Exploring the relationship between parental involvement levels and the level of children's academic achievement

Nancy Rae Zaragoza

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EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT LEVELS AND THE LEVEL OF CHILDREN'S ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Nancy Rae Zaragoza
June 2001
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ABSTRACT

This study addressed the problem of academic achievement and the issue of parental involvement in boosting academic achievement levels. Understanding the problem of soliciting parent involvement may aid students, teachers, and parents in the quest for better education.

Data were obtained from parents of the clientele at the Riverside Youth Service Center. By using bivariate analysis, levels of parental involvement and children's academic achievement levels were compared. One hundred-fifty families from the youth service center were mailed survey questionnaires regarding their participation in their children's education.

This research project may be able to help determine which levels of parental involvement are the most utilized, and may give insight into areas the schools can work on in developing parental involvement programs.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The current study addressed children’s academic achievement and the issue of parental involvement in boosting academic achievement levels.

Since 1983 when the National Commission on Excellence in Education issued its report, “A Nation at Risk,” education became a top priority again. The schools became every political candidates area for reform. Progress was made in clarifying goals, shaping the academic core, and giving attention to teachers (Altback, Kelly, & Weis, 1985). However, school budgets still need to be adequately addressed, and better ways to educate all students, including disadvantaged students must be examined. Among the issues that should be addressed is the need to acknowledge parents as full partners in the educational process.

Many educators are coming to realize how important parental involvement is to success in school. A 1986 United States Department of Education study concluded that the curriculum of the home is twice as predictive of academic learning as socioeconomic status (Canter, 1991). Teachers need parental support and commitment. Parents are the most important people in their child’s life. Their love,
support, and approval are a fundamental need of all children and because parents are number one in importance, they are also in the number one position to influence and motivate their children.

A 1989 Instructor magazine asked educators to name one thing that they would consider important to communicate to national policy makers concerning effective ways to raise student achievement. The answer most given was "More parental involvement," (Haug & Wright, 1991). The 1985 Gallup survey of teachers also stated that 90% did not feel that they got the parental support they needed and lack of parental support was a top problem facing education today (Canter, 1991). Thus, there appears to be a discrepancy between what educators consider important and what parents contribute.

Educators today are called upon to teach children who come from a number of backgrounds and socioeconomic levels. More and more children have behavioral and academic challenges. While parents and their situations may be different, each and every one could be a positive factor in shaping and motivating their child at school. Parental assistance is a resource that needs to be tapped and cultivated.

Joyce Epstein of John Hopkins University studied teachers who adamantly sought parental involvement. She
found there were positive changes in student achievement, attitude, and behavior when teachers included parents as part of their regular teaching practices. The students also reported having a more positive attitude towards school and school work (Canter, 1991).

Understanding this problem of soliciting parent involvement in the classroom may aid students, parents, and teachers in the quest for better education. Pressures for academic achievement and performance on Sat 9 scores (Scholastic Achievement Test) are growing even greater. Currently in California, these tests may determine if children pass or fail at their current grade levels (Linn, 2000). Meanwhile the meager educational budgets do not help to create resources or atmosphere for better education, not to mention giving more incentive or higher salaries to teachers.

William Glasser (best known for Reality Therapy) says in his book, Schools Without Failure, that children may more easily overcome other obstacles (even being underprivileged) in life if school failure does not exist (1975). The well known correlation between lack of education and lack of adequate income is becoming more apparent in today's world (Berger, 1991).
CHAPTER TWO

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The National Commission on Excellence in Education conducted studies in the early 1980's to review the state of the nation's schools. According to their studies, "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might have viewed it as an act of war." (Altback, et. al., 1985). The Twentieth Century Fund task force was hardly less apocalyptic when they wrote that continued failure by the schools to perform their traditional roles adequately would have disastrous consequences for this nation. The National Science Board panel said that large numbers of young Americans are ill equipped to work in, contribute to, and profit from, and enjoy our increasingly technological society (Altback, et. al., 1985).

Scholastic Achievement Test scores have shown a continued decline since the 1970's, because the schools could not provide for all the demands placed upon them. Mathematics SAT scores decreased by 3.6 percentage points between 1973 and 1980 as well as SAT scores in other areas for all High School students. According to the authors of Excellence in Education, the school system since the 1960's and 1970's have been expected to not only teach children,
but also solve racial discrimination issues, socialize generations of new immigrants, and work out social policies such as church-state relations, and sex education policies (Altback, et. al., 1985).

New programs for the handicapped, the gifted, and other educational improvements were launched with much hope in the 1960’s and 70’s. As new social functions and programs were added to the educational agenda, funding for these programs were being cut (Altback, et. al., 1985).

