

THE FACTORS THAT AFFECT PARENT INVOLVEMENT  
AT A RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN THE  
CENTRAL VALLEY OF CALIFORNIA

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By  
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband, Michael Deverall. His unwavering love, support, and encouragement over the last two years have been pivotal to my confidence level and drive to complete this process and accomplish a long existing dream of mine. The work ethic, perseverance, and pride he demonstrates in his own efforts regarding career, school, and family have always served as an example to me in my own endeavors and are a source of my deep admiration. Without his belief in me and unfaltering encouragement, this would not be possible.

This work is also dedicated to my future child, who also served as a powerful driving force by motivating me to complete this project. I was guided by the desire to serve as an example to my family that should you put your mind to it, you can achieve anything despite life's challenges. I hope when you are old enough to comprehend, you are proud of your mom and believe you can be successful as well.

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## ABSTRACT

Despite a shift in recent years towards more parent involvement in children's education, some schools indicate a continued lack of parent presence. Teachers at the school in this study stated that certain parents do not contact them regarding their child's academic and/or behavioral progress. There is also an expressed desire from staff to see more parents attend school events such as Back to School Night and Parent-Teacher Conferences. For this study, a survey was distributed to all families at the elementary school to determine the factors that affect parent participation. Survey statements addressed many different issues that could potentially affect parent involvement, such as the school environment, the quality of communication from teachers and staff, opportunities to be involved in decision making, volunteering opportunities, and the scheduling of school events. The potential issues of childcare and transportation were also addressed by the survey statements. Seventy-one surveys were returned, and Chi Square analyses were used to determine if there was a significant difference in the distribution of responses to each survey statement that required a Likert type response. The results of the analyses indicated that a significant majority of parent respondents indicated an overall satisfaction with their children's school. No survey statements indicated a significant concern in any one area, thus not identifying any issues that would prevent parents from participating more often at school.

CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

**Background**

Parent involvement has always played a significant role in education. Parents who volunteer in the classroom are often visible around campus and well-informed about their child's academic performance. They are in regular contact with the classroom teacher and are consistently informed of events and news occurring at the school. They also monitor assignments at home and attend informative events such as Back to School Night or Parent-Teacher Conferences (McKenna & Millen, 2013).

Children with actively involved parents tend to have a more positive attitude towards school, and are conscious of their parents' high expectations in respect to their performance in the classroom (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012). These children tend to get their work done consistently and effectively, and strive to achieve satisfactory, if not exemplary grades. They also have better overall school attendance (Lunenburg & Irly, 2002). A positive relationship between parent and teacher consists of regular teacher communication with the parents regarding their child's performance in the classroom, and is established on respect and a mutual goal of success for the child (McKenna & Millen, 2013).

There are several factors that may affect the level of parental involvement in their child's education; some are attributed to parent attitudes towards school, and some are beyond the control of the parent. Examples of these factors may include an

irregular work schedule, lack of transportation, limited access to technology (computers and e-mail), infrequent interaction with school staff, or negative personal childhood experiences with school. Some of these factors may be within the control of a school (such as the scheduling of school events, staff attitudes towards parents, and methods of communicating with parents).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Research suggests a correlation between the level of active parent involvement in their child's education and attitude towards school and education in general, which may be reflective of academic performance (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Mo & Singh, 2008). Parents who communicate regularly with their children's teachers and are actively involved in ensuring that their children's school work is complete and done correctly tend to experience more academic success with their children (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012).

Unfortunately, the lack of active parent involvement in education is an issue at the center of this study. Many parents at the school that was selected for this study are not in regular contact with their children's teachers, nor do they encourage their children's academic success at home. When there are school events, many parents do not attend, which teachers believe affects the attitude of their children towards school.

### **Research Question**

What factors determine the level of parent participation in their child's education?

## **Hypothesis**

There are no significant differences in the distribution of survey responses of parents regarding their perceptions about the factors that affect their participation in their child's education.

## **Significance of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that determine the extent of the parents' participation in their child's education by distributing a survey to parents in which they respond to potential factors. The goal is to provide useful information to administrators and staff to help them understand these factors, and ultimately determine ways to encourage parents to become more actively involved in their child's education process. The aim is to capitalize on the correlation between parent involvement and student academic success.

## **Limitations and Delimitations**

**Limitations.** This study was limited to parents and guardians of students attending a K – 8 rural elementary school located in California's Central Valley during the 2014 – 2015 school year.

**Delimitations.** Factors such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and education level of the parents and guardians were not taken into account when conducting this study.

