sample of superintendents to provide cross validation of the data and further explanation and understanding of the research problem.

Design of the Study

Creswell's (2003) between-subject group design was the most appropriate procedure because the researcher compared three groups. Rural, suburban, and urban superintendents' or designees' perceptions were studied, in Oklahoma school districts, during the years 2005 to 2008. Other designs such as within-group, repeated measures design, and factorial design were also considered for this study, but due to the researcher studying three groups, the between-subject group design was considered the best design for this study (Creswell, 2003). During the quantitative phase of the study, in 2005-2006, the components of parental involvement policies and programs were assessed using a survey instrument and parental involvement documentation received from superintendents or designees was analyzed. In the qualitative phase of the study, from

2006 – 2008, interviews with superintendents or designees from three selected sites were conducted to assist in explaining and interpreting the quantitative findings (Morse, 1991). A rural, suburban, and urban school district were purposefully selected based on the results of the survey instrument and parental involvement documentation. Superintendents from three selected school districts responded to interview questions, citing examples of parental involvement policies, practices, and programs. Parental involvement documentation was also collected from 2006 – 2008, from the three superintendents to further enrich the study. The quantitative and qualitative data were compared to examine the perceptions of superintendents or designees in light of No Child Left Behind (2002) and to understand parental involvement through the lens of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002).

The sequential transformative mixed methods approach used in this study allowed the researcher to collect diverse types of data, thus gaining a deeper understanding of the research problem. The purpose of this study was to obtain quantitative results from a sample and then follow up with a few superintendents to probe or explore those results in more depth. The quantitative phase, which occurred first, provided a comparison of, Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) with its use by rural, suburban, and urban superintendents or designees in Oklahoma public school districts.

The qualitative, or second phase of the study, used interviews and parental involvement documentation, to scrutinize results from the quantitative survey by exploring aspects of the parental involvement policies, practices, and programs, with a superintendent from a rural, suburban, and urban school district. The qualitative phase of the study provided a better understanding of the perspectives of the participants and

presented additional data to explain the parental involvement policies, practices, and programs within Oklahoma public school districts. Experts recommend using a combination of techniques for examining parental involvement (Pryor, 1995). Epstein (1996) suggests that it is not adequate to study only family-school contacts. The various components of parental involvement, results of parental involvement policies, and evaluation of the goals have to be measured as well (Epstein, 1996). The combination of quantitative and qualitative data best addressed the research problem and answered the research questions, which increased overall reliability of data gathered (Creswell, 2003; Greene et al., 1989).

Population and Sample

The population studied was school superintendents or their designees in Oklahoma public schools. The target group was represented by 540 public schools (Oklahoma State Department of Education School District Directory, 2005). The sample frame for the quantitative phase of the study was the completion of the survey instrument, resulting in a purposive sample of n= 167 superintendents or designees yielding a 31% response rate. Many factors determined an acceptable response rate such as the purpose of the research, type of data analysis, how the survey was administered and if the respondents knew the researcher or not (Coyote, 2007). According to Dillman (2000), a sample size of 167 for a population size of 540 provides a sampling error of ± 6% for a 95% confidence level. The sample from the survey was within the acceptable ± 10% of the true population value. Acceptable response rates help to ensure that survey results are representative of the target population (Dillman, 2000). The purpose of the study was to gain insight into superintendents' or designees' perceptions of parental involvement

through the lens of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) in light of NCLB (2002) mandates in Oklahoma public schools. The survey responses were also used to construct semi-structured interview questions for superintendents in three purposefully selected school districts. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to indicate general tendencies in the data, to explain trends, to interpret the spread of scores and to compare how factors relate to each other (Creswell, 2003). The mixed mode survey was administered online and through the mail. Respondents, superintendents or designees, were allowed to remain anonymous and most did not know the researcher (Coyote, 2007). Superintendents or designees responding to the survey were geographically dispersed across the state. The schools represented in the survey included 87% rural schools, 11% suburban schools, and 2% urban schools. The sample responding to the survey instrument self identified their districts as being more suburban and less rural than national statistics, but similar for urban districts. The state make up of schools districts in national statistics cited the state make up of school districts as 95% rural schools, 3% suburban schools, and 2% urban schools. (National Center of Educational Statistics, 2005). The schools ranged in size from less than 150 students to over 10,000 students. All school districts responding were identified as receiving Title I federal funds under the NCLB Act (2002).

Instrumentation

The quantitative data source included a survey instrument to gather information from superintendents or designees in Oklahoma public schools. The survey instrument was developed using research–based resources identified by North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL). North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

reviewed parental involvement research during the School & Family Partnership Project (1998), identifying programs that reported positive outcomes in parental involvement. Parental involvement survey instruments were also assessed by NCREL and several surveys were included in the School and Family Partnership Project (1998). These were the National PTA (1997), Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium (1992) and the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships (1990). These survey instruments were consistent with the current research, policy, and practice regarding effective parental involvement programs.

All of the survey instruments included in the School & Family Partnership Project (1998) were based on Epstein's School, Family, and Community Involvement Framework (1992, 1995, 2002) and included the six components of parental involvement: volunteering, communication, parenting, student learning, school decision-making and community collaboration (Epstein 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1995, 2002, National PTA, 1992). The survey instrument used in this study was developed primarily from the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium (1992) survey instrument and was based on Epstein's School, Family, and Community Involvement Framework (1992, 1995, 2002).

As items were written in the original survey instrument, two superintendents or designees were consulted to see if the items reflected their knowledge of parental involvement policies, practices, and programs. Revisions were made based on feedback from these superintendents or designees. The Institutional Review Board granted permission for the survey instrument (See Appendix A). A confidential 27 question survey instrument was then sent to 540 superintendents, with 167 responses, provided a generalized framework of superintendents or designees perceptions of parental

involvement policies, programs, and practices in public schools in Oklahoma. Response options for the survey instrument ranged from yes, no, or non-applicable. Sub-questions assessed specific school district parental involvement policies, programs, and practices. The parental involvement survey instrument examined school district demographic information and assessed the superintendents' or designees' perspectives of school districts' policies, practices, and programs involving parents based on the following six components of Epstein's School, Family, and Community Involvement Framework (1992, 1995, 2002):

1. Parenting – Parenting skills are promoted and supported – education workshops, home visits, coordinating services with outside agencies.
2. Communicating – Communication between home and school is regular, two-way and meaningful – newsletters, web sites, email, memos, report cards, phone calls, and other communication.
3. Volunteering – Parents are welcome in the school and their support and assistance sought – PTA volunteers, homeroom parents.
4. Learning Activities at Home – Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning – monitoring homework and progress.
5. School Decision Making and Advocacy – Parents are partners in the decisions that affect children and families – representatives on school councils, committees, site improvement teams.
6. Community Collaboration – Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning – state mandated immunizations, local counseling services

Purpose

The purpose of the survey instrument was to generalize from a sample of Oklahoma superintendents or designees to a population of all Oklahoma superintendents or designees so that inferences could be made regarding perceptions of parental involvement components with school policies and programs (Babbie, 1990). The survey instrument was the preferred type of data collection procedure for this phase of the study because of the economy of the design and the rapid turnaround in data collection (Creswell, 2003). The data from the electronic survey instrument were cross-sectional. The sampling design was single-stage, in that school district and superintendents' names were accessible through web sites and the Oklahoma Directory of Education (2005). The superintendents or designees sample included superintendents, assistant superintendents, federal program directors, and others. Mixed mode survey procedures, obtaining both mail and electronic responses, provided access to all members of the survey population (Dillman, 2000). The use of different survey methods was also justified by desire to save time and cut costs. A possible limitation of this mixed-mode survey design, both web-based and mail was the possibility of respondents giving different answers to each mode (Dillman, 2000).

Procedures and Response Rate

In September 2005, the least expensive mode, the electronic web-based survey instrument was used first in the study. Accessibility to superintendents' or designees' email addresses and websites proved to be limited. The Oklahoma State Department of Education did not have a listing of email addresses or websites for all Oklahoma public school districts. An electronic survey instrument was sent to all superintendents or

designees that had email addresses or websites N= 91. In October 2005, reminder email messages were sent through Survey Suite. Fourteen superintendents or designees responded to the electronic instrument. The response rate for the electronic survey instrument was 15%. In January 2006, using Dillman's (2000) mail survey methods, 449 mailed survey instruments were sent, due to the low response rate of the electronic survey. This method used first class postage to give the respondent the impression that the survey instrument was important (Dillman, 2000). A stamped return envelope was used to improve response rates. Respondents, when seeing an uncancelled stamp on a return envelope may view the sender's gesture as positive and helpful and thus be more likely to return the survey instrument (Dillman, 2000). The mailed survey instrument yielded responses from 153 superintendents or designees. The response rate for the mailed survey instrument was 29%. Table 1 shows the survey response rate for the electronic and mail survey instruments. Total responses for electronic and mail survey responses = 167.

Responses to questions on the survey instrument were confidential. Respondents were given an opportunity to submit parental involvement policies and programs for document analysis. Respondents who provided name, school district, phone number, and email address, were contacted for interviews at selected sites.

Table 1

Survey Response Rate per Media Type

Survey Format	Surveys Sent (n)	Responses (n)	(%)
Electronic – Parental Involvement	91	14	15
Mailed-Parental Involvement	449	153	34

Overall Survey Response

	Surveys Sent (n)	Responses (n)	(%)
Electronic & Mailed Parental Involvement	540	167	31

Parental Involvement Documentation and Interviews

Parental involvement documentation was used in both phases of the study. The parental involvement documentation consisted of two data sets. The first set was collected from superintendents or designees who responded to the survey from September 2005 through March 2006. The second set was collected from the three superintendents that were interviewed for this study, from April 2006 to September 2008. Both data sets included parental involvement policies, program documents, Title I grant applications, and professional development agendas. The documents served two purposes:

1. Provide ideas about important questions to pursue through interviewing.
2. Provide sources of information about the parental involvement activities and processes.

These supplementary data sources were analyzed to gain insight into many things that cannot be observed and because they may reflect aspects of programs that may be idealized in formal documents, but are not realized in actual parental involvement practices and thus may be unknown to the researcher (Patton, 1987).

In the second phase of the study, interviews were used as the primary qualitative data source. The interviews with superintendents were used to understand parental involvement policies, practices, and programs from diverse school districts in Oklahoma (See Appendixes B and C for survey consent letter and interview protocol). The interview protocol was developed from parental involvement policies (No Child Left Behind, Title I, Sect. 1118), parental involvement literature (Epstein, 1992, 1995, 2002; National PTA, 1992), quantitative survey responses, and parental involvement documentation.

Semi-structured, informal interviews allowed flexibility and responsiveness to emerging issues for both interviewers and interviewees in qualitative research (Schwandt, 2001). Superintendents, from each selected school district, were contacted by email or phone and invited to participate in the study. Locations, dates, and times for interviews were scheduled. The one-on-one, semi-structured interviews conducted with rural, urban, and suburban superintendents were based on the quantitative phase of the study and were within a reasonable traveling distance for the interviewer. At the beginning of each interview, a description of the study and the format of the interview were discussed. Interviews, of approximately 45 minutes each, were recorded and transcribed for data analysis.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

*Q*uantitative data were collected and analyzed first, in the sequential transformative mixed methods study. Survey data were examined for completeness of responses and paired with participant numbers to the survey instrument. The data from the survey instrument were summarized using descriptive statistics to indicate general tendencies in the data, to explain trends, to interpret the spread of scores and to compare how factors relate to each other (Creswell, 2003).

Different demographic data (i.e., rural versus urban versus suburban, small versus large schools) of the 167 respondent school districts were assessed to compare the school district group that was least likely to have parental involvement policies, practices, and programs that were modeled after Epstein's Framework of School, Family, and Community Framework (1992, 1995, 2002). Components of Epstein's framework (1992, 1995, 2002) of the sample school districts were also analyzed using the different demographic data to correlate factors of parental involvement policies, practices, and programs. The demographic data analysis and descriptive statistics provided information to enrich the qualitative research questions in the second phase of the mixed methods study.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Parental involvement documentation data were analyzed to clarify or deepen understanding of the quantitative findings. The document analysis helped to sustain the primary quantitative and qualitative data sources. Parental involvement policies, program documents, Title I grant applications, and professional development agendas, submitted

by superintendents or designees with survey responses during the 2005-2006 school year were examined to provide ideas about possible interview questions. School district documentation provided by the three superintendents interviewed, during the 2006 – 2008 school years, demonstrated examples of parental involvement activities and processes and served to provide ideas for follow-up questions of superintendents. The parental involvement documentation data were also analyzed to determine if similar themes and statistical descriptions from the primary quantitative and qualitative data sources existed. These data provided a deeper understanding of parental involvement policies, practices, and programs.

Interview transcriptions from three superintendents were analyzed through a process of organizing, compacting, and describing the data into codes to determine if themes emerged. The interviews were analyzed using open coding (Stake, 1995) to determine themes and patterns, which were compared to parent, family, and community involvement components: volunteering, communicating, learning at home, parenting, decision-making, and community collaboration (Epstein 1988, 1990, 1992, 1995, 2002; National PTA, 1992). A summarized description of the meanings of each interview was developed that represented each selected school district. Interviews were conducted, transcribed, coded and themed by the researcher. A graduate student also analyzed the data to provide inter-coder reliability for the codes and themes. Respondents in the sequential transformative mixed methods study were asked to verify the accuracy of the interview transcriptions, codes, and themes. This verification established credibility during the qualitative analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

This study used multiple methods or data sources to support the findings, which strengthened the reliability and internal validity (Merriam, 1998). The survey instrument, superintendent interviews, and parental involvement documents were used to confirm parental involvement policy and practice findings. By using both quantitative and qualitative methods, weaknesses within one method offset the strengths of the other method (Brewer & Hunter, 1989; Johnson & Turner, 2003). In this study, the quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed separately, patterns were ascertained when the data were integrated in the interpretation phase.

Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Data

After examining the quantitative and qualitative data separately, the results of the two types of data were integrated during the interpretation phase of the study. The results that supported the study's quantitative research questions were analyzed. Next, the results that informed the qualitative research questions were explained. The qualitative findings explained and deepened understanding of the statistical results of the quantitative stage.

The quantitative and qualitative findings including emerging themes related to Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) and NCLB (2002), and school district demographic data, were discussed in the integration phase. The data sets were examined and compared holistically. Both quantitative and qualitative related parental involvement literature and studies supported the interpretation in the integration phase of the mixed methods study.

Summary

Superintendents' or designees' perceptions were examined in light of NCLB (2002) to understand parental involvement through the lens of Epstein's Framework of

Parental Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002). The purpose of this, sequential transformative mixed methods study was to obtain quantitative results from a sample and then follow up with a few superintendents to probe or explore those results in more depth. Quantitative survey data, collected from superintendents or designees, which compared Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) and NCLB(2002) parental involvement guidelines was analyzed. School district parental involvement documentation submitted was also examined to develop interview questions. Interviews conducted with a smaller selected sample of superintendents provided understanding of parental involvement perceptions of policies, programs, and practices within public school districts. School district parental involvement documentation, provided by superintendents, was also examined to support the primary quantitative and qualitative data sources by enriching or clarifying the results.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results of the Study

Introduction

Chapter Four presents the results of both quantitative and qualitative phases of the sequential transformative mixed methods study. The quantitative research questions indicated the framework for these results. Descriptive and inferential analyses were utilized to examine the variables of this study. The qualitative interview questions were developed from the quantitative phase of the study to develop a more complete picture of how NCLB (2002) and Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) have influenced parental involvement to gain a deeper understanding for schools as they seek to improve student achievement. The qualitative research questions and emerging themes provided the organization of this chapter. The analysis of interviews and parental involvement documentation presented a deeper understanding of the perceptions of No Child Left Behind (2002) parental involvement mandates by superintendents or designees and a richer description of Epstein's (1992, 1995, 2002) Framework of Parent Involvement in Oklahoma public schools. Confidentiality was maintained for the superintendents or designees through pseudonyms when discussing qualitative results. Chapter Four concludes with a summary of the results of the study.