Since the mid 1980’s, the series of negative reports on the state of the nation’s schools spurred a reform movement. School reform is now at the top of the nation’s agenda. The demands for academic achievement have increased. Children in California must pass “Sat 9” examinations each year or risk being held back at the same grade level. Studies, according to Harrington and Young (1993) show parent participation greatly aids academic achievement in all types of communities; rich, poor, and for all races and ethnicities. Harrington and Young also state that other positive pay off for children of involved parents are increased self esteem, fewer behavioral problems, and improved school attendance.

The importance of parent involvement in education is not a new concept. During the 1960’s parent education and collaboration programs began with federal programs such as
Head Start. The emerging alliance between school and home came from the recognition that schools need the support of parents for optimum success. During this period, parent involvement in programs were supported by the federal government, and many new programs were developed to increase parent involvement.

Schools, students, and parents face new challenges in the future to work together to provide the necessary education and support the children need. The Consortium for Longitudinal Studies (1983) composed of early childhood researchers found that such programs enhanced student's school performance. Parent involvement in early to middle childhood improved competency, improved achievement in adolescence, and resulted in greater education and occupation attainment.

Today, new demands for academic achievement are accompanied by greater social problems. Increases in teenage pregnancy rates have resulted in large populations of youth who need help financially and educationally in rearing their own children. Young parents have great difficulty making a living above the poverty level (Berger, 1991). Young parents need educational and organizational skills to gain successful employment. Education has been shown to increase job success through improved knowledge and job related skills, and indirectly through enhancement of
coping skills. When both parents are working outside the home the responsibility is placed on the school to teach both parents and students. Increases in the use of new technology have reduced the number of job opportunities for untrained, uneducated people. Parents with a higher level of education are more likely to have a self sufficient income (Berger, 1991). The split between the middle class and under class has grown. The challenge for the future is clear.

Children are the nation's future and the future lies in the acknowledgement by society and schools that parents must be involved with their children's education if our society is to continue to flourish (Berger, 1991). Strong parent-teacher collaboration is necessary to ensure continuity in care and education and support for children of all income levels.

Does parent participation really aid academic achievement? Findings of this study (done on a local level) may help to make clearer the necessity of harnessing parent power. Perhaps new parent participation programs can be initiated as a result of this study.
CHAPTER THREE
LITERATURE REVIEW

During the 1980's, the Federal Office of Education gave support for home-school collaboration. A number of programs worked specifically with parents. Gott's Longitudinal Research report of Home Oriented Preschool Education (Hope) (1989) was very promising, finding that parents were helpful and that participation in Hope's home visitor treatment resulted in more favorable outcomes in parenting, school-family relations, school performance and children's adjustment (Berger, 1991). The Consortium for Longitudinal Studies (1983) found that many parent participation programs enhanced school performance through early to middle childhood, or through a child's most formative school years (Berger, 1991).

According to the Coleman Report (1966), and Mosteller and Moyihens (1972) reanalysis of the Coleman Report, over half to two-thirds of the student achievement variance was accounted for by home variables. The conclusions of the Coleman Report were derived from student achievement tests. The inequality of the results of these achievement tests from impoverished schools as compared with schools in "good" or "favored" communities led to these findings in the report: The first finding is that schools are similar in the
way they relate to the achievement of their pupils when the socioeconomic background of the students is taken into account. Altogether, the sources of inequality and educational opportunity appear to lie first in the home itself and the cultural influences immediately surrounding the home, and in the school’s cultural homogeneity which perpetuates the social influences of the home and its environment (Brandwein, 1981).

Three important parental influences on children’s adjustment to school are parental expectations of school success, cognitive stimulation that a child receives at home, and parent-child interactions. Parents who expect their children to do well at school often have better performing children. Evidence consistently indicates that cognitive stimulation at home is related to a child’s school performance (Belsky & MacKinnon, 1994). Families who engaged in more teaching at home and who provided toys, games, and books, had children who outperformed their age mates in reading and writing early in their school years. Parent’s parenting styles, their level of warmth in interacting with their children significantly predicted children’s Kindergarten school achievement (Belsky & MacKinnon, 1994).

Suggestions for parent participation programs were offered in publications from the U.S. Department of

1. Read to children at least twenty minutes a day. Regular reading is one of the most important activities parents can do with their children to improve school readiness (Lunenburg & Irby, 1999).

2. Keep good books, magazines, and newspapers in the home. Make it easy for children to find something interesting to read (Lunenburg & Irby, 1999).

3. Add to children’s enjoyment of reading by discussing the books they read. Offer computer-assisted games that promote language, writing, mathematics, and thinking.