## **Definition of Terms**

**Parent.** An adult responsible for the health and welfare of a student.

**Parent Involvement.** Involvement that includes assisting and monitoring homework completion at home, attending school functions such as Back to School Night or Parent-Teacher Conferences, volunteering at the school, and regularly contacting the child's teacher (in person or via phone, e-mail or other written correspondence).

**Absences.** Days of school instruction when the child is not in attendance.

**Truancy.** Consistently arriving to school tardy and missing classroom instruction.

**Academic Success.** The ability of a student to be successful in school in terms of achieving satisfactory or exceptional grades, grasping grade level concepts, and completing all school work.

### **Summary**

Chapter I covers the background regarding the significant role of parent involvement in education that affects student academic success. The research question is presented, as well as the hypothesis regarding the anticipated survey results. The significance of the study in regards to the implications of the survey results for the school at the center of this study is discussed. Limitation and delimitations of this study are addressed, and definitions of terms are provided. Chapter II provides an overview of the literature that discusses the significance of parental involvement on student academic achievement, and the effects of the relationship between parents and staff in a school setting. Chapter III illustrates the methods and procedures used to collect data regarding parent involvement (for this

study's purposes, a parent survey), the sample used, and the method of data analysis. Chapter IV examines and discusses the findings of the survey data in regards to determining the most common factors that affect the level of parent involvement in education. Chapter V presents a summary of the study, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for the staff of the subject school.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### **Background: The Evolution of Parent Involvement**

According to Carney-Hall (2008), parent involvement has grown over the last several years. This may be attributed to factors such as better communication between schools and parents, as well as access to information via technology. Parents have taken a much more involved approach to their child's education as they are more easily able to communicate with teachers through e-mail and can access the school's website to obtain information about upcoming school events or due dates on their children's assignments. Carney-Hall also cited the shift in parental attitudes towards education as more of a consumer-based experience, which encourages parents to seek the best "product" for their money. Parents are motivated to demand the best options for their children when it comes to education, whether it entails holding their neighborhood school accountable for how their tax dollars are spent, or seeking schools that will provide their children with the best programs and educational opportunities.

The increase in parental involvement also stems from state and federally mandated policies that have required schools to make a more concerted effort to involve parents in their children's educational experience (McKenna & Millen, 2013). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 set the expectation that educators should do more to actively include parents in the operations of the school. Examples include

involving parents in the development of academic goals, as well as the daily operations that affect their children. Schools are now expected to not only communicate with parents regarding the upcoming events and daily business of school, but to include them in the decision making process, granting them access as equal stakeholders.

However, despite this apparent cultural shift in parent involvement over the years, there remains an issue in many schools regarding the lack of parent involvement. Educators of the school that was selected for this study often complain that they cannot get many of their parents to attend meetings regarding their child's classroom behavior and academic performance, nor take an active interest in homework or encourage regular school attendance. The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that possibly inhibit or prevent these parents from more active involvement in their children's academic experience, and possibly aid the school in creating solutions to some of these issues.

### **Parent Involvement Models**

Lunenburg and Irly (2002) discussed several models in an effort to help schools develop programs that encourage parent involvement. The first is Ira Gordon's System's Approach (1979), which delineated four levels of parent involvement: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. The microsystem consists of child and family and has the greatest influence on academic success. However, it necessitates the most effort, which can be a challenge. The mesosystem includes the school and community facilities such as recreation centers

and stores, all facilities available to children in their neighborhood. The exosystem comprises policies that affect family life, and therefore children's school experience, such as the availability of social services or the family leave policies of parents' employers. The macrosystem examines the broader social, economic and political aspects that potentially affect many children and parents. All factors affect the academic success of the child, whether directly or indirectly. This raises the question as to whether schools should devote energy to addressing the parent or the community. Ultimately, and not surprisingly, Gordon asserted that the role that parents choose to take in their child's education has the strongest influence on academic success. When parents take on roles such as teacher, classroom volunteer or adult learner, the parent, child and anyone connected with them benefit from these roles.

The second model, Berger's Role Categories (1991), illustrated six recommended roles of parents in their children's education: parents as teachers, parents as spectators, parents as employed resources, parents as temporary volunteers, parents as volunteer resources, and parents as policymakers. Although Berger focused on roles that parents could have at home, at school and elsewhere to strengthen the home-school relationship, she did not approach the issue of parent education as Gordon (1979) had done with his model.