Quantitative Sample and Descriptive Statistics

This section contains demographic information from the responding superintendents or designees in Oklahoma school districts. The target area for the study was Oklahoma, wherein 540 public school districts were enlisted for participation in the study. The identification of the respondents was tallied, as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2

Identification of the Respondents

Respondents Position Within Their District	(n)	(%)
Superintendent	161	96.40
Assistant Superintendent	3	1.79
Federal Program Directors	1	.59
Others	2	1.19
Total	167	100.00

Superintendents or designees reported that student populations in school districts ranged from 1 to < 10,000. Table 3 describes school district student population results.

Table 3

School District Student Population

Population	Rural		Suburban		Urban			
Variable	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
0-150	20	13.79	0	0	0	0	20	11.97
151-300	35	24.14	0	0	0	0	35	20.96
301-500	34	23.45	2	10.53	0	0	36	21.56
501-2500	45	31.03	8	42.11	0	0	53	31.74
2501-5000	10	6.9	3	15.79	0	0	13	7.78
5001-10000	1	0.69	4	21.05	1	33.33	6	3.59
<10000	0	0	2	10.53	2	66.67	4	2.4
Total	145	100	19	100	3	100	167	100

Table 4 describes the types of responding school districts by geographic location.

Table 4

School District Types

Type	(n)	(%)
Rural	145	86.83
Suburban	19	11.38
Urban	3	1.79
Total	167	100

All the targeted schools for the study had received funds under the Title I program, implying that at least 40% of the students were on free and reduced lunches. Table 5 describes the number of schools receiving Title I Funding.

Table 5

Receiving Title I Federal Funding

	Receive Funding Yes		Receive Funding No			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	total (n)	total (%)
Rural	145	100	0	0	145	100
Suburban	19	100	0	0	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	3	100
Total	167	100	0	0	167	100

Statistical Results of the Survey Data

This section consists of the statistical results of the data obtained from the survey investigating superintendents' or designees' perceptions of parental involvement in rural, urban, and suburban school districts in Oklahoma. This part of the study is organized by two research questions. Each question and data from the survey are presented and discussed.

Communication

Research Question 1: According to superintendents or designees, are the following components of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement being used in rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma public school districts?

a. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Communication* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?

The communication channels used to encourage parental involvement are explained based on the data gathered from the respondents. The schools communicated with parents in multiple ways. Other communication cited in the survey included mailings, parent conferences, notes sent home, phone calls, progress reports, and report cards. Rural districts were more likely to use mailings and notes home than urban or suburban school districts. Table 6 denotes the communication methods used to encourage parental involvement by each type of district, and then indicates information with all district types combined.

Table 6

Method Used to Communicate with Parents

Medium	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Newsletter	106	73.1	17	89.47	3	100	126	75.45
TV	9	6.21	7	36.84	2	66.67	18	10.78
Newspaper	86	59.31	16	84.21	3	100	105	62.87
Website	92	63.45	15	78.95	3	100	110	65.87
E-Mail	54	37.24	12	63.16	3	100	69	41.32
Other	69	47.59	7	36.84	2	66.67	78	46.71

Table 7 describes the communication methods used to inform parents about Title I. The table denotes the communication mediums used by each type of district. Other communication included letters, notes home, parent conferences, and annual parent Title I meetings.

Table 7

Methods Used to Inform about Title I Programs

Medium	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Newsletter	96	66.21	15	78.95	3	100	114	68.26
TV	9	6.21	5	26.32	1	33.33	15	8.98
Newspaper	79	54.48	14	73.68	0	0	93	55.69
E-Mail	24	16.55	7	36.84	2	66.67	33	19.76
Website	57	39.31	12	63.16	3	100	72	43.11
Other	56	38.62	6	31.58	3	100	65	38.92

Table 8 denotes communication provided in languages other than English in rural, suburban, and urban districts. Apart from English, Spanish was the other language used in all responding school districts. One urban respondent noted that communication was also provided in Vietnamese.

Table 8

Communication in Languages other than English

	Yes		No		Missing Response			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	34	23.45	108	74.48	3	2.07	145	100
Suburban	7	36.84	12	63.16	0	0	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	0	0	3	100
Total	44	26.34	120	71.86	3	1.80	167	100

Table 9 describes the number of schools, which provided translators for parent conferences in rural, suburban, and urban districts.

Table 9

Translators during Parent Conferences

	Yes		No		Missing Response			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	101	69.66	42	28.97	2	1.38	145	100
Suburban	15	78.95	4	21.05	0	0	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	0	0	3	100
Total	119	71.25	46	27.54	2	1.19	167	100

Table 10 describes the number of rural, suburban, and urban districts, which provided translators for individual meetings with parents.

Table 10

Translators during Individual Meetings

	Yes		No		Missing Response			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	107	73.79	32	22.07	6	4.14	145	100
Suburban	17	89.47	2	10.53	0	0	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	0	0	3	100
Total	127	76.04	34	20.36	6	3.60	167	100

Table 11 describes the use of translators, during individual meetings, when requested by parents.

Table 11

Translators requested by the Parents

	Yes		No		Missing Response			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	117	80.69	22	15.17	6	4.14	145	100
Suburban	19	100	0	0	0	0	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	0	0	3	100
Total	139	83.23	22	13.17	6	3.60	167	100

Table 12 describes rural, suburban, and urban results that denote the use of translators during Title I meetings.

Table 12

Translators during Title I Meetings

	Yes		No		Missing Response			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	100	68.97	42	28.97	3	2.07	145	100
Suburban	12	63.16	7	36.84	0	0	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	0	0	3	100
Total	115	68.86	49	29.34	3	1.79	167	100

Volunteering

Research Question 1: According to superintendents or designees, are the following components of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement being used in rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma public school districts?

b. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Volunteering* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?

Table 13 describes rural, suburban, and urban results based on the percentage of parents volunteering in school districts. As a follow-up item, superintendents or designees were also asked to indicate the types of volunteer activities within their districts. The most prevalent types of activities listed were tutoring, substitute teaching, and helping out during class programs or field trips.

Table 13

Percentage of Parents Volunteering in Schools

	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
0%	4	2.76	1	5.26	0	0	5	2.99
1-5%	69	47.59	7	36.84	1	33.33	77	46.11
6-10%	33	22.76	3	15.79	0	0	36	21.56
11-30%	24	16.55	6	31.58	2	66.67	32	19.16
31-50%	11	7.59	0	0.00	0	0	11	6.59
51-75%	2	1.38	2	10.53	0	0	4	2.40
76-100%	2	1.38	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	145	100	19	100	3	100.00	167	100

Parenting

Research Question 1: According to superintendents or designees, are the following components of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement being used in rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma public school districts?

c. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Parenting* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?

The next component of Epstein's Parental Involvement Framework (1992, 1995, 2002) is parenting. Table 14 describes rural, suburban, and urban results detailing the use of workshop or courses for parental involvement provided by school districts.

Table 14

Workshops or Courses for Parental Involvement

	Yes		No		Missing Response			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	44	30.34	100	68.97	1	0.69	145	100
Suburban	11	57.89	8	42.11	0	0	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	0	0	3	100
Total	58	34.73	108	64.67	1	0.60	167	100

For school districts which provided parental involvement workshops or courses (N=58), the number of workshops varied. Table 15 indicates the number of workshops or courses provided by the 58 respondents from rural, suburban, and urban school districts.

Table 15

Number of Workshops or Courses held by Districts the Previous Year

District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	16	36.36	20	45.45	4	9.09	4	9.09
Suburban	3	27.27	6	54.55	0	0	2	18.18
Urban	0	0	2	66.67	0	0	1	33.33
Total	19	36.20	28	48.27	4	6.67	7	11.67

In relation to the communication phase of parental involvement, workshops were often only in English. Table 16 describes the number of workshops or courses held in different languages in rural, suburban, and urban districts.

Table 16

Workshops or Courses Provided in Different Languages

	Yes		No		Missing Response			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	9	20.45	35	79.55	0	0	44	100
Suburban	2	18.18	8	81.82	1	9.09	11	100
Urban	2	66.67	1	33.33	0	0	3	100
Total	13	22.41	44	75.86	1	1.73	58	100

Learning at Home

Research Question 1: According to superintendents or designees, are the following components of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement being used in rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma public school districts?

d. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Learning at Home* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?

Learning at home, the next component of parental involvement focuses on activities and programs intended to be completed in the children's homes. A home activity is viewed as an important method to keep track of the children's developments, allowing the parents a closer look at the progress of their children. Home activities do not originate from the parents, but from the school. Table 17 describes rural, suburban, and urban home learning activities results.

Table 17

School Districts Providing Information for Home Learning Activities

	Yes		No		Not Sure			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	106	73.10	32	22.07	7	4.83	145	100
Suburban	16	84.21	3	15.79	0	0	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	0	0	3	100
Total	125	74.85	35	20.96	7	4.19	167	100

Table 18 describes the rural, suburban, and urban school district results regarding written homework policies. The school districts that had a written homework policy utilized the student handbook to inform students and parents about the policy.

Table 18

Written Homework Policies

	No		Yes		Missing Response			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	81	55.86	63	43.45	1	0.69	145	100
Suburban	12	63.16	7	36.84	0	0	19	100
Urban	2	66.67	1	33.33	0	0	3	100
Total	95	56.89	71	42.51	1	0.59	167	100

Table 19 describes the rural, suburban, and urban results of workshops for parents and children that promote learning activities in school districts.

Table 19

Workshops for Parent and Children Learning Activities

	Yes		No		Missing Response			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	39	26.90	105	72.41	1	0.69	145	100
Suburban	9	47.37	9	47.37	1	5.26	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	0	0	3	100
Total	51	30.54	114	68.26	2	0.59	167	100

Community Collaboration

Research Question 1: According to superintendents or designees, are the following components of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement being used in rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma public school districts?

e. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Community Collaboration* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?

The next component of parental involvement is community collaboration. The data focused on the community support programs provided by the school district: General Educational Development (GED), English Language Learner (ELL), and computer training. These programs were available in the community for parents. Furthermore, some of the programs specifically targeted families that had diverse educational and linguistic backgrounds. Table 20 denotes the rural, suburban, and urban results of community support programs made available by school districts.

Table 20

Support Programs

	GED Yes		GED No		Missing Response			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	57	39.31	88	60.69	0	0	145	100
Suburban	11	57.89	8	42.11	0	0	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	0	0	3	100
Total	71	42.51	96	57.49	0	0	167	100

	ELL Yes		ELL No		Missing Response			
Rural	29	20.00	115	79.31	1	0.69	145	100
Suburban	8	47.37	11	57.89	0	0	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	0	0	3	100
Total	40	23.95	126	75.44	1	0.59	167	100

	Computer Training Yes		Computer Training No		Missing Response			
Rural	66	45.52	79	54.48	0	0	145	100
Suburban	6	31.58	13	68.42	0	0	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	0	0	3	100
Total	75	44.91	92	55.09	0	0	167	100

Despite the low percentage of respondents having support programs in their school districts, there were much better results in terms of linking the parents with social services. Most social services being offered to the parents included drug awareness, health awareness and counseling services, all centered on aiding children's growth and development. Table 21 describes rural, suburban, and urban results of districts, which link or connect parents with social services.

Table 21

Districts Linking Parents with Social Services

	Yes		No			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	120	82.76	25	17.24	145	100
Suburban	17	89.47	2	10.53	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	3	100
Total	140	83.83	27	16.17	167	100

Decision Making

Research Question 1: According to superintendents or designees, are the following components of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement being used in rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma public school districts?

f. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Decision Making* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?

The last component of parental involvement is decision making, wherein the data indicated the number of parents involved in decision making in their school districts.

Decision-making data presented the number of parents who were actively participating in school organizations such as PTA, district council, or organizations that played an important role in the education of their children. The data suggested that the percentage of parents active in the PTA was limited. Table 22 describes the level of parental participation in PTA in each type of school district.

Table 22

	Rural		Suburban		Urban			
Participation	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
0-10%	83	57.24	5	26.32	1	33.33	89	53.29
11-25%	33	22.76	5	26.32	0	0	38	22.75
25-50%	20	13.79	4	21.05	1	33.33	25	14.97
51-75%	4	2.76	4	21.05	1	33.33	9	5.38
76-100%	2	1.38	1	5.26	0	0	3	1.79
Missing	3	2.07	0	0	0	0	3	1.79
Total	145	100	19	100	3	100	167	100

Table 23 describes parental involvement in district councils in rural, suburban, and urban school districts.

Table 23

Parents Involved in District Council

	Yes		No			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	131	90.34	14	9.66	145	100
Suburban	18	94.74	1	5.26	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	3	100
Total	152	89.82	15	8.98	167	100

Table 24 describes rural, suburban, and urban results based on the percentage of parental involvement at individual school sites.

Table 24

Parents Involved at Individual School Site

	Yes		No			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	131	90.34	14	9.66	145	100
Suburban	19	100	0	0	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	3	100
Total	153	91.62	14	8.38	167	100

Table 25 denotes rural, suburban, and urban results of parental involvement in Title I planning.

Table 25

Parents Involved in Title I Planning

	Yes		No			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	129	88.97	16	11.03	145	100
Suburban	19	100	0	0	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	3	100
Total	151	90.42	16	9.58	167	100

In terms of other methods of involving parents in decision-making, the respondents cited sending surveys to parents regarding important issues that needed to be resolved and calling board meetings in which discussions were held between school officials and parents. There were also other methods used, such as holding conferences between parents and teachers or organizing planning committees in which the core members were parents themselves.

Parental Involvement Policies and Programs meeting NCLB Guidelines

Research Question 2: Do rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma school district parental involvement policies and programs meet NCLB guidelines?

a. Do Oklahoma school districts have written parental involvement policies, programs, and staff training?

Table 26 describes rural, suburban, and urban, results of school districts receiving Title I funding, which did or did not have a written parental involvement policy.

Table 26

Written Parent Involvement Policy

	Yes		No			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	117	80.69	28	19.31	145	100
Suburban	13	68.42	6	31.58	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	3	100
Total	133	79.64	34	20.36	167	100

Table 27 describes the results from rural, suburban, and urban districts in regards to programs supporting parental involvement policies.

Table 27

School District Program Supporting Involvement Policies

	Yes		No		Missing Response			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	104	71.72	35	24.14	6	4.14	145	100
Suburban	10	52.63	7	36.84	2	10.53	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	0	0	3	100
Total	117	70.06	42	25.15	8	4.80	167	100

Table 28 describes the number of rural, suburban, and urban districts that provided staff training to facilitate working with parents.

Table 28

District Training of Staff to work with Parents

	Yes		No		Missing Response			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	60	41.38	78	53.79	7	4.83	145	100
Suburban	10	52.63	7	36.84	2	10.53	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	0	0	3	100
Total	73	43.71	85	50.90	9	5.39	167	100

Research Question 2: Do rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma school district parental involvement policies and programs meet NCLB guidelines?

b. Do Oklahoma school districts allocate Title I funds for parental involvement programs?