4. Make sure children see their parents or caregivers read for twenty minutes a day. Remember parents are a child’s first teacher (Lunenburg & Irby, 1999).

5. If a parent has difficulty reading, tell children stories. In some cultures storytelling plays a
larger role than reading books aloud (Lunenburg & Irby, 1999).

6. Limit children's television viewing to no more than two hours. Discuss the television program with the child (Lunenburg & Irby, 1999).

7. Know what homework is expected from teachers and make sure children complete it. Provide children a quiet, regular place to study (Lunenburg & Irby, 1999).

8. Demonstrate commitment to high standards. Have high expectations and remember the goal is a good education, not a good report card. Encourage your children, "You can do it!" Words can be strengthening or demoralizing (Lunenburg & Irby, 1999).

9. Support school efforts to maintain discipline. Children thrive in an environment where they know what is expected of them (Lunenburg & Irby, 1999).

10. Help children find interest in learning outside of the school day (Lunenburg & Irby, 1999).

These points are important because they relate specifically to the kinds of activities parents participate in at home. Parents can be of more assistance to their children if they have a framework of suggestions to guide them. There are many levels of parent involvement and each
is important in its own way. One of the first is the commitment of the parents to the necessity of schooling for their children and an understanding of the influence that this has on the child's own commitment. Ira Gordon, as cited in Berger (1991), pointed out three central themes common to parent involvement programs for middle class and mainstream parents: 1) The home is important and basic for human development, 2) parents need help in creating the most effective home environment for development, 3) the early years of life are important for lifelong development.

Parents may be aiding their child to a lifetime of school success by creating early learning habits that are stable over a period of the child's academic career (Belsky & MacKinnon, 1994).

Gordon suggested three approaches for parent involvement and parent education: The family impact model, the school impact model, and the community impact model.

The family impact model was designed to work with family members to enable them to cope with the social and educational systems. The model assumed that the family wants to participate in the system, but does not know how to socialize and help their children acquire the necessary prerequisites for success so parent education is offered. The school impact model was defined as one based on teachers learning from parents and vice versa. Teachers needed to
learn new attitudes toward parents, new skills in communication and group processes and sharing. Gordon’s community impact model is comprehensive but is the most difficult for the more powerless to initiate or implement (Berger, 1991). However, some schools are moving to form alliances with other agencies such as health agencies to provide health and education services for families such as the King/Drew Medical Center in the Watts District of Los Angeles that offer a variety of family health, nutritional, and educational support (Berger, 1991).

Schools and parents face working together to provide the education and support children need. Parents must continue to become involved with schools and schools must continue to reach out to parents. According to Epstein and Dauber (1991), parents participation in the schools include at least five levels of involvement.

1. Basic obligations of families include providing children’s health and safety, developing parental skills and child rearing practices that prepare children for school and maintain healthy development across the grades (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Parents need to build positive home conditions that support school learning and behavior through the school years (Berger, 1991). Schools can assist families to develop the
knowledge and skills needed to understand their children at each grade level through workshops, home visitors, family support programs. This level of parental involvement is probably the most influential to a child's school success.

2. Basic obligations of schools include communications with families about school programs and children's progress. This includes memos, notices, phone calls, report cards, and parent conferences (Berger, 1991; Haug & Wright, 1991; Kirshbaum, 1991).

3. Involvement at school includes parents and other volunteers who assist teachers. It also includes family members who come to school for student performances or sports events. Schools can improve recruitment and provide training so volunteers are more helpful to teachers, students and school efforts (Berger, 1991; Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

4. Involvement in learning activities at home include requests and guidance from teachers for parents to assist their children at home on learning activities that are coordinated with the children's class work (Johnson, 1997). Schools assist families on how to help their child by
providing information on skills required of students to pass their grade (Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

5. Involvement in decision making, governance, and advocacy, includes parents in participatory roles in the parent-teacher association, or advisory councils. Schools assist by training parent leaders in ways to communicate to the large body of parents they represent, and by providing information for school improvement (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Schools should help create programs that provide access to community and other support services.