The third model, Chavkin and Williams' Parent Involvement Roles (1993), was the result of a survey that asked parents about their interest in the following roles: paid school staff, audience, decision maker, program supporter, advocate, home tutor,

and co-learner. Although the data were examined by parent ethnicity, the top three categories amongst all groups were audience, home tutor and program supporter. Unconventional roles such as co-learner and paid school staff were ranked lower. Parents showed interest in all categories, with an overall interest in being involved in their children's schools.

The fourth model described by Lunenburg and Irly was Alice Honig's Early Childhood Education Model (1990), which examined parent involvement in early childhood education programs. Honig's seven categories included home visitation by a staff member; parent group meetings focusing on parent education; home visits for interagency linkages (i.e., the Head Start model); program-articulated home visits; parents as teachers; home follow-up on television viewing (based on special-purpose TV programs such as "Sesame Street"); and omnibus programs intended to service the entire family in areas of health, education and social services. The emphasis in Honig's models concentrated heavily on providing information, knowledge and skills to allow parents to better serve their children.

The fifth model discussed was Bruce Jones' four levels of parental involvement (1989): traditional (parent-teacher meetings), receiving information (communication with parents about students, budget, curriculum, etc.), involvement in schools (paid volunteers for a variety of activities at school), and decision making (regarding policy, hiring, curriculum development, budget, etc.). Jones' study was used to evaluate parent involvement within school districts in Indiana.

In the sixth model, Lunenburg and Irly discussed Epstein's Typologies (1985; 1987; 1995; 2001), which avoids descriptive categories and instead presents a framework of non-hierarchical typologies that include parenting (and how the school can assist parent understanding of issues such as adolescent development and parenting skills), communication from the school, volunteering, learning at home (helping parents assist students with homework, selecting courses and college research), decision making (parents as participants in advisory committees at the school), and collaborating with the community (involving the greater community in children's success).

The seventh model explored by Lunenburg and Irly was Language Minority Parents Involvement (Lara-Alecio, Irby & Ebener, 1997). This model emphasizes the importance of language minority parents setting high academic expectations for their children, which can be placed into three broad categories: high expectations (in completion of school and furthering education), belief in education (modeling the behavior and expectations at home), and parents as a home/school link (staying informed and being involved in their children's school).

Lunenburg and Irly also reviewed a study conducted by the System Development Corporation (SDC) of California to analyze the level of parent involvement in schools within 57 different projects supported by federal grants. The levels of involvement consist of six categories: home-school relations, home-based instruction, school support, instruction at schools, parent education and advisory boards. The SDC concluded that due to government requirements of parent

involvement in these federally-funded programs, parents were effectively involved in all six categories.

Another approach to the parent involvement model was developed by McKenna and Millen (2013). They asserted that there is a misconception amongst educators, not only regarding a perceived lack of interest from parents to be involved, but how parents should be “taught” to assist in their children’s education. They state that educators need to be more sensitive to the differing parenting styles and family constructs to understand how to better involve parents, who very much want to be a part of their children’s educational experience. Parents feel they provide valuable feedback for educators regarding their children’s academic and emotional needs, and desire to be heard and respected by their children’s teachers. They believe they are valuable partners in their children’s educational experience.

### **Studies on Parent Involvement and Student Achievement**

Research consistently shows a correlation between the amount of parent involvement and level of student achievement. Parents, who actively communicate with teachers, check their children’s homework and attend school events, tend to have students who care about their learning, grades and performance in the classroom (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012).

Cheung and Pomerantz (2012) surveyed 825 American and Chinese seventh graders every six months regarding parent involvement in their education, as well as different elements of student motivation until the end of eighth grade year. The purpose of the study was to analyze the effects of parent involvement on student

motivation in school, as well as the ability of the students to self-regulate their learning. The study looked at the effects of parent influence on student motivation, and therefore student achievement.

Students selected were seventh graders who attended working class and middle class schools in suburban Chicago and suburban Beijing. Three hundred seventy-four American students (split evenly between boys and girls) and 451 Chinese students (240 boys and 211 girls) were selected through an opt-in consent procedure. Students completed questionnaires, which took about 45 minutes for each of the four sessions, in the fall and spring of their seventh and eighth grade years. The following areas were analyzed: parents' involvement in children's learning (such as helping with homework, getting to know teachers, attending parent-teacher conferences and asking students about school), parent-oriented motivation in school (the degree to which students seek parent approval), controlled and autonomous motivation in school (whether students are motivated out of a desire to be successful or to avoid consequences and receive rewards), self-regulated learning strategies (taking initiative and responsibility for their own learning), and student grades. In all categories except grades, a 1 to 5 Likert type scale was utilized by students to rank statements, with 1 representing "not at all true" and 5 representing "very true."