Table 29 describes the percentage of Title I money budgeted for parental involvement uses in rural, suburban, and urban districts.

Table29

District Budget for Parental Involvement

	Less than 1%		1% - 5%		More than 5%			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	121	83.45	23	15.86	1	0.69	145	100
Suburban	15	78.95	4	21.05	0	0	19	100
Urban	1	33.33	2	66.67	0	0	3	100
Total	137	82.04	29	17.36	1	0.60	167	100

Research Question 2: Do rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma school district parental involvement policies and programs meet NCLB guidelines?

c. Do Oklahoma school districts provide annual student performance report cards detailing the performance of the school district and individual schools?

Table 30 describes the results from rural, urban, and suburban districts sending school district and individual student performance report cards to parents.

Table 30

Student Performance report Cards

	Yes		No			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	133	91.72	12	8.28	145	100
Suburban	18	94.74	1	5.26	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	3	100
Total	154	92.22	13	7.78	167	100

Research Question 2: Do rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma school district parental involvement policies and programs meet NCLB guidelines?

d. Do Oklahoma school districts notify parents if Title I schools fall into the *needs improvement, corrective action, or restructured categories*?

Table 31 provides the percentage of rural, suburban, and urban school districts notifying parents if they fall into the needs improvement, corrective action, or restructured categories.

Table 31

Notification of Failure to Meet NCLB Guidelines

	Yes		No			
District Type	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	Total(n)	Total(%)
Rural	124	85.52	21	14.48	145	100
Suburban	17	89.47	2	10.53	19	100
Urban	3	100	0	0	3	100
Total	144	86.23	23	13.77	167	100

Qualitative Sample

In the first phase of this mixed methods study, the quantitative data indicated that 87% of respondents were from rural school districts, 11% were from suburban districts, and 2% were from urban districts. Because this group self-identified as rural, suburban, and urban, three superintendents from rural, urban, and suburban school districts were purposefully selected, as the sample for the qualitative phase of the study. The perspectives of these superintendents was analyzed to better understand perceptions of NCLB's influence on parental involvement policies, practices, and programs and how these leaders develop components of parental involvement policies, practices, and programs. Table 32 presents demographic information for each of the three school districts.

Table 32

Sample Sizes – Demographic Data

Superintendent	Area	Students	Poverty	Minority
Steed	Rural	1430	52%	42%
Tomas	Urban	37,217	85.8%	74%
Underwood	Suburban	13,100	42%	27%

Results of the Interviews

This section consists of the results of the qualitative data obtained from the interviews examining rural, urban, and suburban superintendents' perceptions of NCLB's influence on parental involvement policies, programs, and practices in school districts in Oklahoma. This part of the study is organized by two research questions. Questions, data, and themes from the interviews are presented.

Qualitative Research Questions

The qualitative research questions reflected the quantitative portion of this study, the literature on parental involvement, and the theoretical framework for this study. The questions were as follows.

Research Question 1: How does NCLB (2002) influence Oklahoma's parental involvement policies, practices, and programs within rural, urban, and suburban school districts?

Research Question 2: How do rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma superintendents determine and develop the components of parental involvement policies, practices, and programs?

Themes

The qualitative research questions examined three superintendents' perceptions in light of NCLB (2002) to understand parental involvement through the lens of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002). The qualitative research questions and interview protocol were based on the findings from the quantitative phase and school district parental involvement documentation provided by superintendents or designees. Themes primarily emerged based on components of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002). A semi-structured interview process was purposefully used to allow alternative themes to develop. School district documentation, which included parental involvement policies and program documents, Title I grant applications, and professional development agendas were also examined for examples of items from the qualitative themes to provide a deeper understanding of how parental involvement policies, practices, and programs were developed and changed.

From the superintendent interviews and parental involvement and school district documentation, four themes emerged, which correlated with Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002): communication, parent volunteers, parent resources (learning at home), and decision-making. A fifth theme, compliance with NCLB guidelines also developed from the interviews and school district parental involvement documentation and did not fit with Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002): See Table 33. The interviews suggested commonalities and similarities between the themes and the research questions, providing evidence of overlap.

Table 33

Qualitative Themes from each Superintendent

Steed	Tomas	Underwood
1. limited compliance	compliance	compliance
2. communication	communication	communication
3. limited parent volunteers	parents invited	parents expected
4. lack of parent resources	parent resources provided	parent resources provided
5. lack of parents involved – decision-making	parents involved-decision-making	parents involved-decision making

Rural School District

Rural, for the purpose of this study, was determined by the locale codes given by the National Center for Education Statistics. This system, introduced in 2006 (Schneider, 2006), utilized twelve codes with three for each category; instead of the eight codes used in the old system. The new codes were designed to better identify communities by their geographic location (Rural School and Community Trust, 2006).

The student population of the rural district of Oklahoma consisted of 1,430 students: 58% White, 22% Native American, 18% Hispanic, and 2% African-American. According to the interview, 52% were free/reduced lunch students (Table 32). In the interview with the rural superintendent or designee, it seemed that parental involvement had only increased slightly despite the mandates by the federal government. The following instances culled from the interview transcription and school district parental

involvement documentation demonstrated the minimal performance of this rural school in encouraging parental involvement:

1. Despite the fact that this rural district received Title I Funding, less than 1% was allotted to parental involvement. “We typically don’t use these funds; it is such a small amount” (Interview, 2008). This signified non-compliance with the policy; that schools receiving Title I funding should involve parents in decision-making sessions on how the funds should be spent.
2. Superintendent Steed emphasized, “Parents are asked to help students with their reading at home” (Interview, 2008). “We do not have materials for parents to help their children with learning at home” (Interview, 2008).
3. Superintendent Steed stated that at least 18% of the student population of this rural school district was Hispanic. “Some of our parents do not speak English” (Interview 2008). “For better communication, we do hire interpreters to communicate with parents” (Interview 2008). In order to serve parents and families, the rural school district should provide materials written in other languages that would help non-English speaking children and their parents understand all aspects of the school district and allow parents to participate in discussions more easily.

The minimal implementation of NCLB in this rural school district may be attributed to a simple but shallow understanding of the school-parent compact promoted by NCLB. Superintendent Steed defined the school parent compact as an “agreement to support and monitor student achievement” (Interview 2008). There is a vague

understanding of the NCLB school-parent compact that is a core principle of Title I and a requirement of Title I funding. This understanding of Title I had not been clarified or improved due to the fact that according to Superintendent Steed, "the State Department of Education has not dropped by the district to monitor or evaluate Title I parental involvement policies and programs during my five year tenure" (Interview 2008). No Child Left Behind (2002) did not seem to influence parental involvement in this district. Nevertheless, the rural school district was making efforts to involve parents in their children's learning as noted in the following statements by Superintendent Steed:

> We do have scheduled parent-teacher conferences and provide weekly folders for our elementary kids. We also send notes to parents regarding CRT testing and API report cards. We have our district results published in the local newspaper and in our school newsletter. We give workshops for teachers in conference skills, phone call skills, and face-to-face training. Parents volunteer as teacher aides in elementary classrooms, come in, and read to students at times. (Interview, 2008)

Superintendent Steed's perceptions of the policies, practices, and programs formulated in the rural school district were limited in scope as noted from the transcription notes. According to Superintendent Steed:

> The Board of Education creates policies, practices, and programs that permit the administrators to be active in upholding parental involvement. The principals work autonomously at the individual school sites, to make decisions about which Title I parental involvement strategies they should

implement. I advise principals to choose strategies that would be suitable for their own school environments. (Interview, 2008)

Superintendent Steed shared that a majority of parents come to parent conferences at the elementary and middle school levels.

> Parents are less likely to participate at the high school. Teachers share valuable information about students' performance in school. Parents are involved in school activities such as field trips and chaperoning, but parents are minimally involved in Title I parental involvement decisions, practices, and programs. (Interview, 2008)

Urban School District

Urban, for the purpose of this study, was determined by the locale codes given by the National Center for Education Statistics. An urban area was designated as a principal city with population of 250,000 or more (Schneider, 2006). The school district selected for this study met the urban criteria.

The student population of the urban district in Oklahoma consisted of 37,217 students: 34% Hispanic, 32% African-American, 26% White, and 6% Native American (Table 32). According to the Superintendent Tomas, 85.8% were free/reduced lunch students (Table 32). In the interview with the urban superintendent or designee, it seemed that the urban school district had taken the parental involvement components of the NCLB Act seriously, as parental involvement was included in numerous programs throughout the district. "Parent Involvement is an integral part of many of our programs, practices, and processes" (Interview, 2008). Here are a few of the initiatives that

Superintendent Tomas discussed in our conversation regarding parental involvement under Title I of the NCLB Act in his district:

> There is a coordinated effort between our district office and individual schools to communicate with parents through PTA organizations, newsletters, and district and school internet websites. We try to keep parents updated about events and activities within our schools by mail-outs, televised board meetings, emergency notification system and a web-based grading and attendance program, so parents can monitor their children's grades and attendance. We have to consider communication methods in all aspects of our system. We celebrate a Parent Involvement Week every November, which is at the same time as the National Parents-in-Schools week. During the course of the parent involvement week, we hope to further increase parental involvement; promote active parent participation in learning; and collaborate with the community. We also encourage our parents to use our health services. All of our schools provide health screening for the students, immunizations, health education, and first aid. (Interview, 2008)
>
> Volunteers are expected in our schools. We want as many parents as possible in our classrooms, seeing what their children are learning. Educators have to open their doors and allow parents access if our school district and our reputation is going to move to the next level. (Interview, 2008)

Superintendent Tomas also explained the process of determining which schools receive Title I funding.

> I work with others to evaluate each of the schools in the district to decide which schools meet the guidelines for funding. Schools, that have at least 56% of the students on free and reduced lunches, are targeted and receive funding. Over 32,000 students in pre-kindergarten through high school during the last school year were provided Title I services. The district uses 1% of Title I money for parental involvement. (Interview, 2008)

Superintendent Tomas also discussed how the district provided information regarding state standards.

> We send out brochures, pamphlets, newsletters and information is put on websites. Our district test results are posted on the district website. We use as many different types of media as possible to get our information to our patrons. (Interview, 2008)

The urban school district provided parents with activities and strategies that helped them continue learning at home.

Superintendent Tomas stated, “Schools had Math nights, Reading with Parents nights, and Computer nights to connect parents and children. Many of our parents would not come to school without an activity that involves their children” (Interview, 2008).

The urban district’s student population possessed multicultural and multilingual students and parents. “Interpreters are used to communicate with non-English speaking families” (Interview, 2008). The urban school district had developed informational materials, forms, and resources in both Spanish and Vietnamese for non-English speaking

families. “Our community’s diversity demands that we provide information in several languages” (Interview, 2008).

Superintendent Tomas understood that the parent-school compact of Title I under the NCLB Act, is an agreement in which the “parents and schools receiving Title I funds must work together to improve student learning” (Interview, 2008). Superintendent Tomas and the district also based all parental involvement policies, practices, and programs on the requirements of Title I. This was evident in Superintendent Tomas’ statements, “the school board expects communication and involvement with all of our parents” (Interview 2008). “The board sets the policies for parental involvement under the guidelines of the federal government – Title I” (Interview, 2008). The proper implementation of Title I of the NCLB Act had not been dependent upon monitoring by the State Department of Education as the Superintendent Tomas noted that the agency had not monitored the district during the last few years.

The urban school district set policies, practices and programs based on the guidelines of the federal government under Title I. “Title I requires schools that receive Title I funds to involve parents in decisions as to what the school will do with the funds” (Interview, 2008). Policies, practices, and programs implemented by the urban school district are dynamic and noticeable. Reminders and news can be seen in the internet, television, newspapers, etc. – everywhere where the parents can view recent developments in order to increase their awareness about the school and its activities

Superintendent Tomas and the urban school district provided parents with necessary information regarding their children’s performance and seemed to encourage parents to spend some more time at school as well.

> We have to have parents in our buildings learning with their children. Our events such as the Parental Involvement Week help parents and teachers strengthen their relationships through interaction. With activities such as Math night, Reading with Parents night and Computer night, parents learn how they can help their children be successful at school as well as learn directly from their children's teachers. (Interview, 2008)

Suburban School District

Suburban for the purpose of this study, was determined by the locale codes given by the National Center for Education Statistics. The code includes territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with population less than 250,000 and greater than or equal to 100,000 (Schneider, 2006). The school district chosen for this study was located in a suburban area.

The third interview was conducted with a suburban superintendent. The district had 13,100 students (Table 32). The student population was 73% White, 7% African-American, 8% Native American, 8% Hispanic and 3% Asian (Table 32). According to Superintendent Underwood, 42% were free/reduced lunch students (Table 32). In accordance with Title I under the NCLB Act, here are the measures that Superintendent Underwood had taken to ensure parental involvement:

> We involve parents through newsletters, PTAs, and district and site websites. School board meetings are televised on our school channel every month. Parents also have access to our web-based grading and attendance program to keep up with their child's progress. The district is also discussing a way to keep parents informed about possible school closings

and other event or activity changes, an emergency notification system. (Interview, 2007)

We also invite parents into our schools as field trip sponsors, to serve on committees like PTA, Gifted, and Title I; to help in classrooms; to read to students and to work in libraries and offices. We typically have stay-at-home moms in our schools. (Interview, 2007)

The district receives about a 1.3 million dollar budget from Title I funding with 1% specifically dedicated to parent involvement. Assessment results and other announcements are provided to the public through district literature, website, and media. Our district also publishes student and parent handbooks in both English and Spanish to better communicate with non-English speaking families. We use interpreters when needed. (Interview, 2007)

Students are able to use software programs such as SuccessMaker, NovaNet, and Odysseyware for learning at home, in case of suspension, homebound, or just as another option. Our elementary schools also provide parents with resources to help their child at home, such as Everyday Math. (Interview, 2007)

Superintendent Underwood's perceptions of the development of parental involvement policies, practices, and programs were linked to NCLB (2002). The suburban district fulfilled the Title I requirement of parental involvement in Title I planning, implementation, and evaluation of policies, programs, and practices. Extensive Title I documentation was provided to the researcher during the course of

this sequential transformative mixed methods study. A Title I district plan and individual school site plans indicated that parents were involved in parental involvement decisions. All programs, despite being formulated by the suburban administration, involved parents. Superintendent Underwood and the suburban school district had a somewhat in-depth connection with parental involvement.

> Parental involvement is embedded in all school decisions, programs, and practices. We do not treat parental involvement as a mere requirement but as a part of their educational culture. We have parent involvement even in the most simplest of programs. The district follows parental involvement provisions under Title I. (Interview, 2007)

The suburban superintendent was also open to communication suggestions made by parents and other educators. This was the case when parents and other educators suggested televising the Board of Education meetings and school programs. “I really doubted that parents and the community would be interested in board meetings and activities and was surprised by the positive feedback from the public” (Interview, 2007).

Summary

The results of the quantitative and qualitative phase of the sequential transformative mixed methods study were described in this chapter. The quantitative sample and descriptive statistics on demographic information were identified for the study. Quantitative research questions guided the researcher. The first question examined superintendents’ or designees’ perspectives of components of Epstein’s (1992, 1995, 2002) Framework for Parental Involvement in Oklahoma public

schools. The second question investigated the extent that Oklahoma public schools met NCLB guidelines as perceived by superintendents or designees. Analysis of the survey, and school district parental involvement documentation provided results to choose a purposefully selected sample for the qualitative portion of the sequential transformative mixed methods study.