A parent is a child’s first teacher. Parental love and approval are fundamental needs for every child. Parental approval is a very powerful motivator for a child’s learning development. This approval provides the basic positive reinforcement children require for optimal learning (Canter, 1991). The warm, safe friendly home environment first helps the children learn how to learn. Studies have shown that the more children feel at home in school, the more they learn (Kirshbaum, 1997; Santrock, 1967). So it makes sense that if children feel their teachers and parents are working together and school is an extension of home they feel more connected to their school and are more successful learners.
Parents are naturally interested in their children, but parents may have to be persuaded to become involved in their child's educational world. In a typical elementary classroom teachers have perhaps a maximum of five minutes per day giving students individual attention on reading or math skills. When a parent can spend fifteen minutes a night helping his or her child, they are tripling the amount of individual attention a child receives (Canter, 1991). After kindergarten most parents gradually start to lose touch with the school and their child's education. As parents struggle to keep up with their own hectic schedules, fewer and fewer feel they have time for their families at all (Kirshbaum, 1998). Kirshbaum says in her book, Parent Power, that only 3% of employed parents meet frequently to discuss school progress. Only 52% attend regular school activities, and only 36% of employed parents help with homework.

Temple University Professor Laurence Steihberg had a team of researchers who surveyed 20,000 teenagers and their parents (Kirshbaum, 1998). The Steihberg study discovered that being an involved parent leads to student success. If two students were seen one year with equal grades they were followed over the course of that year and it was found that
the student whose parents remained most involved earned the better grades. Yet half of the students polled said they could bring home grades of below "C" without their parents getting upset; one third of the students said their parents had no idea how they were doing in school, and only one-fifth of parents consistently attended school programs, while forty percent never did (Kirshbaum, 1998). Parents must be made aware of their influence over their child’s learning success. Many parents do not seem to be aware of the influence they have over their children or how to use their influence to their best advantage. Teachers can guide parents towards positive reinforcement techniques that will motivate their child to greater success in school (Canter, 1991). The U.S. Department of Education found evidence for potential involvement leading to student success so strong it launched a comprehensive campaign in 1994 called Partnership for Family Involvement in Education (Kirshbaum, 1998).

The Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education released a book which features 20 Title I programs (governmental education programs.) These Title I programs (1997) used strategies to overcome barriers to parent involvement. Among the Title I programs that are the focus of "Family Involvement in Children’s Education: Successful Local Approaches"; The
Atenville Elementary School Program is a good example of a well designed parent involvement program. Although the rural coal mining community in West Virginia struggled with poverty and unemployment, the Parents as Educational Partners Program (PEP) began in the 1991-92 school year. In the Spring of 1991, Atenville applied to work with the Parent/Teacher Action Research Project at the Institute for Responsible Education. This partnership led to the development of the PEP Program (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2000).

The major components of this program included a "telephone tree" staffed by parent volunteers, a home visiting program, a parent coordinator, and the Atenville Family Center. Transportation was arranged for parents for conferences or the principal and teachers met parents "where they were" and began home visits for people who had difficulty coming to the school building. Other home visits averaged 20 per year to families with difficulties and were conducted by the school's parent coordinator and telephone tree coordinator. The telephone tree helped families communicate with school personnel as well as with each other. All parent coordinators and telephone tree coordinators were given training and training sessions were made available either day or evening to parents who had varied schedules (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2000).
Restructuring the school to support family involvement included assessing family needs, and designing a family center to serve as parent volunteer headquarters which maximized parent decision making. The school also hired a parent volunteer.

Although the PEP Program is funded by Title I Goals 2000 and IRE, Atenville has also established other partnerships to meet family needs, such as with the local community college, and a mobile health unit. The positive results of this program have been that parents have volunteered 7,000 hours during the 1995 school year, compared with 2,000 during the 1991 year. Nearly half the parents in 1995 participated in the annual volunteer training. Student achievement has increased. Atenville’s third and sixth graders scored in the 59th and 58th on the 1991 CTBS (Comprehensive Test on Basic Skills). In 1996, third graders were in the 71st percentile, and the sixth graders were up to 68th percentile. In addition, sixth graders who said they believed they would graduate and go to college grew from 72% to 79%. Suspensions have decreased from 12 in 1991, to 3 yearly since then (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2000).

Given such a wealth of research on the merits of parent involvement programs, it is reasonable to assume that strong parent involvement programs are a necessity in the school
system, but there are some barriers to these programs being adequately implemented. A study done by Epstein and Dauber of John Hopkins University (1991), uses data from 171 teachers in eight inner city elementary and middle schools to examine the connections between school programs of parent involvement and teachers' attitudes, and the practices teachers use to involve parents of their own students. Patterns were examined at two levels of schooling, elementary and middle, under various classroom organizations, and under different levels of shared support for parental involvement by the teachers.

Some findings of this study showed that the greater discrepancies between teachers' beliefs about their own and parent support for involvement are linked to weaker programs of parent involvement methods, with the exception of communications. Many of the teachers with students of below average ability and with more departmentalized programs showed greater discrepancies. These teachers believe they are more supportive than are the parents. When teachers differ culturally and educationally from their students or they teach large numbers of students, they are less likely to know parents and are more likely to believe parents are disinterested.