To determine parents' involvement in children's learning, 10 statements were ranked by the children. Statements included "My parents help me with my homework when I ask" and "My parents try to get to know my teachers at my school." To analyze children's parent motivation in school, students responded to 12

items such as “I try to do well because I want my parents’ approval,” and “I try to do well to show my parents that I am being responsible.” Children’s controlled and autonomous motivation in school was determined by using the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (Ryan & Connell, 1989) that contains four types of reasons for engagement in academics. Self-regulated learning strategies were assessed with Dowson’s and McInerney’s GOALS-S (2004). The subscales measure children’s meta-cognitive strategies (monitoring, planning and regulating), and cognitive strategies (rehearsal, elaboration). Grades in the core subjects were given a numerical value and averaged.

A series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) was conducted within a SEM model (structural equation modeling) to examine the data from the United States and China as well as the four waves of the study to allow valid comparisons. Results showed that the level of parent involvement did indeed affect the level of student motivation ( $p < .05$ ). Initially, student motivation was determined as a parent controlled motivation; however, this motivation eventually evolved into a heightened self-regulated learning on behalf of the student. In other words, students were initially motivated to do well to please their parents and meet their expectations, but eventually, that motivation became autonomous as the children became interested in succeeding in school for the sake of being successful.

Mo and Singh (2008) studied the effects of parent involvement on student achievement using the WAVE I survey data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) on students’ school and family experiences. The data

were analyzed to determine if a correlation existed between parent involvement and student engagement and performance. Surveys were conducted with seventh and eighth graders with follow-up interviews, and the data (collected between September 1994 and December 1995) were analyzed. Questions in an interview addressed social and demographic information about the students, the education and occupation of parents, as well as areas such as household structures, risk behaviors, expectations for the future, self-esteem, health status, friendships and extracurricular activities during the school year. Parents of these children were also surveyed on the same areas, and data were collected.

Three areas were assessed in the study. School performance was determined by grades in mathematics, science, social studies and language arts (scores were assigned for each letter grade: 1 for D or lower, 4 for an A, and an average determined from the scores). Parents' relationships and involvement were assessed on a 1 to 5 Likert type scale by the children's responses to questions regarding relationships with their mothers and fathers, as well as their parents' involvement in their education and aspirations for the future (1 indicating a low relationship and 5 indicating strong relationship). Finally, school engagement of students was measured by their interest in school on three levels of engagement: behavioral, emotional and cognitive.

The behavioral engagement questions addressed four items that asked how often children had problems getting along with teachers, paying attention in school, getting homework done, and getting along with other students (responses were: never,

just a few times, once a week, almost every day and every day). The emotional engagement component asked whether children felt close to people at their school, felt a sense of belonging at their school, were happy to be at their school, felt teachers treated students fairly, and if they felt safe at school. The cognitive engagement component used the 1 to 5 Likert type scale to ask how much the children wanted to go to college and how likely it was that they would go to college.

Mo and Singh used structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze the non-experimental data. The chi-square and  $p$  value criteria were used to evaluate a fit for the SEM model. They concluded that children's relationships with their parents, as well as the parents' level of involvement in their education, had a significant effect on their performance in school ( $p < .05$ ). Parents who were very involved in their children's education influenced their children's engagement in school and therefore level of achievement. They asserted that although parent involvement tends to drop off during children's middle and high school years, it continues to be an important factor in their engagement and academic performance.

Englund, Luckner, Whaley, and Egeland (2004) examined the effects of parental involvement on achievement in a study that recruited low income mothers and their first born children (102 male and 85 female) through Minneapolis public health clinics. Participants were monitored from birth through third grade by examining data that included interviews with children's mothers and teachers, lab observations with mothers and children, and intelligence tests of the children. Data were gathered in first and third grades.