In the qualitative phase of the study, a rural, urban, and suburban superintendent provided descriptions of the participating school districts' parental involvement policies, programs, and practices. Quotes used throughout the qualitative findings provide a richer understanding of the perceptions of the each superintendent. An analysis of school district documentation submitted by the superintendents clarified understanding of parental involvement policies, programs, and practices. Themes that emerged from the interviews, and school district parental involvement documentation included communication, compliance with NCLB guidelines under Title I, parent volunteers, parent resources, and decision-making.

Below Table 34 presents a comparison of the quantitative and qualitative results that were grouped according to the components of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) and juxtaposed with each other to see how each the findings of one validates the outcomes of the other. The five themes, communication, parent volunteers, parent resources, decision-making, and compliance with NCLB guidelines are noted in the table.

Table 34

Summary : Themes - Data Sources

		Survey Results		Interview Results		Document Results
Theme-Communication Methods	RSD	Newsletters, newspaper letters home, and email TV - minimal - 6%	RSD	Parent conferences, weekly folders progress reports, web-based grading program	RSD	Copies of progress reports provided.
	SSD	newsletters, newspaper, website, email, TV and letters home	SSD	newsletters, PTA, district and site publications, website, TV, grade & attendance program	SSD	PTA newsletters, grade and attendance program documents, district pamphlets, site brochures
	USD	newsletter, newspaper, website, email, and TV. Other methods - letters, notes, parent conferences	USD	PTA, websites, mail, TV, web-based grade program, parent involvement week, health services	USD	PTA newsletters, website, parent involvement week program, grading program documents.
Methods - Title I	RSD	newsletter, newspaper, website, email, and letters TV - minimal - 6.21%	RSD	notes and letters	RSD	Title I letter provided.
	SSD	newsletter, newspaper, website, email, letters	SSD	parent letter, website, newspaper, parent meetings	SSD	Title I notification letter, Title I parent compact, newspaper article, agendas for parent meetings.
	USD	newsletter, website, letters, parent meetings, email, TV - 33%	USD	website, newsletter, letter,	USD	Title I Plan, letters, website,

		Survey Results		Interview Results		Document Results
Other Languages - Resources, Materials	RSD	74% - no other languages 23% - other languages	RSD	No forms in other languages	RSD	No forms
	SSD	63% - no other languages 37% - other languages	SSD	Forms provided in Spanish	SSD	Forms in Spanish - enrollment, home language survey, health forms
	USD	100% - other languages	USD	Forms provided in Spanish & Vietnamese	USD	Forms in Spanish and Vietnamese - enrollment, home language survey, health forms, lunch forms
Translators - Parent Conferences	RSD	70% - translators provided 29% - translators not provided	RSD	Translators provided	RSD	No documentation available
	SSD	79% - translators provided 21% - translators not provided	SSD	Translators provided	SSD	Translators staff listing
	USD	100% - translators provided	USD	Translators provided	USD	Translators staff listing
Translators - Individual Meetings	RSD	74% - translators provided 22% - translators not provided	RSD	Translators provided	RSD	No documentation available
	SSD	89% - translators provided 11% - translators not provided	SSD	Translators provided	SSD	Translators staff listing
	USD	100% - translators provided	USD	Translators provided	USD	Translators staff listing

		Survey Results		Interview Results		Document Results
Translators when Requested by Parent	RSD	81% - when requested 15% - do not provide when requested	RSD	Translators provided	RSD	No documentation available
	SSD	100% - when requested	SSD	Translators provided	SSD	No documentation available
	USD	100% - when requested	USD	Translators provided	USD	No documentation available
Translators - Title I Meetings	RSD	67% - translators provided 29% - translators not provided	RSD	Translators provided	RSD	No documentation available
	SSD	63% - translators provided 37% - translators not provided	SSD	Translators provided	SSD	Title I parent meeting notes
	USD	100% - translators provided	USD	Translators provided	USD	Title I Plan
Theme- Parent Volunteers	RSD	1-10% - 68%	RSD	Limited - field trips,	RSD	No documentation available
	SSD	1-10% - 52%, 11-30% - 32%	SSD	Some sites have more volunteers than others - field trips, tutors, chaperones	SSD	No documentation available
	USD	11-30% - 67%, 1-10% - 33%	USD	Volunteers expected - field trips, office, library aides	USD	No documentation available

		Survey Results		Interview Results		Document Results
Theme- Parent Resources	RSD	30% - workshops provided 69% - workshops not provided	RSD	Staff training – conference	RSD	Conferencing skills agenda
	SSD	58% - workshops provided 42% - workshops not provided	SSD	New teacher training - conferencing skills	SSD	New Teacher Training Program
	USD	100% - workshops provided	USD	Conferencing skills, How to deal with difficult Parents	USD	Teacher Training programs
# of Workshops Provided N=58	RSD	1-3 workshops - 72%	RSD	1 - 2 workshops annually	RSD	Conferencing skills agenda
	SSD	1-3 workshops - 82%	SSD	1-3 workshops annually	SSD	New Teacher Training Program
	USD	2-3 workshops - 67%, 6 or more - 33%	USD	1-2 workshops annually	USD	Teacher Training programs
Workshops- Other Languages	RSD	25% - other languages 75% - no other languages	RSD	None	RSD	None
	SSD	84% - other languages 11% - no other languages	SSD	None	SSD	None
	USD	67% - other languages 33% - no other languages	USD	1-2 workshops provided for Spanish-speaking parents	USD	No documentation available

		Survey Results		Interview Results		Document Results
Theme - Decision-Making						
Parents in PTA	RSD	0 - 25% = 80% participation 51-100% = 4% participation	RSD	Limited parent involvement	RSD	PTA membership list
	SSD	0 - 25% = 43% participation 26 - 50% = 43% participation	SSD	PTAs at every school site	SSD	PTA agendas, site lists
	USD	0 - 25% = 33% participation 26 - 75% = 67% participation	USD	PTAs at all sites, some have more involvement than others.	USD	PTA agendas, site lists
District Council	RSD	90% - parents involved 10% - parents not involved	RSD	No district council	RSD	None
	SSD	95% - parents involved 5% - parents not involved	SSD	District council makes recommendations	SSD	District council agendas
	USD	100% - parents involved	USD	District council makes recommendations	USD	District council agendas
Indiv. Sch. Sites	RSD	90% - parents involved 10% - not involved	RSD	Limited parental involvement - decision-making	RSD	No documentation provided
	SSD	100% - parents involved	SSD	Parents involved in site planning meetings and site committees.	SSD	School site agendas
	USD	100% - parents involved	USD	Parents involved in site planning, and school committees.	USD	School site agendas

		Survey Results		Interview Results		Document Results
Title I Planning	RSD	89% - parents involved 11% - not involved	RSD	Minimal involvement	RSD	Title I Plan
	SSD	100% - parents involved	SSD	Parental involvement embedded in all programs	SSD	Title I Plan, district documents, and site documents
	USD	100% - parents involved	USD	Parents involved in Title I Plan.	USD	Title I Plan
Theme - NCLB Compliance						
Written Parent Inv. Policy	RSD	81% - have policy 19% - no policy	RSD	Title I policy	RSD	Title I Plan
	SSD	68% - have policy 32% - no policy	SSD	parental involvement policy on website, Title I Plans	SSD	website, Title I Plans
	USD	100% - have policy	USD	Title I Plans, website	USD	website, Title I Plans
Parent Inv. Program	RSD	72% - have program 24% - do not have program	RSD	No programs	RSD	None
	SSD	53% - have program 37% - do not have program	SSD	parental involvement embedded in all programs	SSD	programs, agendas, Title I plans
	USD	100% - have program	USD	parental involvement program	USD	Program agendas, Title I, district plan

		Survey Results		Interview Results		Document Results
Staff Training - working with parents	RSD	41% - have training 54% - do not have training	RSD	limited training	RSD	Staff Development forms
	SSD	53% - have training 37% - do not have training	SSD	Provide training for new teachers.	SSD	Staff Development forms
	USD	100% - have training	USD	District training for staff members	USD	Staff Development forms
District Budget - Parental Inv. Less than 1%	RSD	83%	RSD	Less than 1%	RSD	Title I budget - reported 1%
	SSD	79%	SSD	1%	SSD	Title I budget and expenditures - 1%
	USD	33%	USD	1%	USD	Title I budget
Student Performance Report Cards	RSD	92% - sent to parents	RSD	District and School site Performance Report Cards sent.	RSD	Annual Performance Index reports, testing documents
	SSD	95% - sent to parents	SSD	District and School site Performance Report Cards sent.	SSD	Annual Performance Index reports, testing documents
	USD	100% - sent to parents	USD	District and School site performance report cards sent.	USD	Annual Performance Index reports, testing documents

		Survey Results		Interview Results		Document Results
Notification of failure to meet NCLB Guidelines	RSD	86% - notified parents	RSD	Would notify parents.	RSD	No documentation available.
	SSD	90% - notified parents	SSD	Would notify parents.	SSD	No documentation available
	USD	100% - notified parents	USD	Have notified parents.	USD	Letters to parents.

RSD – Rural Superintendent or Designee, SSD – Suburban Superintendent or Designee, USD – Urban Superintendent or Designee

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Conclusions

Introduction

This purpose of this chapter is to present conclusions, limitations and recommendations obtained from the analysis of data derived from a survey of superintendents or designees, superintendent interviews, and parental involvement documents. First, during the quantitative phase, rural, suburban, and urban superintendents' or designees' perceptions of the components of parental involvement and NCLB (2002) guidelines were analyzed through the lens of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002). During the qualitative phase, superintendents' perceptions from interviews, addressed NCLB's (2002) influence and the determination and development of components of parental involvement policies, practices, and programs within rural, suburban, and urban school districts. During the quantitative phase, parental involvement documents submitted by superintendents or designees were used in the development of the interview questions in the qualitative phase. Parental involvement documents submitted by superintendents who were interviewed provided clarification and better understanding of the research problem. Quantitative and qualitative data were examined and blended to investigate the meaning of the findings during the interpretation phase and presented in this chapter. Mixed methods questions guided discussion of factors that promoted and constrained the implementation of parental involvement policies and asked how the qualitative findings explained the statistical results addressed in the quantitative phase.

This chapter contains six sections. The first section summarizes Epstein's Framework of Parental Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002). The second section is a discussion of the quantitative results. The third section presents qualitative outcomes, describes themes, and discussion. The fourth section overlays the qualitative and quantitative findings, and explains the data through the lens of mixed methods questions. The fifth section discusses implications and recommendations based on the results of the study. The final section includes recommendations for future research.

Discussion of Results

Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement

Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) suggested a social organizational perspective in which home-school-community was interwoven, creating an overlapping sphere model (Epstein, 1992). However, instead of creating conflict due to the overlapping spheres, Epstein's framework (1992, 1995, 2002) suggested a harmonious working relationship, a dynamic system which addressed the psychological needs of children, the autonomy of parents and the professionalism of the educators (Epstein, 1987). In order to address these, Epstein's Framework (1992, 1995, 2002) was divided into six types of involvement: communication, volunteering, parenting, learning at home, community collaboration, and decision making wherein six dimensions of the home-school-community paradigm, were analyzed.

For this study, Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) was used to measure parental involvement in the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study. Furthermore, since legislation and educational programs were formulated

based on Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002), the study also assessed if rural, urban, and suburban public schools in Oklahoma included Epstein's components of parental involvement (1992, 1995, 2002).

Quantitative Results and Discussion

Communication.

Research Question 1: According to superintendents or designees, are the following components of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement being used in rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma public school districts?

a. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Communication* employed in Oklahoma public school districts?

The first component was communication, wherein the focus was home-school and school-home communication between the parents and school personnel (Epstein, 2002). Based on the data gathered, there were multiple ways in which the school districts communicated with parents in general and specifically concerning Title I. The most prevalent type of communication in rural, urban, and suburban districts was the PTA newsletter. Websites and newspapers were the next most popular communication methods for all districts. This coincided with the assertions of Epstein (2002) as cited in her work, PTA newsletters and newspapers were two of the major forms of communication between home and school. Newspapers and newsletters are viewed as formal and one-way, not targeting the audience and are not very effective (Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms 1986, Rogers, & Wright, 2008). Other researchers (Barnett, 1995, Blackerby, 2004, Purnell & Gotts, 1983) have agreed that schools must move from traditional one-way, mass communication methods to more interactive approaches to

achieve higher levels of parental involvement in schools. Mass communications are not effective in shaping or changing attitudes. Superintendents and school districts must become more adept at interpersonal communication with a target audience if schools are to increase parental involvement (Rogers & Wright, 2008). With more technology available in our society than ever before, it was not surprising to find websites becoming a more popular avenue of communication in all types of districts. Email was used less by rural districts than by urban and suburban respondents. This may be due to the many barriers to effective online communication in rural communities such as lack of computer access, lack of technical skills, and lack of knowledge about the available technology (Blackerby, 2004). These barriers must be overcome if schools are to have true two-way communication and mutual sharing of information between schools and parents. Schools and parents must strive to open as many modes of communication as possible.

The No Child Left Behind Act (2002) requires school districts to communicate with parents in an understandable format and in a language that parents can understand. Based on the survey responses, the medium of communication with parents in public schools was primarily English in rural and suburban schools. Of the rural survey responses, 74% noted that languages other than English were not being used. Suburban respondents suggested that in 63% of districts, English was the only language available to parents. Other languages were used in just over a quarter of the rural and suburban sample districts. Inability to understand the language of the school is a major deterrent to the parents who have not achieved full English proficiency (Antunez, 2000). In these cases, interactions with the schools are difficult, and, therefore, practically non-existent (Antunez, 2000). All urban respondents reported communication was provided in other

languages. Spanish was the language cited in the survey as the other language used in the survey data. Given the location of the public schools, in the southwestern region of the United States, English would be the first language, followed by Spanish. At this point in our country's history, it would be a weakness for school districts to use English exclusively, considering there are various ethnic minorities in public schools. To improve communication with diverse families, superintendents and school districts must gain knowledge and understanding of the diverse cultures and values of families. Families are more likely to develop effective working relationships with educators they trust. In some cultures, the father may be considered the head of the household and, therefore, may be responsible for making decisions for the rest of the family. In other cultures, the mother or oldest female member of the household may hold the position of authority. Researchers suggest that these issues need to be considered on a family-by-family basis, because intra-group differences are as great as inter-group differences (Bruns & Corso, 2001). Awareness of these differences increases the likelihood of building reciprocal relationships between parents and schools.

Cultural differences in communication may also affect school – home relationships. For example, if educators assume a dominant role in conversations, the submissive role in which the family is placed may be a source of tension and may result in family members withholding information. Communication of this type may be particularly offensive to some families from traditional Hispanic, Native American, and Asian backgrounds (Bruns & Corso, 2001). Educators must go beyond the walls of the schoolhouse in order to communicate with diverse families. Conferences, meetings and

informal get-togethers can take place outside of the school setting such as at a faith-based or community centers.