If teachers believe parents are less supportive than they are, teachers report that the schools have fewer
workshops, develop fewer methods to involve parents in
learning activities at home, and give fewer opportunities
for parental decision making (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). If
the teachers believe that "hard to reach" parents are not
interested in becoming involved with their children's
schooling, teachers make fewer efforts to contact them,
especially on more difficult types of involvement such as
involving parents in learning activities at home. Highly
discrepant environments where teachers believe they differ
in attitudes from others at school are less likely to
support strong comprehensive programs of parent involvement.
Less discrepant environments where teachers see themselves
as similar to their own school administrators, colleagues,
and parents, are more likely to support strong school
programs and encourage strong teacher attitudes and
practices (Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

The current research study used a humanistic,
person-centered approach towards education and parent
involvement. This approach supports the belief that parents
and their children are eager and willing to change and grow.
A natural human trait is the desire for knowledge (Combs,
1971; Maslow, 1968; Roberts, 1975). Physical, emotional,
and intellectual growth is a natural process which involves
learning and the fulfillment of the whole person. Maslow's
Needs Hierarchy Theory of Motivation posits the desire for
being with others, for competence and recognition, and for self actualization (1968). The humanistic approach to education emphasizes possibilities for positive growth. This human potential approach searches for abilities people can develop and focuses on helping them to develop these abilities. These can include social and interpersonal abilities. The focus is on finding satisfaction with one's self and one's life, and society (Combs, 1971; Maslow, 1968; Roberts, 1975).

The current study involving parental participation differed from some other studies in that it surveyed the parents, not the educators, to explore what levels of activities of parent involvement had the most impact on a child's academic achievement. The current study helped to determine which levels of parent involvement are the most utilized in the local area, and may give some insight into areas the local schools can work on in developing parental involvement programs. The levels of parental involvement which will most likely be useful in determining higher academic achievement levels are the basic obligations of families level, and the basic obligations of school's level of involvement. The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between levels of parental involvement and children's academic achievement. Does parental involvement aid children's academic achievement?
The hypothesis of the study is that the parental involvement levels and their activities at the basic obligations of families involvement level, and the basic obligation of school's level of involvement, will be the predictors of children's higher academic achievement.
CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this study was a cross sectional survey design. Self-administered questionnaires were mailed to parents who are obtaining service at Riverside Youth Service Center. This survey used the parents as the main source of the data for the study. Parents were asked questions regarding their levels of involvement with their children’s educational process, and also were asked their children’s academic achievement level evidenced by grades most received at school.

Sample

The sample from which the data were obtained for this study was drawn from parents who are clients at Riverside Youth Service Center. This sample was a sample of 150 parents, taken from the parent population of the Riverside Youth Service Center. One hundred-fifty surveys were mailed, and 19 were returned, representing a 13% return rate. The sample population was chosen in order to explore the ways that parents participate in their children’s education and to what extent these aid the children’s academic achievement.

The sample size was relatively small due to the realistic expectations that the response rate to the mailed

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survey might be relatively low and therefore require many more mailings than are returned. The data that were collected were data concerning the levels of parent involvement in their children's education and how this affected the children's educational achievement levels.

Instruments

The levels of parental involvement were assessed through a mailed survey by asking four questions on the survey representative of each of the five category levels of parental involvement. These five levels/categories of parental involvement are:

1. Basic home care obligations; place to do homework, parent making sure children are well fed, have enough sleep.
2. Parent / School communications; school conferences, phone calls, report cards.
3. Parent assisting teacher in classroom; parent attending performances at school.
4. Parent involvement in learning activities at home.
5. Parent involvement in Parent-Teacher Organization or any decision making groups at the child's school.

The responses to these questions were measured on a ordinal Likert type scale, in other words a question
representative of Level 1 Basic home obligations was asked; My child gets adequate sleep each night (nine hours.)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
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The dependent variable, the children's academic achievement level, was measured on an ordinal scale. Data was obtained by the parent's self-report of their children's grades: My child's grades are mostly?

F D C B A
1 2 3 4 5

Additional spaces were available for additional children.

The utilization of the levels of parental involvement were compared with the reported academic grade levels achieved by the child (children) by using the Pearson's r to determine a bivariate correlation.

Other independent variables that were included in this study are the child's age level and were measured by a continuous level of measurement and child's sex measured by nominal categories: 1) Male, and 2) Female.