In a videotaped laboratory procedure, mother and child pairs were provided four developmentally appropriate problem solving scenarios. Two independent coders observed how the mothers instructed their children through the task and rated them on a 7-point scale (ranging from uninvolved/unstructured instruction to effective instruction). The children's IQs were assessed at 64 months of age using an abbreviated version of the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI; Wechsler, 1967). Mothers' expectations were examined at grades 1 and 3 during a semi-structured interview during which they were asked to respond on a 5-point Likert type scale (ranging from "will not complete high school" to "will go to graduate or professional school") to the question, "How far do you think your child will go in school?" Parental involvement was determined by interviews with the children's teachers at grades 1 and 3. Teachers were asked whether they knew the parents, whether the parents demonstrated concern and interest in their children's schoolwork, and whether the parents participated in parent conferences or other meetings with the teacher. The teacher's responses were coded on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from not being involved to being very involved. Children's achievement was determined by asking teachers to rate the overall academic progress of the students compared to other students in the same grade in the spring of first and third grades. Again, a 5-point Likert type scale was utilized (very poor to outstanding).

The authors developed a path analysis model to analyze relationships among the variables. They calculated Pearson product-moment correlations, and means and

standard deviations were noted. The path analysis was tested using the program LISREL 8.5. Results indicated that a mother's educational level correlated with her ability to instruct her child in teaching tasks as well as with her child's IQ ( $p < .05$ ). Although there was no significant correlation between how involved parents were in first grade and their children's level of achievement that year ( $p < .05$ ), the parents' involvement after first grade significantly predicted their children's performance in third grade ( $p < .05$ ).

Sheldon and Epstein (2005) conducted a study to determine if a correlation existed between parental involvement and children's performance on mathematics achievement tests. The study examined 18 schools in Ohio, Maryland, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Kansas and California. All schools varied greatly in regard to enrollment numbers, socioeconomic status and location (suburban, urban, inner-city and rural), but shared the common factor of receiving Title I funding. Baseline and follow-up surveys were sent to the participating schools at the beginning and conclusion of the 1997-1998 school year for information on school characteristics, student body characteristics, organized school-family-community practices centered on improving mathematics skills, mathematics achievement results from 1997, and mathematics report card grades for the fall term. Schools were asked to report results from standardized mathematics tests for two consecutive years and report card grades from fall to spring of the school year. The characteristics of the schools were examined (elementary or secondary, location, enrollment numbers, percentage of free or reduced price lunches, percentage of ESL students) and school practices. School

practices were determined by how school action team members reported their involvement on a questionnaire on the 14 partnership practices that focused on mathematics (such as conducting workshops for parents, issuing certificates to children who master new mathematics skills, informing parents of children's progress and problems in mathematics and assigning mathematics homework to children that requires them to demonstrate mathematics skills to a family member).

The study utilized descriptive analyses to investigate the association of school characteristics with children's outcomes in mathematics (student performances on standardized tests and report card grades). After statistically accounting for school's prior levels of mathematics achievement, Sheldon and Epstein postulated that there was one type of involvement, learning-at-home-activities, which linked consistently with improvement on mathematics achievement tests. Children who are required to work with their parents at home on mathematics homework statistically scored higher on their standardized testing and achieved better mathematics grades.

Bennett-Conroy (2012) investigated the effects of assigning homework that required parent-child interaction. The hypothesis was that children who were given these assignments would demonstrate a higher rate of completed work with higher scores than children in the control group. Participants were eighth grade students and their parents from a downstate New York school district consisting mainly of low-income, high immigrant and minority families.

In Phase I of the study, semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted during the 2009 – 2010 school year with 17 parents identified by school staff as not

involved in their children's schooling. In Phase II, conducted during the 2010 – 2011 school year, the researcher collaborated with three English teachers to plan weekly TIPS (Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork) assignments for children of the intervention group to complete at home with their parents over seven consecutive weeks. The central goal of TIPS assignments is to establish bidirectional communication between parents and teachers, and therefore ensure more parental help on student work at home. One randomly selected class for each of the teachers was selected as the intervention group, making a total of 61 intervention subjects and 131 control subjects.

By utilizing a chi-square test on the assignment data (how many assignments were turned in and scores earned for both the control and intervention groups), Bennett-Conroy was able to conclude that children who were required to complete TIPS assignments not only turned in their homework more often than those in the control group, but also received higher scores on those assignments ( $p < .001$ ).

### **Summary**

Research supports the idea that the level of parents' involvement in their children's learning directly influences the academic success of their children. Children with actively involved parents exhibit higher levels of motivation, engagement and achievement in school. Although there are many parent involvement models out there, the common thread that exists amongst all of them is that the simple act of parents communicating with teachers, keeping current with school events,

helping their children with their homework, and showing an overall interest in their children's school experience has a direct effect on their children's performance.