However, despite the limited use of secondary languages for communication in suburban and rural schools, translators were provided during the course of parent conferences, individual meetings, and Title I meetings in over 70% of responses. When parents requested translators, 83% of schools provided translators. When the data were stratified further, rural school districts cited the highest percentages (15 – 29%) of translators not being provided during parent conferences, individual meetings and when requested by parents. When translators were requested during Title I meetings, 37% of suburban respondents suggested that translators were not used during these activities. All urban respondents reported that translators were utilized in Title I meetings, parent conferences, individual meetings and when requested by parents. In this manner, non-English speaking parents felt more comfortable, and their comprehension of the sessions was ensured. This was critical, as all parents are essential in the communication component of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002). Based on the respondents, the availability of translators allowed the parents to view or assess educational programs, understand student progress, and be involved in parent conferences in the non-threatening, comfortable manner. Translators could also affect how parents participate in Title I meetings, activities, and school-parent conferences, as they become more knowledgeable and updated about the situation of their children at school and the agenda of school administrators and the Title I plan. One of the main functions of communication with parents is to give a better view of the development and growth of their children (Epstein, 2002). Negative responses from approximately 15 – 29% of rural

survey respondents may indicate the lack of available translators or limited resources to provide interpreters in some districts. The employment of translators during parent conferences, individual meetings, Title I meetings and when requested by parents demonstrates that a substantial percentage of sample school districts are using communication tools to elicit parental involvement based on Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002).

Volunteering.

Research Question 1: According to superintendents or designees, are the following components of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement being used in rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma public school districts?

b. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Volunteering* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?

Supporting student programs and school functions was a core concept of the volunteering dimension of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002). Parents give information to the schools and this information is then used to assign certain volunteering activities to them (Epstein, 1992). Based upon the experiences of eight schools participating in a three-year study of diverse family-school-community collaborations, Taheri (1993) concluded: "The process of parents and teachers working together on a common project has a definite impact on the way each perceives the other. It helps break down barriers, build partnerships, clear up misunderstandings, and erase false expectations" (p. 10).

With respect to volunteering activities, the data yielded conclusive results, only two rural districts had between 76 – 100% support of parents when it came to

volunteering activities. On the other side, 118 schools had between 0 – 10% that received support from parents; of those schools, 106 were rural school districts. Respondents from 47 districts indicated that parents volunteered in schools between 11 – 75%; of these responses, 37 were from rural districts, while eight were suburban and two were urban. This indicated that when it came to volunteering activities, most Oklahoma public school districts represented in this sample had limited parental involvement in this component of Epstein's Framework of Parental Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002).

A number of factors may influence these low volunteerism results. Differences in race, culture, and socio-economic status (SES) of parents in these Oklahoma school districts may contribute to the low involvement outcomes (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Traditional parent-volunteers groups such as PTA cater primarily to non-minority parents (Toch, 2001). Research suggests that minorities are not approached as possible volunteers at the same rate as whites (Musick, Wilson, & Bynum, 2000, Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Some parents may not be involved due to cultural isolation. There is often an exchange between individuals and groups that work to benefit members of that cultural group (Putnam, 2000). Friends ask other friends to volunteer, forming a social club, which tends to limit volunteerism among outsiders (Putnam, 2000). Finally, school districts often mirror middle class cultures (Lareau, 2000). Socio-economic status is an important feature of parent volunteerism. Parents with higher SES appear to school personnel as being supportive of educational missions, more trusting of educators, and more likely to interact with the school (Lareau, 2000). Upper class and middle class parents are typically recruited into parent volunteer groups more than poorer parents due to the view that these parents may possess resources desired by the school district (Hoover-Dempsey,

Bassler, & Brissie, 1992). Surpluses of time, money, and energy are seen as beneficial to the volunteer groups.

Another factor in determining whether a parent volunteers or not is time (Kearney, 2004). A common barrier to volunteerism relates to the limited options as to when volunteers are needed, such as during work hours (Epstein, 2001; National Council of Jewish Women, 1996). This barrier can be formidable for parents who are primary care givers of smaller children, elderly parents, or single parents. For parents with multiple family and work commitments, the required time may be too great for volunteer obligations. Individuals with overwhelming work or home-related commitments are less likely to be available for volunteer activities (Omoto & Snyder, 2002). Within this study, time constraints and traditional volunteering activities such as substituting teaching, class aiding, and helping during field trips or class programs could be factors for limited parent volunteerism. The raw data indicated that volunteering activities might be problematic for some parents, as they need to juggle between work and their personal life, making it difficult to participate in school activities.

Epstein (2002) cited the importance of volunteering activities, which are opportunities for parents to assess the development of their children through actual experience. Students with parents that volunteered in schools made better grades and had higher standardized test scores (Desimone, 1999).Volunteering activities in Oklahoma public school districts were not implemented as effectively as expected, noting the lack of support from parents in these activities. There were certain conditions wherein parents were unable to participate in such activities, therefore limiting the number of volunteers. It would be beneficial if schools considered parental constraints when asking parents to

participate in volunteer activities (Epstein, 1992). School districts must reach out to diverse families, creating a partnership with parents.

Parenting.

Research Question 1: According to superintendents or designees, are the following components of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement being used in rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma public school districts?

c. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Parenting* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?

The next component of parental involvement in Epstein's framework was parenting. Parenting does not only involve parents; it also involves the children, the community, and the school. Together they form a systematic and symmetrical relationship that greatly affects child rearing. Like the previous component, parenting was composed of certain activities. According to Epstein (2002), the focus of these activities was to understand child development through strengthening parenting skills while promoting student learning even outside of school. The latter was made possible through understanding of the home environment and incorporating such comprehension into childrearing.

Within the survey data, only 35% of superintendents or designees reported that workshops for parents were provided in their school districts. In the school districts that provided workshops, 84% indicated that one to three workshops were held during the previous year. Of the 35% that provided workshops, 16% provided workshops or courses in other languages. When the data were disaggregated further, it was noted that 100 (69%) rural districts did not provide parental involvement workshops or courses.

Parental involvement workshops or courses were provided in 11 (58%) suburban districts, while all three (100%) urban districts reported having parental involvement workshops or courses. Rural districts were more likely to have one workshop or course per year; while suburban and urban districts frequently had 2-3 workshops or courses during the school year. Rural and suburban districts were less likely to have workshops or courses in other languages than urban districts. Superintendents or designees also cited types of workshops or courses given to parents in the survey data. The presence of multiple parenting programs such as workshops on tutoring techniques, health care, career choices for students, and sexuality education parent courses, were cited in the survey data, supporting the parenting component.

Another objective of the parenting dimension was to aid school administrators and educators in improving educational services for their children. This was accomplished with the help of parents, as they were the ones who provided the necessary information that fostered educational improvement. Parents and educators may better understand the needs of students by sharing information (Epstein, 2002). Based on the gathered data, the percentage of school districts that provided parenting workshops was limited to one-third of the sample. This suggested that the school districts should provide more workshops or courses if the parenting component of the Epstein framework is to be effectively implemented in Oklahoma public schools. The survey data also indicated that workshops in other languages were supported in 22% of districts providing workshops. In examining the total sample N=167, this would indicate 8% of the districts had workshops in other languages. Analysis of these data implied that parenting programs had not been developed to the extent possible and may not include a wide range of families.

Learning at home.

Research Question 1: According to superintendents or designees, are the following components of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement being used in rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma public school districts?

d. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Learning at Home* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?

Learning at home was a close component of the parenting dimension in the Epstein framework. Learning at home promoted student learning during the time that children stay at home through the help of activities patterned from the students' lessons (Epstein, 2002). According to Epstein (2002), in order to contribute to the success of their students, most family members, especially parents, must conduct curricular linked activities. These activities were focused on helping children at home, both academically and on a personal level. Based on the gathered data, 75% of superintendents or designees reported that school districts did provide information about certain home learning activities. From this data, findings indicated that 73% of rural, 84% of suburban, and 100% of urban districts provided information regarding home learning activities to parents.

A written homework policy was cited as one of the school district tools for learning at home. A significant percentage (57%) of respondents did not have written homework policies, as noted in the results of the study. Rural districts were more likely to have written homework policies (44%) as opposed to suburban (37%) or urban (33%) districts. These results suggested that this component of Epstein's Framework of Parent

Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) was not utilized in over a majority of sample Oklahoma school districts.

Family learning workshops were available in 31% of reporting school districts, while 68% responded that workshops geared toward elevating the learning at home activities were not available to parents. Rural respondents indicated that workshops were not available for parents and children learning activities in 72% of sample districts. Workshops for parents and children learning activities were not available in 47% of sample suburban districts. All urban respondents noted that workshops were available for parents and children learning activities.

Overall, the findings from survey respondents demonstrated that many school districts were providing home-learning activities, but a large majority of districts did not have written homework policies or provide workshops for parents and children to learn together. Some researchers believed that the learning at home component of Epstein's framework (1992, 1995, 2002) was the most significant in relation to increasing student achievement. Studies found that home discussion of school activities was one of the stronger predictors of student achievement (Balli Demo, & Wedman, 1998; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Although the dynamics of parent-child discussion about school were not clearly understood, studies suggested parent-child discussion, which focused on middle level students, was another area where parent involvement programs could make a difference (Balli, Demo, & Wedman, 1998; Sui-Chu & Willms 1996).

Epstein (2002) suggested that by involving parents in their child's learning activities, conversation about the student's academic subjects and his/her condition at school may emerge, and be a starting point for openness and progress (Epstein, 2002).

Furthermore, Epstein (1992) viewed learning at home as a reminder for children to do well in school and at the same time as a way of motivating them to do their best. School districts must continue to provide learning at home activities. Suburban and rural districts must provide additional opportunities for parents and children to learn together.

Community collaboration.

Research Question 1: According to superintendents or designees, are the following components of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement being used in rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma public school districts?

e. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Community Collaboration* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?

The home-community-school was a paradigm of the Epstein framework (1995, 2002). The community acted as a bridge for the school and home, which emphasized the importance of community in parental involvement and education in the school district. According to Epstein (2002), collaborating with the community strengthened school programs and student learning. Soliciting the help of various groups in the community, this component intended to establish a working relationship with the community, in which the goal was to bolster students' performances and to motivate parents and educators to give back to the community through close participation in collaboration activities (Epstein, 2002). Christenson and Sheridan (2001) suggested that the quality of children's school-community connections influenced their school learning. Community collaboration may be used extensively with help from selected parents and schools. This has produced significant results such as select community organizations becoming mentors and tutors for the students, as cited in the work of Epstein (2002).

The gathered data presented a modest percentage of respondents that were actively involved in programs such as General Educational Development (GED), English Language Learner (ELL), and computer training provided in their community with the help of school administrators. Rural districts were less likely to have these programs while all urban districts were providing these programs. These results may indicate a lack of resources, time, and qualified personnel in rural districts. Respondents also suggested that parents were being linked with social services in over 80% of reporting districts. Superintendent or designees also indicated types of social services that school districts connected parents with, in their communities. Health services, drug awareness, and counseling services were social services that are cited in the data. Districts should examine the programs in their community and determine if programs such as GED, ELL, and computer training are needed for their families.

Decision-making.

Research Question 1: According to superintendents or designees, are the following components of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement being used in rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma public school districts?

f. Is Epstein's parental involvement type *Decision-making* being employed in Oklahoma public school districts?

The final component, decision-making, was characterized as the active involvement of parents in school affairs. According to Epstein (2002), when parents were actively involved in school meetings and conferences they might also have a voice in school policies and programs**.** Henderson and Berla (1994) indicated that when parents were decision makers in schools, children's learning could be positively impacted in the

classroom. Recent studies by Corter and Pelletier (2004), Leithwood and Parker (2000) have found that parental involvement in the governance of schools has little or no direct impact on classroom practices and little or no direct impact on student learning.

PTA committees, district council meetings, and Title I planning sessions gave parents opportunities to participate in decision-making. The survey data suggested a common trend in today's PTAs; few parents are participating in PTA meetings, which may be due to more single parent households and failure to attract minority families. With the data disaggregated by rural, suburban, and urban responses, 57% of rural schools had 0-10% participation in PTA. Only two rural districts reported having 76-100% parent participation in PTA. Despite the low percentage of respondents stating that parents were active in the PTA, there were still parents who found time to be involved and knew the issues discussed by the school districts. When it came to district council meetings and individual school site parental involvement, respondents indicated that parents were included in these activities. In over 90% of sample school districts, parents were involved in district councils and at individual school sites. In 89% of sample rural schools parents were involved in Title I planning; while in 100% of sample suburban and urban schools, parents participated in Title I planning. Epstein (2002) cited that parents who are actively involved in such activities are concerned about on-going issues that could affect the school and education of their children.

No Child Left Behind Guidelines

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was written and implemented to improve K-12 education in public schools (NCLB, 2002). The mandate of NCLB (2002) was to help students achieve proficiency in all core subjects. No Child Left Behind (2002) also

provided funding for schools and educational programs such as Title I. The survey was used to measure how parental involvement polices and programs met the NCLB guidelines. Hence, the analysis was an assessment of whether the parental involvement programs and policies met the NCLB guidelines.

Written parental involvement policies, programs, and staff training.

Research Question 2: Do rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma school district parental involvement policies and programs meet NCLB guidelines?

a. Do Oklahoma school districts have written parental involvement policies, programs, and staff training?

All urban superintendents or designees reported that a parental involvement policy had been written; while 81% of rural and 68% of suburban superintendents or designees cited that this guideline of NCLB had been met. The survey results indicated that all school districts in the study were receiving Title I funds, therefore all school districts should have written parental involvement policies in place.

Title I Section 1118, Part A mandates:

> Each LEA that receives Title I, Part A funds must develop a written parental involvement policy that establishes the LEA's expectations for parental involvement. The policy must be developed jointly with, and agreed upon with, the parents of children participating in Title I, Part A programs and distributed to parents of all children participating in Title I, Part A programs. (Section 1118(a) (2)

According to Epstein (2005), parents tend to forget that there is a written parental involvement policy being implemented in the school district. The problem lies in the

nature of informing the parents about the said policy. Most of the time, the policy was integrated in the student handbooks and according to NCLB (2002), may not be read, thus resulting in parents not having any idea about the policy. Epstein (2005) asserted that there should be a variety of methods used to communicate parental involvement policies.

In relation to parent involvement policies, there were 72% of rural school districts, 53% of suburban school districts, and 100% of urban school districts that had school district programs supporting parent involvement policies. One quarter of the responding school districts did not have parental involvement programs. Under NCLB, Title I Part A, Section 1118(a), a school district may receive funds only if the school district implements parental involvement programs, activities, and procedures. School districts must plan and implement these programs, activities, and procedures with meaningful collaboration of parents of children within the Title I schools. Suburban and rural schools in this study that did not have parental involvement programs were not complying with NCLB guidelines.

In order to have successful parental involvement programs in schools, staffs must be trained to work with parents. Rural superintendents or designees responded that in 78 (54%) districts, training was not provided to staff. Suburban respondents suggested that in seven (37%) districts, training was provided to staff members. Urban superintendents or designees cited in three (100%) districts that staffs were trained to work with parents. In general, results indicated that in 85 (51%) districts, staff training was not provided and schools were not complying with NCLB mandates. No Child Left Behind, Title I, Part A, Section 1118, Part E states:

> Schools and local education agencies (LEAs) must educate their staffs in how to work with parents as equal partners. Specifically, with the assistance of parents, schools and LEAs must educate teachers, pupil services personnel, principals, and other staff in the value and utility of the contributions of parents, and in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents, implement and coordinate parent programs, and build ties between parents and the school. Schools and LEAs may involve parents in developing this training, in order to improve its effectiveness. (Section 1118(e), (3) (6)

Title I funding.

Research Question 2: Do rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma school district parental involvement policies and programs meet NCLB guidelines?

b. Do Oklahoma school districts allocate Title I funds for parental involvement programs?