This survey was created to explore the relationships between levels of parent involvement and children's academic achievement levels. The questions on the survey served as
representative of the levels of parental involvement. The likely strengths of this instrument was it's simplicity, and easy comprehension. The weakness of this instrument was that it was created solely for the purpose of this study, and the instrument was not tested or proven.

**Procedure**

The surveys were mailed to potential respondents (a random sample). A stamped return addressed envelope to the Riverside Youth Service Center was enclosed with each survey with attention to myself on the envelope.

This quantitative study examined the relationship between the variables in this study. This study looked at the correlation between the five levels of parental involvement, and the children's academic achievement, or grades achieved. Using bivariate analysis, each level of parental involvement were compared with children's achievement; grade level. Each survey question on the level of parental involvement was ordinally ranked from low involvement to high involvement, and this measurement was compared to the ordinally ranked grade level values. The ages and genders of the children, household size, one or two parent household status, and household income were other variables considered in this study.
Protection of Human Subjects

The confidentiality of the participants of this study were assured. The survey mailed randomly to clients was sent with instructions for informed consent, and a signature was requested on the survey to ensure they were 18 years of age or older. The survey was returned in a pre-addressed, stamped envelope with the assurance that the survey results were confidential and are reported in group form only.

A debriefing statement was included with the survey as well as contact numbers made available in the event that there were any questions or concerns regarding the questionnaire. The approximate date and location where the results of the survey would be made available was also disclosed.
CHAPTER FIVE
RESULTS

Frequency and descriptive statistics were run to obtain mean, standard deviations and percentages on the data. Among the 19 families who answered the survey, 11 (57.9%) were single parent households, and 8 (42%) were two parent households (see appendix E). The mean household size was 4.2 family members (see appendices H, & I). The median income was $22,966.67. The mean ages of the children in the families were: child one; 12.15, child two; 10.40, and child three; 9.00. For child one the grades most frequently reported is “B” (50%). The child one category was comprised of 66.7% males, and 33.3% females. Seventy-five percent of child two category were male, and the other 25% were female. The grade most reported in this category was also B (50%). For child three the gender breakdown was 75% female and 25% male, and the grade most reported was “C” at 66.7%.

The most frequently reported educational level for the mother’s education in this sample is 57.9%, reporting some college education. The most frequent reported educational level for the fathers in this study is 36.8%, did not complete High School (see appendices F and G).

Parental involvement activities most participated in by parents are giving praise, (84.2%), attending awards

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ceremonies, (57.9%), helping with homework, (52.6%), place to study, (57.9%), and parents strongly agreed children got adequate sleep or diet, (42%).

A One Way Anova test was run to compare means between the children's grade factor and types of parental participation. No significance was found. Meaningful analysis on the grade variable and the parental participation variable was compromised due to a small sample size.

Pearson correlations were computed on the types of parent involvement variables. Several significant correlations were detected. Correlations between parents who attend parent-teacher conferences with parents who received regular notices home (r = .750), p = <.01, and parents who received regular phone calls home from teachers (r = .531), p = <.05, and parents who received regular report or report cards, (r = .470), p = <.05, were found. Significant correlations were also detected between parents who attended school award ceremonies and parents who received regular notices, (r = .545), p = <.05, parents who assisted in activities, (r = .456), p = <.05, and parents who participated in helping with homework, (r = .463), p = <.05.

There were significant correlations between mother's level of education and the level of praise given to the child, (r = .480), p = <.05. There were also significant
correlation levels found between the variables of frequent phone calls from teachers and the amount of sleep parents insured their children received (r = .609), p=<.01, and the variable of parental assistance with homework (r = .591), p=<.01. Significant correlations were made between the amount of school activities parents participated in and the adequate diet children received at home (r = .510), p=<.05. Other significant correlations indicated were in the amount of guidance the teacher gave the family for school assignments and the adequate diet a child receives at home (r = .540), p=<.05. Correlations also exist between the coordinated learning activities at home, and adequate diet received at home (r = .495), p=<.05.

Parents who belong to the Parent-Teacher Association show positive correlation with receiving notices (r = .632), p=<.01, and attending parent-teacher conferences (r = .541), p=<.05. Parents who help organize activities or plan curriculum show significant Pearson correlations of (r = .470), p=<.05, with parents who receive phone calls from school (r = .666), p=<.01, with families who connect with community resources.
CHAPTER SIX
DISCUSSION

The hypothesis of this study was that parental involvement levels and their activities at the basic obligations of families involvement level, and at the basic obligation of school's level of involvement would be the predictors of children's higher academic achievement. Taking into consideration that the sample size was too small to find statistical significance for the dependent variables of parental involvement and children's grades or academic achievement, this study still yielded some significant correlations. The study results gave suggestion to what types of parental involvement activities of the five levels of parental participation parents most participate in, and also suggested which parental involvement activities seem to correlate with participation in another activity. One example of this was parents who participate by actively working in the classroom (involvement in school activities level), also interestingly enough showed a high correlation with parents who participate by adequately providing a good diet (basic obligation of families level of involvement). Another example was that parents who belonged to the Parent-Teacher Association (involvement in decision making levels), did not show a correlation with parents who
attended PTA meetings, but there were correlations with other parental involvement activities, such as receiving telephone calls at home (basic obligation of school's level of involvement).