Chapter III will discuss the methodology for collecting data from parents regarding factors that affect the level of involvement in their children's school, as well as describe the process for the analysis of the data.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study is to determine the factors that affect parent involvement in the school selected. This chapter will describe the sample population used for the survey, the instrumentation, methodology and statistical analysis of the data.

#### **Sample Population**

The sample population consisted of parents whose children attended kindergarten through eighth grade at a rural elementary school in the central valley of California. Participants were asked to respond to statements regarding factors that affected their involvement at the school.

#### **Instrumentation**

A paper survey was sent home with students to collect data from parents for this study (see Appendix A). The survey consisted of 18 items addressing factors that potentially affect parent involvement, such as the school environment, communication, volunteering opportunities and school supports. For items 1 – 13, the survey utilized a four point Likert-type interval scale (1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3= Disagree, and 4=Strongly Disagree). Items 14 – 18 asked parent respondents for additional information regarding their participation in the school. The survey was created by considering examples of online surveys developed by other school districts, as well as feedback from the principal of the school that was

selected for this study regarding issues he wished to see addressed. The survey was reviewed and revised by the chairperson of this writer's thesis committee. The survey instrument was submitted to the California State University, Stanislaus Institutional Review Board and was approved December 15, 2014.

### **Methodology**

The paper survey was administered to parents whose children attended the school in this study. Parents of children in grades kindergarten through eighth received a survey as well as an Informed Parent Consent Letter (see Appendix B). The letter explained the purpose of this study, assured confidentiality of the responses, and requested consent to participate. The letter also directed any questions regarding the study and the survey to this writer and her chairperson. All properly completed surveys were used for statistical analysis.

### **Statistical Analysis**

The responses to the 13 statements that required a Likert type response were analyzed by using the Chi Square Goodness of Fit to determine any significant differences in the distribution of survey responses of parents regarding their perceptions about the factors that affect their participation in their child's education. A significance level of  $p < .05$  was used as the basis for statistical analysis. A descriptive analysis was also utilized using frequencies and percentages.

### **Summary**

Chapter III provided an overview of the purpose of the study and an explanation of the sample population, instrumentation, methodology, and statistical analysis. Chapter IV discusses the results of the data.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that affect parent involvement in the school selected. This chapter presents the analysis of the responses to a parent survey. Out of 168 surveys distributed, 83 were returned by the deadline. Eleven surveys were not accepted for analysis due to incompleteness or failure to follow survey directions. One survey had a parent's initials, which made the respondent identifiable, and was therefore rejected for analysis. Chapter IV discusses the distribution of parent respondents by their children's grade level as well as the inferential and descriptive analyses of the responses to 18 statements.

#### **Distribution of Respondents as Determined by Their Children's Grade Level**

Of the 71 respondents, most parents had children enrolled in grades 4 – 8 (with the exception of fifth grade that had seven), with eighth grade having the highest number at 16 or 23%. Kindergarten had the fewest respondents with 6 surveys returned or 8%. Table 1 displays the distribution of parent respondents according to their children's grade level.

Table 1

*Parent Respondents Determined by Their Children's Grade Level, Frequencies and Percentages*

Parent Respondents (by grade)	<i>f</i>	%
K	6	8
1	10	14
2	9	13
3	8	11
4	14	20
5	7	10
6	12	17
7	15	21
8	16	23

### **Inferential Analysis**

For 13 survey statements, parents were asked to rate their level of agreement (using a Likert type response) regarding topics such as the school environment, effectiveness of school and staff communication, opportunities for volunteering and participation in decision making. A significance level of  $p < .05$  was set for this study (see Table 2). The results indicated a greater difference than anticipated ( $p < .01$ ) in responses to all 13 statements.

Table 2

*Chi Square Values*

Statement	$\chi^2$	Significance
<i>School Environment</i>		
S1: Welcomed & valued	32.65	.001*
S2: Acknowledged & respected	29.94	.001*
S3: Friendly environment	33.32	.001*
<i>Communication</i>		
S4: Staying in touch	47.48	.001*
S5: Academic progress reported	10.51	.001*
S6: Staff responds right away	19.80	.001*
<i>Decision Making</i>		
S7: Participate on committees	27.83	.001*
S8: Part in deciding goals	40.72	.001*
S9: Involvement valued	30.28	.001*
<i>Volunteering Opportunities</i>		
S10: Volunteers welcomed/encouraged	75.27	.001*
S11: Allowed to volunteer in various ways	47.48	.001*
<i>Other</i>		
S12: Transportation an issue	56.25	.001*
S13: Childcare an issue	43.16	.001*

\* $p < .05$ **Descriptive Analysis**

Various levels of agreement to each of the statements were calculated by frequencies and percentages (see Table 3). Regarding the school environment, 98.6% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they felt welcomed and valued at the school (Statement 1). Also, 97.2% of the parents either strongly agreed or agreed

that the school made them feel acknowledged and respected by all staff members (Statement 2). Concerning Statement 3, 98.6% strongly agreed or agreed that the school provided a friendly environment to students, parents and families.