Title I funding was a necessary component of NCLB mandates. Title I, as cited in the work of Epstein (2005), was a supplementary program for K-12 students who were falling behind academically. School districts receiving over $500,000 in Title I funding, must designate 1% to parental involvement. Any school receiving Title I money must involve parents in making decisions about Title I funds. In school districts of Oklahoma, 121 rural respondents (83%) were designating less than 1% to parental involvement. Suburban districts also reported a high percentage (79%) using less than 1%, while only one (33%) urban district cited this response. Overall, 137 respondents (82%) affirmed that they were using less than 1%. Due to the number of rural school districts in

Oklahoma, it would stand to reason that many of the school districts in the sample did not receive over $500,000 in Title I funds. The survey indicated that 29 respondents (17%) were using 1-5% of the total Title I budget for parental involvement. These results suggested that school districts in this study were minimally meeting the Title I funding guidelines mandated under the NCLB Act of 2001.

Annual student performance report cards.

Research Question 2: Do rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma school district parental involvement policies and programs meet NCLB guidelines?

c. Do Oklahoma school districts provide annual student performance report cards detailing the performance of the school district and individual schools?

A core requirement of NCLB was that parents should be made aware of the performance of the school district and individual school sites. School district and individual school site report cards are tools for promoting accountability for schools, local school districts, and states by publicizing data about student performance and program effectiveness for parents, policy makers, and other stakeholders. Report cards help parents and the public see where schools and districts are succeeding and where there are opportunities for improvement. Additionally, the more parents and community members know about the academic achievement of their children and their schools, the more likely they are to be involved in their local schools and the public school system. For these reasons, school districts and individual school sites receiving Title I funds must prepare and disseminate annual report cards (Report Cards**.** Title I**,** Part A Non-Regulatory Guidance, n.d). In over 90% of rural, urban, and suburban responding districts in Oklahoma this mandate was being fulfilled by providing annual student

performance report cards. Quantitative data indicated that schools were communicating student performance results primarily through school/PTA newsletters, websites, and newspapers.

Title I schools and parent notification.

Research Question 2: According to superintendents or designees, do rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma school district parental involvement policies and programs meet NCLB guidelines?

d. Do Oklahoma school districts notify parents if Title I schools fall into the *needs improvement, corrective action, or restructured categories?*

Communication was a key component of parental involvement in Title I under NCLB. Parents had to be involved in Title I planning, implementation, and evaluation of the Title I Plan. According to NCLB (2002) Title I and parenting were closely linked, as each was dependent upon the other. Therefore, it is important that parents are aware of the condition or status of a school district's Title I Plan. Based on the gathered data, the most effective method of communicating the Title I Plan was to invite and motivate parents to be actively involved in the decision making process during Title I planning and evaluation meetings.

The survey data indicated that most school districts were communicating with parents through meetings and sending letters, in order for those who could not attend to be updated about the status of Title I. It is evident that school districts were getting input and feedback from parents in matters such as Title I and NCLB. Moreover, another way of determining how effectively a school district's parental involvement polices are in meeting the NCLB guidelines is through an assessment of parents' extent of integration

and involvement in school decision making and conferences. When evaluated as a whole, decision-making as a component of the Epstein framework was exhibited in Oklahoma schools. The data indicated that some parents in school districts of Oklahoma showed interest and willingness to participate in PTA meetings, parent learning workshops, and other courses that are coordinated by school and community organizations with this, NCLB guidelines were sufficiently met.

Summary – Quantitative Outcomes

Results from the survey of rural, suburban, and urban Oklahoma superintendents or designees revealed that implementation of Epstein's six parental involvement components varied among school districts. A variety of communication methods were used in suburban and urban districts, but tended to be more limited in rural districts. Modes of communication were typically mass and one-way in all districts, rather than personal and targeted to specific audiences. Translators were more likely to be provided in meetings and individual conferences in suburban and urban districts, rather than in rural districts. Communication in other languages was limited in rural and suburban districts. Volunteering results indicated that few parents were involved in school activities in all types of districts, with respondents citing the most common volunteering rate as 1-5%. Parenting workshop and course results indicated that just over one third of the sample school districts were implementing this component, and within this group, only 15% provided workshops in other languages. Superintendents or designees reported that learning at home activities were provided, but less cited written homework policies, learning activity workshops for parents and children, and other languages used in

workshops. Results again varied when examining community collaboration within rural and suburban districts, citing limited parent and family support programs, but denoting a higher percentage of schools linking parents with social services. All urban schools in this study reported that support programs were available and schools were connecting parents with services. In the last component, decision making, PTA involvement proved to be a low percentage in school districts, but involvement in district councils, individual school sites, and Title I planning was significant in the survey results.

Results suggested that Oklahoma school districts had not developed Epstein's Framework of Parental Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) to the fullest extent possible. Urban superintendents or designees, in this study, were utilizing Epstein's framework (1992, 1995, 2002) in more instances than rural or suburban respondents. Rural superintendents or designees results indicated the most limited use of Epstein's Framework of Parental Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) as compared to suburban or urban superintendents.

School districts must systemically develop and implement each of the components of the framework in order to improve parental involvement in schools. According to Epstein (2002), these components were comprised mostly of activities that were intended to produce a harmonious working relationship between the overlapping spheres in the framework. Furthermore, these activities formed a bridge that connects the home-community-school paradigm, which focused on improving educational services and relationships within the school district.

Superintendents or designees indicated that NCLB (2002) guidelines were met in most areas. Most school districts had written parent involvement policies

in addition, many had district programs to support these policies. Annual student performance report cards were provided in over 90% of sample school districts. Parents were being notified if their schools fell into the needs improvement, corrective action, or restructured categories in most districts. The two areas of NCLB (2002) that needed improvement from the survey results, were training for staff in working with parents and Title I budgets. Less than one-half of sample school districts were providing training, which indicated that educators might not have the tools necessary to communicate with parents and share student achievement data. Over 80% of districts were spending less than 1% of their Title I budgets on parental involvement. A reason for these results could suggest that 86% of superintendents or designees reported that they led rural districts in Oklahoma. These districts may not receive over $500,000 in Title I funds and therefore are not required to spend 1% of their budget on parental involvement. They are still required to have parents involved in decisions about spending of Title I funds. Most Oklahoma sample school districts were minimally funding parental involvement.

Qualitative Results and Discussion

In the qualitative phase of this mixed methods study, qualitative data were analyzed, illuminating the complexity of Oklahoma school districts and the role of superintendents in NCLB (2002) parental involvement guidelines and the development of parental involvement policies, practices, and program in these districts. Communication, compliance, parent volunteers, parent resources, and decision-making emerged as themes from the experiences of the participants. The experiences indicated overlapping ideas that flowed between the themes. This portion of the chapter discusses each research question through the experiences of the superintendents and the lens of the

themes.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: How does NCLB (2002) influence Oklahoma's parental involvement policies, practices, and programs within rural, urban, and suburban school districts?

Compliance

No Child Left Behind (2002) encourages schools to strengthen ties with parents of children enrolled in their schools. The law aims to improve the performance of children with the help of not only the schools' teachers but also of their parents. Moreover, NCLB (2002) also provides financial assistance to children in school in the form of Title I funding. With the existence of NCLB (2002) for almost eight years, it is impossible that this law would not influence parental involvement policies, practices, and programs among these schools. The influence of NCLB (2002) does vary in these three Oklahoma school districts.

In the rural district, Superintendent Steed illustrated limited compliance with NCLB (2002) parental involvement guidelines. Less than 1% of Title I funds were appropriated for parental involvement in the district's Title I plan. Superintendent Steed stated, "We typically do not use these funds; it is a fairly small amount of money" (Interview, 2008). The superintendent's autocratic style of leadership led him to minimally include parents in decisions regarding Title I funding. Superintendent Steed was responsible for the writing of the district Title I plan. Principals and teachers wrote the individual site plans. When interviewed regarding the school-parent compact, the superintendent did not have a clear understanding that parents and educators worked

together to improve student achievement with this agreement. The school district did not provide learning materials for parents to help their children with schoolwork.

In the rural district, parents became aware of the district Title I plan through newsletters and the local newspaper. District student performance report cards were sent to parents on a yearly basis and standard student report cards were sent out every nine weeks to let parents know of student progress. Parent-teacher conferences were provided twice per year. Teacher in-services were given focusing on conferencing skills, phone call skills, and face-to-face training. Interpreters were hired when needed to communicate with non-English speaking parents (Interview, 2008).

Superintendent Steed seemed to struggle with the implementation of NCLB (2002) parental involvement mandates. In a 2006 study, Epstein and Sanders suggested that compliance with NCLB parental involvement mandates was dependent on five factors. These factors included: priority given to parental involvement by school leaders, adequacy of funding for staff and programs, and active leadership and promotion of parental involvement activities, the clarity of focus of superintendent' responsibilities and the leaders' level of passion for and commitment to parental involvement mandates. Superintendent Steed did not make NCLB parental involvement mandates a priority in his district. He did not actively promote activities to attract parents and families and minimally included parents in decision-making concerning Title I planning and implementation. He did not have a clear focus of NCLB as noted by his lack of knowledge of school-parent compacts.

Hazi (1998) suggested that rural leaders tend to be reactive rather than assertive in their stance toward school reforms. It is often difficult for rural superintendents to be

assertive with limited resources and often find it a strain to keep up with mandates (Hazi, 1998). School leaders in rural areas are selective about compliance with mandates, depending on such factors as when monitoring by the state occurs, if the mandates are relevant and cost-effective, and good for students (Hazi, 1998). Being selective with mandates, seemed to be one of the ways that Superintendent Steed and this rural district could maintain the appearance of autonomy and local control.

In the urban and suburban school districts, compliance with No Child Left Behind (2002) parental involvement guidelines was evident during the interviews and from the school district parental involvement documentation. Both superintendents believed that parental involvement was a necessary component of many of the policies, programs, and practices in their districts. “Parent involvement is not a separate program in our district” (Interview, 2007). Title I funding in both districts was equal to 1% of the total Title I budget. Information regarding state standards, district report cards, and student report cards were provided to parents in both districts. Both Superintendent Tomas and Superintendent Underwood provided examples of learning activities for parents and children such as Math and Computer nights and Reading with Parents evenings demonstrating that this component of NCLB was facilitated by these districts. Parents were notified of the number of highly qualified teachers, curriculum standards and state testing results.

Both districts had developed materials, forms, and resources in Spanish for non-English speaking parents. The urban district due to its diverse student population also had materials in Vietnamese. Both districts used interpreters to communicate with parents, when needed. The urban and suburban superintendents, although only spending the

minimum on parental involvement illustrated that their districts are complying with NCLB requirements.

Communication

Communication, a component of Epstein's Framework of Parental Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) and a requirement under NCLB (2002), was used in all three school districts. The urban and suburban districts utilized communication with parents extensively through a variety of sources such as PTA organizations, newspapers, newsletters, web-based grading and attendance programs, school websites, emails, emergency notification system, and television, while the rural district used primarily notes to parents, newsletters, and the local newspaper. The suburban district televised Board meetings. The urban district provided information about a number of programs and services such as Parent Involvement Week and health services.

Communication in all three school districts was frequently one-way; giving information to parents, but the urban and suburban superintendents did have parents on district councils such as the Title I Planning committee and the Gifted committee. Parents on these committees did have a voice in making recommendations to district personnel suggesting that parents served in an advisory capacity rather than a partnership role. The urban and suburban superintendents both stressed that communication was a vital aspect of parental involvement. All three school districts must continue to seek out an array of communication methods, which are two-way and target specific audiences.

Communicating with diverse families was considered in all three districts, but not as evident in the rural district as the urban and suburban districts. Translators were used in all three districts, but forms in other languages were only provided in the urban and

suburban districts. All three districts could increase parental involvement with diverse families.

Brewster and Railback (2003) found the following:

> Minority, lower-income, and families who speak limited English, are often highly underrepresented in school level decision-making and in family involvement activities — a phenomenon that speaks far more often to differing needs, values, and levels of trust than it does to families' lack of interest or unwillingness to get involved. (p. 1)

Parent Volunteers

Volunteering in schools was a theme discussed by the rural, urban, and suburban superintendents. Each superintendent's responses varied in the level of parents volunteering in their schools. The rural superintendent only discussed parents working as class aides and periodically reading to students, implying limited parent volunteering activities in his district. The urban superintendent believed "Ideally, a parent would be present in every classroom every day, observing and participating in the educational process" (Interview, 2008). He did not specifically list ways that parents could volunteer, but stated, "parents were expected" to be in classrooms and finding out what their children were learning. The suburban superintendent gave numerous examples of parents "being invited" to volunteer in activities such as PTA, field trip sponsors, office and library help, class readers, and committee members. Parent volunteers are an asset in our schools today, educators should seek out parents of varying socio-economic levels and ethnic backgrounds to enrich the classrooms and to develop this component to the

maximum level possible. It takes parents and educators working together to meet the needs of our students and to improve student achievement.

Learning at Home

This theme was evident in differing degrees in the rural, urban, and suburban districts. In the rural district, the superintendent reported that parents were expected to monitor their children's reading at home, but resources or materials were not available for parents to help their children with learning at home. The urban and suburban superintendents both discussed having activities for parents and children to promote learning at home. The suburban superintendent discussed Everyday Math activities that were given to elementary parents to help their children with different math strategies. The urban superintendent stated, "Many of our parents won't come to school without an activity that involves their children. We have to help parents understand the curriculum, and in turn they will be able to help their children at home" (Interview, 2008). Some of the parent resources had been developed in other languages in the urban district. All three school districts could offer more parent resources because as Henderson and Mapp (2002) suggested,

> When examining the research, there are strong indications that the most effective forms of parental involvement are those that engage parents in working directly with their children on learning activities in the home. Programs which involve parents in reading with their children, supporting their work on homework assignments, or tutoring them using materials and instructions provided by teachers, show particularly impressive results. (p.30)

Decision-Making

In discussing decision-making, the sixth component of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (2002), the rural superintendent's views differed from the urban and suburban superintendents' opinions. The rural superintendent minimally involved parents in decision-making activities in his district. He made decisions with limited parental involvement. Parents were not involved in a district council and minimally involved in Title I planning. The urban and suburban superintendents were similar in their statements about decision-making. Both superintendents discussed district councils, PTA, and Title I committees in which parents made recommendations to district personnel or to the board of education; suggesting that parents served as advisors rather than a partners.

In all three districts, parents need to become full partners in decisions that affect their children. Studies have shown that schools where parents are involved in decision-making and advocacy have higher levels of student achievement and greater public support (National PTA, 2002). Effective partnerships develop when each partner is empowered to participate in the decision-making process. Schools and programs that actively enlist parent participation and input communicate that parents are valued as full partners in the educating of their children (National PTA, 2002). The involvement of parents is crucial in collaborative decision-making processes on issues from curriculum to Title I budgets.

Development of Parental Involvement Policies, Practices, and Programs

Research Question 2: How do rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma superintendents or designees determine and develop the components of parental involvement policies, practices and programs?

Responses differed on how superintendents determine and develop parental involvement policies, practices, and programs in the three school district interviews. The rural superintendent suggested that parental involvement policies and programs, in his district, were created by the board of education. Principals at the schools worked to decide which Title I strategies they were going to implement based on their needs. The urban superintendent relied on Title I guidelines to develop the parental involvement policies, programs, and practices in his district. These policies, programs, and practices were publicized through newspapers, television, and the internet. The suburban superintendent emphasized the importance of parental involvement by embedding components of Epstein's framework (1992, 1995, 2002) in all decisions, programs, and practices. Parental involvement was not viewed as a separate entity due to NCLB Title I guidelines.