The literature review discussed studies which showed teachers did not attempt to connect with parents who they did not feel were as involved in the children's education as the teachers were. The one parent-teacher activity that this did not apply to was communications, or phoning or sending notices home to parents (basic obligation of school's level of involvement). It was noted in this study that the parents who participated in this level of involvement, that is, reported receiving phone calls and notices home frequently, were also more involved in other levels of parental participation. Of the five levels of parental participation, parents most participate in the first and second levels of educational involvement, or the basic family obligation level (Berger, 1991; Epstein & Dauber), and the basic school obligation level (Berger, 1991; Haug & Wright, 1991; Kirshbaum, 1991). The other three levels of involvement; involvement in activities at school (Berger, 1991; Epstein & Dauber, 1991), involvement in learning activities at home (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Johnson, 1997), involvement in decision making, governance, and advocacy at school (Epstein & Dauber, 1991), were also
participated in. Parents attended awards ceremonies and at-school activities. Families were also involved in planning learning activities at home, and in participating in advisory councils at school. This small study demonstrates parents do want to be involved, and the ones who participate attempt to become involved in most of these levels of participation. Schools should clearly work on expanding parental involvement programs at the basic obligations of families and at the basic obligations of school's involvement areas, as these are areas parents seem to be most involved.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation to the study is the small sample size that did not allow for any significance to be demonstrated in the results for the dependent variables of parental involvement and children's grades. The sample was derived from clients at the Youth Service Center. Perhaps a larger more diverse population would have yielded better results or more surveys to have been returned. Many of the clientele at the Youth Service Center may be too concerned with daily survival at this time to take the time out to answer a survey.

Another limitation of the current study is that the parents are the main source of data, so the information gathered was by parent's report only. There may be bias in
reporting. Other limitations are that this is a cross sectional design, a one time only single measurement of this data. Using a more reliable measuring instrument may also help to yield better results. This study actually raised some important issues relating to future studies concerning parental involvement programs. The low survey return rate, thirteen percent, actually parallels the difficulty schools may have in engaging hard to reach parents. Creative methods are needed to connect with families, such as incorporating a raffle drawing in with the completed, returned surveys.

Implications for Social Work

The implications for social work practice are encouraging. The participation in levels of parental involvement activities suggests that the more parents and teachers communicate by phone, notices home, or conferences, the higher the correlation exists for children's adequate sleep and adequate diet.

Encouraging parents to become active partners in their children's school and education may require providing some form of stipend for hard working parents. The various supermarket and department store chains now aid by donating to the schools. Perhaps they would donate vouchers for merchandise to parents who participate at school on a monthly basis. Small grants to teachers to develop more
responsive programs and practices of parent involvement may help these projects become more successful.

Some steps that schools can take to maximize their success in developing programs are to access the present strengths and weaknesses of their current parent involvement programs. This will aid schools to move ahead with more comprehensive programs. The next step would be for schools to identify their hopes and goals for future programs.

Further research needs to be done in the area of what specifically parents can do to aid children's academic achievement levels. Future research in this area optimally would examine which practices of each of the five types of parental involvement are presently strong at each grade level. Research should also examine which practices are important for each grade level, and which practices should change from grade to grade.
APPENDIX A:

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer a few questions about your family situation.

1. What is your household size? _____
2. Single parent household _____, or, Two parent household _____
3. What is the family’s total annual income? _____
4. What is the mother’s level of education?
   Not High School Grad _____
   High School Graduate _____
   Some College _____
   College Graduate _____

   What is the father’s level of education?
   Not High School Grad _____
   High School Grad _____
   Some College _____
   College Grad _____

   Please answer the following questions for each school age child living in the home up to 17 years old.