Regarding the topic of communication, 90.1% of the parents strongly agreed or agreed that the school stayed in touch with them in various ways (Statement 4).

With reference to Statement 5 (their child's academic progress is regularly reported by the teacher), 84.5% strongly agreed or agreed. A response of 91.5% strongly agreed or agreed with Statement 6, which states that staff responds to questions or concerns right away.

Concerning the next topic of decision making, 95.8% of parents that strongly agreed or agreed that the school provides them with opportunities to participate on committees (Statement 7). Of the parents, 90.1% strongly agreed or agreed that the school provides opportunities for them to determine goals for their children's learning (Statement 8). Regarding Statement 9 (parents' involvement in their children's education is valued), 97.2% of parents strongly agreed or agreed.

Volunteering opportunities showed a response of 91.5% of parents who strongly agreed or agreed with Statement 10 (parent volunteers are welcomed and encouraged), and 90.1% strongly agreed or agreed with Statement 11 (parents are allowed to volunteer at the school in many different ways).

Table 3

*Parent Involvement Survey Results: Frequencies and Percentages*

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
S1: Welcomed & valued	(36) 50.7%	(34) 47.9%	(1) 1.4%	0 responses
S2: Acknowledged & respected	(36) 50.7%	(33) 46.5%	(2) 2.8%	0 responses
S3: Friendly environment	(38) 53.5%	(32) 45.1%	(1) 1.4%	0 responses
S4: Staying in touch	(29) 40.8%	(35) 49.3%	(6) 8.5%	(1) 1.4%
S5: Academic progress reported	(32) 45.1%	(28) 39.4%	(11) 15.5%	0 responses
S6: Staff responds right away	(33) 46.5%	(32) 45.1%	(6) 8.5%	0 responses
S7: Participate on committees	(31) 43.7%	(37) 52.1%	(3) 4.2%	0 responses
S8: Part in deciding goals	(29) 40.8%	(33) 46.5%	(7) 9.9%	0 responses
S9: Involvement valued	(32) 45.1%	(37) 52.1%	(2) 2.8%	0 responses
S10: Volunteers welcomed/encouraged	(31) 43.7%	(33) 46.5%	(5) 7.0%	(1) 1.4%
S11: Allowed to volunteer in various ways	(29) 40.8%	(35) 49.3%	(6) 8.5%	(1) 1.4%
S12: Transportation to school	(5) 7.0%	(6) 8.5%	(28) 39.4%	(31) 43.7%
S13: Childcare an issue	(4) 5.6%	(12) 16.9%	(26) 36.6%	(28) 39.4%

**Survey Statements with Multiple Options for Responses**

Statements 14 – 18 provided parents with the possibility for multiple responses, such as preferred times of day to attend events, types of supports offered and desired at the school, and various options to participate at the school. Tables 4 – 11 display the distribution of responses.

Table 4

*Preference for Back to School Night Times, Frequencies and Percentages*

Back to School Night Times	<i>f</i>	%
After School	29	41
Evenings	48	68
Other	4	6

Table 5

*Preference for Parent-Teacher Conference Times, Frequencies and Percentages*

Parent/Teacher Conference Times	<i>f</i>	%
Mornings	17	24
After School	40	56
Evenings	34	48
Other	6	8

Table 6

*Preference for Open House Times, Frequencies and Percentages*

Open House Times	<i>f</i>	%
Mornings	10	14
After School	33	46
Evenings	45	63
Other	4	6

Table 7

*Preference for Informational Meeting Times, Frequencies and Percentages*

Informational Meeting Times	<i>f</i>	%
Mornings	11	15
After School	32	45
Evenings	44	62
Other	5	7

Table 8

*Perceived Supports Offered by the School, Frequencies and Percentages*

Perceived Supports	<i>f</i>	%
Childcare	11	15
Transportation	61	86
Translator	26	37
Networking with other families	14	20
Parenting Classes	7	10
Adult Education Classes	5	7