Summary – Qualitative Outcomes

This section provides a summary of the qualitative interpretations of this study. Each of the research questions were viewed through the perceptions of a rural, suburban, and urban superintendent and the emerging themes. The five themes: compliance, communication, parent volunteers, parent resources, and decision making provided the structure for the discussion of NCLB's (2002) influence on parental involvement policies, programs, and practices within the three school districts. Compliance proved to be limited in the rural district without systematic parent involvement policies, programs, and practices and less than 1% allocated to parental involvement. The urban and suburban superintendents provided evidence of compliance through extensive Title I documentation and interview transcriptions. Title I funding requirements were met in

both urban and suburban districts. Communication methods were used in all three districts to reach parents, with the urban and suburban districts utilized as many communication methods as possible. Communication in all three districts, in most instances, was one-way, providing information to parents. Parent volunteer activities were limited in the rural district as opposed to the urban and suburban districts. The suburban superintendent invited parents to volunteer, while the urban superintendent took it to next level by expecting parents to volunteer in as many ways as possible. Parent resources to help parents with learning at home were not provided in the rural district. The urban and suburban superintendents both discussed providing activities and materials for parents to help their children at home. Decision-making was minimal in the rural district, while the urban and suburban superintendents discussed committees in which parents provided input and made recommendations. The urban and suburban superintendents' perceptions were more similar than those of the rural superintendent.

Superintendents' perceptions were also interpreted to gain a deeper understanding of the determination and development of components of parental involvement policies, practices, and programs. All three superintendents' responses varied in how they perceived the development of parental involvement policies, programs, and practices. The rural superintendent concluded that the Board of Education determined how parental involvement policies, programs, and policies were created in his district. Principals were responsible for which Title I interventions would be implemented based on their needs. The urban superintendent based his parental involvement policies, programs, and practices on Title I guidelines. The suburban superintendent understood the necessity of following Title I provisions, and was emphatic about embedding the components of

Epstein's framework (1992, 1995, 2002) in all decisions, programs, and practices.

Analysis of Mixed Methods

Mixed Method Research Questions

Research Question 1: What factors promote or constrain the implementation of parental involvement policies in Oklahoma rural, urban, and suburban school districts?

Factors that Affect the Implementation of Parental Involvement

Parental involvement policies, programs, and practices are essential components of Title I under NCLB. Quantitative data indicated that superintendents or designees recognized the importance of parental involvement, but sometimes struggled with implementation of components of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002). Parental involvement documentation submitted by superintendents or designees confirmed the existence of a wide range of policies, programs, and practices. School district parental involvement documentation submitted by superintendents or designees ranged from a one-page parental involvement policy to an in-depth parental involvement program, which included a parental involvement coordinator. The qualitative data suggested that several factors affected the implementation of parental involvement policies, programs, and practices in school districts in Oklahoma.

The first factor, which impeded all three superintendents, centered on communication and reaching all families. All stated that their school districts were communicating with parents under NCLB guidelines, but each said that many diverse parents were not recruited for Title I committees. Superintendent Underwood stated, "We have difficulty getting a diverse group of parents involved in school decision-

making activities" (Interview, 2007). Superintendent Steed said, "Communication could be improved with diverse families by having forms in Spanish and trying to recruit employees who are bilingual" (Interview, 2008). Superintendent Tomas stated, "We have to have two-way communication with all of our parents" (Interview, 2008).

The second factor that affected implementation was the involvement of parents in Title I decisions. Parents must be involved in every aspect of the Title I Plan, from the planning to the evaluation of the document. Superintendent Steed admitted to having "limited involvement from parents in Title I committees" (Interview, 2008). The urban and suburban superintendents did have parents listed as committee members on school district parental involvement documents provided to the researcher.

Third, Title I school districts and individual school sites are to include parents in discussions regarding Title I funds. School districts receiving $500,000 or more in Title I funds are required to allot 1% of the funds for parental involvement. Superintendent Steed admitted, "The district does receive more than $500,000, but had not spent 1% on parental involvement" (Interview, 2008). Superintendent Tomas provided documentation that between 1 – 2% of Title I funds were used for parental involvement. Superintendent Underwood provided budget figures for the last few years that indicated that 1% of Title I funds were used for parental involvement.

Fourth, in all three school districts, administrators initiated parental involvement programs and practices. In the rural district, Superintendent Steed emphasized, "Parents had limited roles in the schools, but were asked to participate in

field trips and volunteer as class aides" (Interview, 2008). In the urban district, Superintendent Tomas stated, "Parents are invited to participate in a multitude of activities to support their children's learning" (Interview, 2008). In the suburban district, Superintendent Underwood said, "Administrators seek out parents for participation in a wide range of activities, programs, and committees" (Interview, 2007). School district personnel led all three school districts' parental involvement policies, programs, and practices.

Finally, qualitative data indicated that implementation of parental involvement has been affected due to language barriers in the rural school district. Student populations in the three Oklahoma schools consisted of Whites, Native Americans, Hispanics, and African Americans. Superintendent Steed said, "Translators are not always available to communicate with non-English speaking parents; making communication extremely difficult" (Interview, 2008). Superintendents Tomas and Underwood shared that materials such as forms and student handbooks in Spanish were available to parents.

Explanation of Statistical Results through Qualitative Data

Research Question 2: How do the qualitative findings explain the statistical results addressed in the quantitative phase?

It has been asserted that in order to have a strong, valid study, qualitative data should be supported by numerical data. On the other hand, quantitative data should be backed up with intelligent in-depth insights. In this study, the qualitative data provided a clear picture of what the statistics connote. The statistical data were gathered from 167 rural, urban, and suburban school superintendents or designees, thus, it represents

different parental involvement perspectives of parental involvement as viewed through the lens of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) and NCLB Title I (2002) mandates. The qualitative data provided a deeper understanding of how each of three superintendents or designees worked to understand the parental involvement components of Title I and further elaborated on the factors, which proved to make implementation sometimes difficult in school districts. Juxtaposing numerical results from the survey and those from the interviews and parental involvement documentation provided counter validation from each primary data source.

The blending of the data from the quantitative and qualitative outcomes illustrated the varying results of NCLB's influence on the implementation of Title I parental involvement components based on Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (2002) in rural, suburban, and urban districts of Oklahoma. These findings suggested a need to define the expectations and procedures involved in its implementation. The rural school districts seemed to develop and implement the Title I parental involvement guidelines almost autonomously, while urban and suburban school districts were more concerned with federal guidelines and worked to integrate the parental involvement mandates. This difference alone could lead to numerous variations of its implementation and effect. Moreover, having an understanding of Title I parental involvement mandates is imperative. The rural superintendent's knowledge of the parent-school compact differed from the urban superintendent's view of the agreement.

The federal government and the State Department of Education should focus more attention on Title I parental involvement requirements in schools in order to lessen the varied implementation of the policy. Every school district has different needs, which

make standardization of parental involvement programs impossible, but more defined guidelines could help superintendents with implementation.

Implications and Recommendations

In an era of accountability with heightened pressure to improve the education of all students, there is a necessity for educational research to identify components related to student success. Decades of research have indicated that parental involvement can have a positive impact on students' achievement (Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993; Simon, 2000; Trusty, 1999; Sanders & Epstein, 2000). More recent research from a synthesis of studies analyzed by Anne Henderson and Karen Mapp, (2002) from the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL), suggested that when schools, families, and community organizations work together, children excel in school, stay in school longer, and enjoy school more.

Today's schools have been prompted by NCLB guidelines (2002) to examine how policies and program designs affect parental involvement (National PTA, 2000). Parental involvement under NCLB (2002) may seem straightforward, but it does not account for the complexity of schools and parent communities. Due to NCLB (2002), superintendents have an opportunity to develop and implement parental involvement policies, programs, and practices; while building partnerships with parents.

This study is not intended to suggest that if parental involvement policies, programs, and practices in Oklahoma school districts follow No Child Left Behind Title I guidelines (2002) and are based upon Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (2002), that alone will increase student achievement or improve schools it is only a piece of the puzzle. Nor is this study designed to imply that demographics alone denote

differences in the development and implementation of parental involvement policies, programs, and practices. If parental involvement policies, programs, and practices that are aligned with Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (2002) and NCLB Title I guidelines are sought, the findings of this mixed methods study present some practical implications for federal, state and local Title I directors, school boards, superintendents, educators, and parents.

Research by Joyce Epstein (2002) and the National Network of Partnership Schools concluded that for parental involvement to thrive, it must be clearly integrated into the school's programs. This study has affirmed Epstein's (2002) research and has documented that most Oklahoma public school districts in this sample are attempting to fulfill the NCLB Title I guidelines, but efforts still need to be made to embed components of parental involvement in all policies, programs, and practices, if reforms are to make a difference for our children. Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) was a starting point for policymakers in drafting NCLB (2002) mandates; superintendents must take the next steps by developing, implementing, and evaluating parental involvement policies, programs, and practices to meet the diverse needs of their school districts.

This study also questioned earlier research that suggested that rural schools had higher levels of parental involvement than urban or suburban schools (Dee Ha, & Jacob, 2006; Meier, 1996; Sun, Hobbs, & Elder, 1994; Sun, Hobbs & Elder, & Sun, 1997; Thorkildsen & Stein, 1998). Researchers suggested that rural parents would be more involved because their children attended a small K-12 school, rather than an urban

school, which covered a large area and made travel time alone a deterred families from becoming involved in school activities (Thorkildsen & Stein, 1998).

The outcomes of this mixed methods study revealed the understanding by rural, suburban, and urban superintendents or designees of NCLB's influence on the implementation of Title I parental involvement components based on Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002). It provided evidence of the need to define parental involvement expectations and procedures involved in its implementation. The study added to the research base for the development and implementation of policies and programs. It also added to the literature base for superintendents' perceptions of the influence of NCLB, specifically focusing on Epstein's six components of parental involvement. Quantitative results indicated that implementation of Epstein's framework (2002) varied in school districts, but NCLB guidelines were being met in most instances. Qualitative outcomes illustrated a deeper understanding of the research problem that could not have been gained without the interviews and school district parental involvement documentation. This study also added to the mixed methods research in education by elaborating on the sequential transformative design and integrating the two phases of the study. This study applied mixed methods research to education practices. Application of these findings could provide new perspectives to be examined further and could perhaps initiate state and local parental involvement systemic reform efforts.

The recommendations presented here reflect the findings of the study and detail ways that policy makers, state and local education agencies, school administrators and teachers could work together to meet the needs of students in schools through

partnerships with families. Policy makers should increase the percentage of funding for parental involvement. Many districts were allocating less than or equal to 1% of their Title I budgets to Title I parental involvement programs and practices.

The Oklahoma State Department of Education should develop and routinely monitor statewide accountability requirements and policies that measure all components of parental involvement in schools. School parental involvement outcomes should be available to patrons. Some school districts in the study were providing information in Spanish and Vietnamese and utilizing interpreters when available, but greater fluency among staff is needed to engage parents in substantial ways. Incentives and recruitment strategies should be provided to Spanish-speaking applicants from the state and local school boards to increase Spanish-fluent staff. State funding should also support non-English language in-service training programs for teachers. This training must focus on attitudes, knowledge, and skills for educators to improve relationships with parents. Communication in other languages should also be provided in school districts.

School districts and individual school sites should develop comprehensive district-wide parent involvement policies and plans, which include clear goals and objectives for increasing parental involvement. Objectives should be measurable and embedded in as many school policies, programs, and practices as possible. At least one parent coordinator per school district should be hired to work with individual school sites to integrate parental involvement components and activities. This coordinator would also use accountability measures provided by the state, to assess parental involvement in the schools. Two-way communication from school to home and home to school has to be systematic. Technology such as television, websites, grading and attendance software,

and emails should be utilized to communicate with parents. Volunteering results revealed that few parents were involved in school activities. School districts and school sites should schedule events and activities involving parents during times and days most convenient for parents. Schools could offer incentives and rewards for parents and families to participate in these activities. Professional development opportunities for teachers and staff should be provided by schools to share best practices for increasing parental involvement. Networking with institutions of higher learning to involve teachers in school and district levels with training and projects to increase parental involvement is an area that needs to be promoted. Quantitative results indicated that schools had limited PTA parent involvement. Parents should be recruited and given incentives to join and participate in this organization. Learning activities for parents to work with their children were limited in the quantitative results, but superintendents in urban and suburban district in the qualitative phase of the study cited examples of curricular-related events that were provided for parents. More efforts should be made to provide learning opportunities for educators and families and integrate these learning activities into school calendars. Community collaboration activities should also be increased for parents. Computer training, GED programs, and ELL services should be based on needs and organized in partnership with parents and communities. Parents should be expected to collaborate with school administrators, teachers, and staff to participate in committees and to be full partners providing input and making recommendations to local school boards.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future parental involvement studies could add to this study by examining parental involvement in rural, urban, and suburban school districts through additional

stakeholders' perceptions. Specifically, additional surveys and interviews with parents, teachers, students, state department of education Title I directors, policy makers, and community stakeholders could provide a deeper understanding of the influence of NCLB on parental involvement policies, programs, and practices. Further studies could also use direct observations of parental behavior with standardized data collection tools to give another measure of parental involvement.

Future research could isolate the effects of parental involvement; separating components of Epstein's Framework of Parent Involvement (1992, 1995, 2002) in order to assess each type's impact on the identified outcomes. Further research could also evaluate the different influences on each of the components of parental involvement policies, programs, and practices such as policymakers, state department of education personnel, parents, school administrators, teachers, and students. Research is also needed to expand the knowledge base on the benefits of parental involvement at school and parental involvement at home. The amount of parental involvement needed to produce positive student outcomes needs to be identified. Studies could attempt to determine the critical amount of parental involvement. Quality of parental involvement between parents and teachers and between parents and their children may also be an area of research that could also be explored.

Future researchers may want to examine the interrelationship of the components of parental involvement and its outcomes. For example, the different aspects of parent involvement at elementary, middle, and high school and the complexity of different types of involvement interacting or suppressing each other. In conclusion, future research could also focus on parent involvement and gender. For example, a hypothesis could be

generated that considers which components of parental involvement are more likely to benefit student achievement in girls rather than boys.