   Child 1: Age _____ Gender _____ Grade most received _____
   Child 2: Age _____ Gender _____ Grade most received _____
   Child 3: Age _____ Gender _____ Grade most received _____
Circle the reply that best fits your family:

1. My child (children) get adequate sleep (nine hours) on school nights.
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

2. My child (children) has an adequate diet consisting of all food groups:
   Never  Occasionally  Often  Always

3. My child (children) has a specific place to work on homework at home.
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

4. We encourage and praise our child’s (children’s) school work and accomplishments at home.
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

5. We receive regular notices concerning school programs and events (about every other week.)
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

6. We receive phone calls from teachers on a regular basis (every other month).
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

39
7. We receive report cards about our child's (children's) progress or other written notices concerning our child's progress.
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

8. We are invited to and attend parent conferences concerning our child's (children's) school performance.
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

9. We regularly attend school sports activities.
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

10. We go to school to watch our child (children) receive awards or in performances.
    Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

11. We assist in the classroom at school.
    Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

12. We assist in other activities at our children's school.
    Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree
13. Our family assists our child (children) with their homework at home.
   Never   Occasionally   Often   Always

14. Our family contacts the teacher for guidance to assist our children with their homework.
   Never   Occasionally   Often   Always

15. We coordinate learning activities at home that relate to children's classwork.
   Never   Occasionally   Often   Always

16. We know what skills our child (children) need to know to pass their grade.
   Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

17. Our family belongs to the Parent Teacher Organization.
   Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

18. Our family attends PTA meetings at school:
   Never   Occasionally   Often   Always

19. Our school encourages parents to help organize various activities or to decide on curriculum:
   Never   Occasionally   Often   Always
20. Our child's (children's) school organizes activities that help bring other community resources to parents.

Never  Occasionally  Often  Always
APPENDIX B:

INFORMED CONSENT
INFORMED CONSENT

You are being asked to participate in a study of ways parent involvement may help a child’s academic achievement (grades.) Questions will be asked concerning the child’s grades and how the parent’s are involved with their child’s education. This study is done by Nancy Zaragoza, MSW Intern at California State University, San Bernardino, for completion of my Master’s Degree in Social Work. This study is being conducted under the supervision of Jette Warka, with guidance from Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, (909) 880-5507. Your participation or non-participation in this study will not in any way alter the treatment services being provided by The Youth Service Center.

This survey is completely confidential. Results are reported in group form only. No names are connected to the results.

This survey is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw your participation at any time during the questionnaire or leave any question blank. There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study. If you feel uncomfortable answering questions you can decide to stop answering question or skip a question. While you may not benefit personally by participating in this study, the information gathered may be used to educate social
workers (and other professionals) about the need for parent involvement in children's education.

There are twenty questions pertaining to levels of parent involvement. The survey should take about ten minutes to complete. This research project has been approved by the Department of Social Work Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board at California State University, San Bernardino.

I have been fully informed of the nature of this study and I am at least 18 years of age.

Signature ___________________________ Date _____
APPENDIX C:

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

You have participated in a study of how levels of parent involvement affect a child’s academic achievement levels. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of ways parents influence their children’s academic achievement. Thank you for your participation in the study.

If you have any questions or comments concerning the study, contact Dr. Rosemary McCaslin at California State University, San Bernardino at (909)880-5507. This study was conducted at the Youth Service Center by Nancy Zaragoza, MSW Intern at California State University, San Bernardino.

If any of the issues brought up in the study made you feel uncomfortable, feel free to contact Nancy Zaragoza through the California State University Dept. of Social Work, Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, (909)880-5507, or seek additional counseling at the Family Service Association, (909) 686-3706.

The results of this study will be available at the Pfau Library at California State University, San Bernardino in the Summer of 2001.
APPENDIX D:

AGENCY CONSENT FORM
AGENCY CONSENT FORM

The agency consent form is currently on file at the Master of Social Work Department, California State University, San Bernardino.
APPENDIX E:

SINGLE AND TWO PARENT FREQUENCY BAR CHART
SINGLE AND TWO PARENT HOUSEHOLD FREQUENCY

BAR CHART

ONETWO

ONETWO

Frequency

0 2 4 6 8 10 12

single parent household  two parent household
MOTHER’S LEVEL OF EDUCATION
BAR CHART

MEDUCAT

Frequency

0 2 4 6 8 10 12

complete high school  high school graduate  college  college graduate

53
APPENDIX G:

FATHER’S LEVEL OF EDUCATION BAR CHART
FATHER’S LEVEL OF EDUCATION

BAR CHART

FEDUCAT

FEDUCAT

FEDUCAT
APPENDIX H:

FREQUENCY TABLE OF HOUSEHOLD SIZE
## FREQUENCY TABLE OF HOUSEHOLD SIZE

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APPENDIX I:

HISTOGRAM OF HOUSEHOLD SIZE
HISTOGRAM OF HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Std. Dev = 1.99
Mean = 4.2
N = 18.00
REFERENCES