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APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF SECTION 1118 OF NCLB

Source:
Virginia Department of Education (n.d.) Title I School Parent Involvement Policy Checklist, retrieved on Jan 22, 2009 from Virginia Department of Education Website: www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Instruction/title1/sample_school_parent_involvement_policy_checklist.doc

NCLB Section	Parent Involvement Stipulation
Section 1118 (b) *School Parental Involvement Policy*	**write** a school parental involvement policy jointly developed with, and distributed to, parents with children participating in a Title I program. An existing school or a division parental involvement policy may be amended to include the requirements in Section 1118 (b) – (h).
Section 1118 (c)(1) *Policy Involvement*	**convene** at a convenient time, to which all parents of participating children shall be invited and encouraged to attend, to inform patents of their school's participation under this part and to explain the requirements of this part, and the right of the parents to be involved; (Required)
Section 1118 (c) (2)	**offer** flexible number of meetings, such as meetings in the morning or evening, and may provide, with funds provided under this part, transportation, child care, or home visits, as such services relate to parental involvement; (Required)
Section 1118 (c) (3)	**involve** parents, in an organized, ongoing, and timely way, in the planning, review, and improvement of programs under this part, including the planning, review, and improvement of the school parental involvement policy and the joint development of the schoolwide program plan under Section 1114(b)(2), except that if a school has in place a process for involving parents in the joint planning and design of the school's programs, the school may use that process, if such process includes an adequate representation of parents of participating children; (Required)
Section 1118 (c) (4) (A)	**provide** parents of participating children timely information; (Required)
Section 1118 (c) (4) (B)	**provide** parents of participating children a description and explanation of the curriculum in use at the school, the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, and the

	proficiency levels students are expected to meet; (Required)
Section 1118 (c) (4) (C)	**provide** parents of participating children, if requested by parents, opportunities for regular meetings to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children, and respond to any such suggestions as soon as practicably possible; (Required)
Section 1118 (c) (5)	**ensure** that if the schoolwide program plan under Section 1114(b)(2) is not satisfactory to the parents of participating children, submit any parent comments on the plan when the school makes the plan available to the local educational agency; (Required)
Section 1118 (d) (1) *Shared Responsibilities for High Student Academic Achievemen*t	**describe** the school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables the children served under this part to meet the state's student academic achievement standards, and the ways in which each parent will be responsible for supporting their children's learning, such as monitoring attendance, homework completion, and television watching; volunteering in their child's classroom; and participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children and positive use of extracurricular time; (Required)
Section 1118 (d) (2) (A)	**include** a schedule for elementary school parent-teacher conferences, at least annually, during which the compact shall be discussed as the compact relates to the individual child's achievement; (Required)
Section 1118 (d) (2) (B)	**provide** frequent reports to parents on their children's progress; (Required)
Section 1118 (d) (2) (C)	**afford** parents, of children receiving Title I services, reasonable access to staff, opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class, and observation of classroom activities; (Required)
Section 1118 (e) (1) *Building Capacity for Involvement*	**shall provide** assistance to parents of children served by the school or local educational agency, as appropriate, in understanding such topics as the state's academic content standards and state student academic achievement standards, state and local academic assessments, the requirements of this part, and how to monitor a child's progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their children; (Required)
Section 1118 (e) (2)	**shall provide** materials and training to help parents to work with

	their children to improve their children's achievement, such as literacy training and using technology, as appropriate, to foster parental involvement; (Required)
Section 1118 (e) (3)	**shall**, with the assistance of parents, educate teachers, pupil services personnel, principals, and other staff in the value and the utility of parents' contributions. Educators should also receive guidance in ways to reach out to parents; to communicate with them; to work with them as equal partners; to implement and coordinate parent programs; and to build ties between parents and the school; (Required)
Section 1118 (e) (4)	**shall**, to the extent feasible and appropriate, coordinate and integrate parental involvement programs and activities with Head Start, Reading First, Early Reading First, Even Start, the Home Instruction Programs for Preschool Youngsters, the Parents as Teachers Program, and public preschool and other programs, and conduct other activities, such as parent resource centers, that encourage and support parents in more fully participating in the education of their children; (Required)
Section 1118 (e) (5)	**shall** ensure that information related to school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities is sent to the parents of participating children in a format, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand; (Required)
Section 1118 (e) (6)	**may** involved parents in the development of training for teachers, principals, and other educators to improve the effectiveness of such training; (Not Required)
Section 1118 (e) (7)	**may** provide literacy training from funds received under this part if the local educational agency has exhausted all other reasonably available sources of funding for such training; (Not Required)
Section 1118 (e) (8)	**may** pay reasonable and necessary expenses associated with local parental involvement activities, including transportation and child care costs, to enable parents to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions; (Not Required)
Section 1118 (e) (9)	may train parents to enhance the involvement of other parents; (Not Required)
Section 1118 (e) (10)	**may** arrange school meetings at a variety of times, or conduct in-home conferences between teachers or other educators, who work directly with participating children, with parents who are unable to attend such conferences at school, in order to

	maximize parental involvement and participation; (Not Required)
Section 1118 (e) (11)	**may** adopt and implement model approaches to improve parental involvement; (Not Required)
Section 1118 (e) (12)	**may** establish a district-wide parent advisory council to provide advice on all matters related to parental involvement in programs supported under this section; (Not Required)
Section 1118 (e) (13)	**may** develop appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses in parent involvement activities; (Not Required)
Section 1118 (e) (14)	**shall** provide such other reasonable support for parental involvement activities under this section as parents may request; (Required)
Section 1118 (f) *Accessibility*	**shall provide** full opportunities for the participation of parents with limited English proficiency, parents with disabilities, and parents of migratory children, including providing information and school reports required under Section 1111 in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language such parents understand, in carrying out parental involvement policy in the school division and in the schools; (Required)

APPENDIX B

PARENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to examine mandated parental involvement programs in Oklahoma public schools. These programs have been legislated by state (HB 1017; HB 1549) and federal government (No Child Left Behind Act, (2002) to involve parents in school processes and decisions. This survey will evaluate the link between parents and schools using Joyce Epstein's (1992, 1995, 2002) School, Family, and Community Involvement Framework.

Your participation will involve responding to a series of survey questions and should only take about 10-15 minutes. Your responses are a vital component of this research study and will provide a more accurate description of parent involvement in Oklahoma. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time. The results of our study may be published, but your name will not be linked to responses in publications that are released from the project. In fact, the published results will be presented in summary form only. All information you provide will remain strictly confidential.

DIRECTIONS: Please check the selection that most closely matches your answer for each item. Please give written details about answers in the lines provided. **Thank you for completing this survey!**

SCHOOL DISTRICT INFORMATION

1. For the purposes of this survey, I am responding as a(n):

___superintendent ___asst. superintendent ___federal programs director

___other educational leader (specify_____)

2. My school district's student population is:

___0-150 ___151-300 ___301-500 ___501-2500 ___2501-5000 ___5001-10,000

___ above 10,000

3. I consider my school district to be:

___rural ___suburban ___urban

4. Does your school district receive Title I federal funding?

___yes ___no

5. Does your school district have a written parent involvement policy(s)?

___yes ___no

6. Does your school district have a program(s) supporting parent involvement policies?

___yes ___no

Please list specific programs supporting parent involvement policies:

_____

_____

7. Does your school district train staff to work with parents?

___yes ___no

Please list specific training provided to staff members:

_____

8. What percentage of your district budget is allocated for parental involvement?

___less than 1% ___1 – 5% ___over 5%

9. Does your school district provide annual student performance report cards detailing the performance of the school district and individual schools?

___yes ___no

10. Does your school district notify parents if your schools fall into the *needs improvement, corrective action, or restructured categories?*

___yes ___no

COMMUNICATION

11a. Please indicate the method(s) used to communicate with parents about student progress and programs.

___School/PTA newsletter ___TV ___newspaper ___website ___email

___other_____

11b. Please indicate the method(s) used to inform parents about Title I programs?

___School/PTA newsletter ___TV ___newspaper ___website ___email

___other_____

12. Are written communications provided in languages other than English?

___no ___yes, (specify other languages:_____)

13. Does your school district provide translators, when needed, for:
Parent conferences?

___yes ___no

13a Private individual meetings?

___yes ___no

13b. When requested by parent?

___yes ___no

13c. Title I meetings?

___yes ___no

VOLUNTEERING

14. What percentage of parents volunteer within your school district each year?

___0 ___1 – 5% ___6 – 10% ___11- 30% ___31 – 50% ___51 – 75%

___76 – 100%

15. In what ways do parents volunteer within your school district?

_____

_____

PARENTING

16. Last year, did your school district provide workshops or courses to help parents understand and work with children?

___yes ___no

16a. If yes, approximately how many workshops or courses did your school district provide for parents on parenting skills (e.g. discipline, child development, etc) last year?

___1 ___2-3 ___4-5 ___6 or more

16b. Please specify workshops or courses:

_____

17. Are workshops or courses provided in different languages?

___No, workshops are only in English

___Yes, workshops are in different languages (specify other languages: _____

_____

LEARNING AT HOME

18. Does your school district provide parents with information related to home learning activities?

___yes ___no ___do not know

19. Does your school district have a written homework policy? If so, how is the information communicated to parents?

___no ___yes (specify methods of communication:

_____

20. Does your school district provide workshops to help parents work with their children on learning activities?

____yes ___no

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

21. Does your school district provide any of the following support programs for families of diverse educational and linguistic backgrounds?

    GED programs?

    ___yes ___no

    English–as-a-second-language programs?

    ___yes ___no

    Computer training programs?

    ___yes ___no

    Other support programs

(specify_____)

22. Does your school district link parents with social services (e.g. social workers, psychologists, health services, drug awareness programs, outside services or agencies)?

    ___yes ___no

Please specify services that are provided:

_____

DECISION MAKING

23. Estimate what percentage of parents are active in parent-teacher organizations (PTA, PTO) across your district?

    ___0 – 10% ___11 – 25% ___26 – 50% ___51% - 75% ___76% - 100%

24. Are parents involved in district councils and/or committees?

    ___yes ___no

25. Are parents involved in individual school site councils and/or committees?

    ___yes ___no

26. Are parents involved in Title I planning, implementation and evaluation of programs?

___yes ___no

27. Please list any other ways that your school district involves parents in decision making.

_____

_____

Please send any parent involvement policies or program information from your school district electronically to dmorris@norman.k12.ok.us or mail to Dana Morris, 7250 Nutmeg Drive, Norman, OK 73026.

I will also be including follow-up interviews in my study. If you are comfortable being contacted for a follow-up interview, please list your name, school district, phone number, and Email address in the spaces provided. **Thank you for your help with this study!**

Name_____

School District_____

Phone Number_____

Email address_____

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Cover Letter
Confidential Survey

August 9, 2005

Dear _____:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Gregg Garn in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department at The University of Oklahoma-Norman Campus. I invite you to participate in a research study being conducted under the auspices of the University of Oklahoma-Norman Campus entitled Examining Mandated Parent Involvement Programs in Oklahoma School Districts IRB # 05-193

The purpose of this study is to examine mandated parental involvement programs in Oklahoma public schools. These programs have been legislated by the state of Oklahoma (HB 1017; HB 1549) as well as the federal government (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001) to involve parents in school processes and decisions. This study will determine if parent involvement policies and programs exist and for what purposes. The study will evaluate the link between parents and schools using Joyce Epstein's (1992, 1995, 2001) School, Family, and Community Involvement Framework.

Oklahoma school superintendents both men and women ages 18 – 80 will be surveyed about their experiences with parent involvement policies and programs within their local public school districts. Your participation will involve responding to a series of survey questions and should only take about 10 minutes. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time. The results of our study may be published, but your name will not be linked to responses in publications that are released from the project. In fact, the published results will be presented in summary form only. All information you provide will remain strictly confidential.

The findings from this project will provide information on policies and programs linking parents to schools with no cost to you other than the time it takes to complete the survey. If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call Dana Morris at (405) 447-5305 or email dmorris@norman.k12.ok.us or Dr. Gregg Garn at (405) 325-6832 or e-mail at garn@ou.edu. Questions about your rights as a research participant or concerns about the project should be directed to the Institutional Review Board at The University of Oklahoma-Norman Campus at (405) 325-8110 or irb@ou.edu

By returning this questionnaire in the envelope provided, you will be agreeing to participate in the above described project.

Thanks for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Dana Morris

OU Doctoral Student

APPENDIX D

Letter of Permission – Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium

May 12, 2009

Dana Morris
7250 Nutmeg Drive
Norman, OK 73026

Dear Ms. Morris:

You have the permission of the Mid –Atlantic Equity Consortium, Inc. to use the Parent Involvement Survey for your dissertation.

Sincerely,

Susan Shaffer, Vice President
The Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, Inc.

The Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, Inc • 5272 River Road, Suite 340 • Bethesda, MD 20816 • 301-657-7741 • 301-657-8782 (fax)

APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol

Superintendent

Date:

Name:

Age:

1. Please identify the years you served as a school administrator?

2. Please describe the demographics of the school district. Student population? Ethnicity? Free and Reduced Lunch percentage?

3. How does the school district involve parents? What policies and programs involve parents and support student success? Please discuss.

4. Does this school district receive Title I funding? What percentage of that funding is used to involve parents?

5. What does the term school-parent compact (NCLB) mean to you and this district?

6. How are parents made aware of state standards and assessments? Please discuss.

7. Are materials provided to parents to assist with learning at home? If so, please discuss.

8. How does the district communicate with families who do not speak English? Are materials provided in other languages?

9. What role does the school board and or administrators play in parent involvement programs and policies?

10. What types of professional development opportunities are provided to educators regarding parent involvement? Please discuss.

11. Has the Oklahoma State Dept. of Education ever monitored or evaluated your school district's parent involvement policy or program?

12. Do you believe that parent involvement is valued by board members and administrators? Why? Or Why not?

APPENDIX F

University of Oklahoma
Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Project Title:	Examining Mandated Parent Involvement Programs in Oklahoma School Districts
Principal Investigator:	Dana Morris
Department:	Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

You are being asked to volunteer for this research study. This study is being conducted under the auspices of the University of Oklahoma-Norman Campus. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an educational leader in the state of Oklahoma.

Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Purpose of the Research Study

The purpose of this study is to examine mandated parental involvement programs in Oklahoma public schools. These programs have been legislated by the state of Oklahoma (HB 1017; HB 1549) as well as the federal government No Child Left Behind Act, 2001, (2002) to involve parents in school processes and decisions. This study will determine if parent involvement programs exist and for what purposes. The study will evaluate the link between parents and schools using Joyce Epstein's (1992, 1995, 2002) School, Family, and Community Involvement Framework.

Number of Participants

A rural, suburban, and urban educational leader will be interviewed about their experiences with parent involvement policies and programs within their local public school districts.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

Your participation will involve answering a series of interview questions. The interview will be audiotape recorded. It should only take about 1–2 hours. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time. The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used. In fact, the published results will be presented in summary form only.

You will not be identifiable by name or city in any project publications. You will be identified by number and pseudonym on the audiotape transcripts and on the audiotape labels. Dana L. Morris will personally transcribe all audiotapes to ensure confidentiality. Pseudonyms will be used to identify all participants within the research document or other project publications. You will be identifiable only on the audiotapes of the interviews and only insofar as you identify yourself. Dana L. Morris will keep the audiotapes in her possession or in her home. The audiotapes will not be available to non-project personnel.

Length of Participation

It should only take about 1–2 hours. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time.

This study has the following risks:

No foreseeable risks beyond those present in everyday life are anticipated. You are free not to participate in this study. Your participation is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in this research study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. To participate in this study, you must be at least 18 years of age and not older than 80 years of age.

Benefits of being in the study are

None

Confidentiality

In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify you without your permission. Research records will be stored securely and only approved researchers will have access to the records.

There are organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis. These organizations include the OU Educational Leadership department under the direction of Dr. Gregg Garn and the OU Institutional Review Board.

Compensation

You will not be reimbursed for you time and participation in this study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you withdraw or decline participation, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the study. If you decide to participate, you may decline to answer any question and may choose to withdraw at any time.

Audio Recording of Study Activities

To assist with accurate recording of participant responses, interviews may be recorded on an audio recording device. You have the right to refuse to allow such recording without penalty. Please select one of the following options.

I consent to audio recording. ___ Yes ___ No.

Contacts and Questions

If you have concerns or complaints about the research, the researcher(s) conducting this study can be contacted at (405) 447-5305, or e-mail dmorris@ norman.k12.ok.us or Dr. Gregg Garn at (405) 325-6832 or e-mail at garn@ou.edu. Questions about your rights as a research participant or concerns about the project should be directed to the Institutional Review Board at the University of Oklahoma-Norman Campus at (405) 325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Contact the researcher(s) if you have questions or if you have experienced a research-related injury.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than individuals on the research team or if you cannot reach the research team, you may contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records. If you are not given a copy of this consent form, please request one.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received satisfactory answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature	Date