Table 9

*Supports Desired by Parents, Frequencies and Percentages*

Supports Desired	<i>f</i>	%
Childcare	24	34
Transportation	12	17
Translator	6	8
Networking with other families	18	25
Parenting Classes	21	30
Adult Education Classes	27	38

Table 10

*Events/Committees in Which Parents are Interested in Participating, Frequencies and Percentages*

Events/Committees	<i>f</i>	%
Book Fair	45	63
Conferences	42	59
Clubs/Organizations	27	38
Parent Teacher Club	25	35
ELAC Committee	6	8
School Site Council	15	21
Volunteering	47	66
Family Nights	40	56
Other	9	13

Table 11

*Preferred Method of Communication, Frequencies and Percentages*

Method of Communication	<i>f</i>	%
Fliers	19	37
Newsletters	21	30
E-mail	38	54
Phone Message	35	49
School Website	12	17

**Summary**

Chapter IV analyzed the responses of parents who completed a survey consisting of 18 statements regarding their participation at their children's school. A chi square analysis was utilized to determine if any significant differences existed among the responses to the survey statements. The results showed a significant difference in the distribution of responses for statements 1 – 13 ( $p < .05$ ). Chapter V includes a summary, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further study.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that affect parent participation at their children's school. A parent survey was distributed to all parents at the school in this study. A chi square analysis showed a significant difference in the distribution of responses to 13 statements in the survey that required a Likert type response. Chapter V presents a summary of the results, conclusions, implications of the results, and provides recommendations for further study.

#### **Summary**

This study was conducted to determine the factors that affect parent participation at school. A survey with 18 statements was distributed to all families at the elementary school that was selected for this study. For thirteen of the statements in the survey, a Likert-type scale was used to determine the level of satisfaction parents felt regarding the school environment, communication from the school, and opportunities for participation and volunteering. Five other statements asked parents to select times that were most convenient for them to participate in various school events, identify supports they perceived as provided by the school and what supports they would like to see provided, as well as events in which they would like to participate.

Surveys were sent home with the eldest child of each family, with a deadline of a week to complete and return them to the school. Of the 168 surveys distributed,

83 were completed and returned by the deadline. Seventy-one surveys were used for this study, as 12 were either incomplete or directions were not followed by the respondent. The Chi Square Goodness of Fit was used to analyze the survey responses. There was a difference in the distribution of responses for each survey statement. A significant majority of parent respondents indicated that they either strongly agreed or agreed with the survey statements, indicating an overall satisfaction with their children's school. They also indicated that issues such as childcare or transportation were not a concern, thus not identifying any issues that would prevent them from participating more often at school.

### **Conclusions**

Carney-Hall (2008) stated that the increase of parent involvement in their children's school is due to several factors, such as the availability and convenience of information via school websites, as well as communication with teachers and staff through e-mail, making school staff more accessible to parents than ever before. Parents are able to access information about upcoming school events, class assignments, and their children's grades through the school website, as well as use e-mail to contact their children's teachers more easily. Carney-Hall also surmised that education is increasingly viewed through the lens of a consumer-based society, therefore catering to customers (the parents) who want the best services (quality of education) for their tax dollar. McKenna and Millen (2013) discussed a change in approach from schools with No Child Left Behind by requiring schools to more actively involve parents in the decision making processes that impact their children's

education. This increase in parent presence within schools makes schools more accountable, and therefore holds them to a higher standard for the services they provide to students and parents. The question that remains is whether this accessibility to schools does indeed encourage parents to be more involved in their children's education.

### **Implications**

In an attempt to identify factors that could prevent parents from being more involved at school, survey questions were created to address any potential issues. Although parent responses were supportive of the school selected for this study, three statements deserve some attention. Statement 5 ("My child's academic progress is reported by his/her teacher regularly") indicated that 15.5% of parents disagreed, and 8.5% and 16.9% of parents agreed, respectively, with Statements 12 and 13 ("Transportation/Childcare is an issue for me and prevents me from participating in school events"). While the results showed an overall positive parent perception of the school, a further investigation should be conducted to improve the satisfaction level of parents concerning these needs, perhaps by identifying the grade levels of those who expressed dissatisfaction with teacher communication.

Although the school sends home mid-trimester progress reports, as well as provides online access to grades of fifth through eighth grade students, some parents do not feel they are informed frequently enough. Perhaps the school could explore additional methods of communicating grades to parents on a more frequent basis. A factor to consider is that the online access to grades is only available for certain grade

levels, and furthermore, it is possible that not all parents have online access. This, of course, requires a standard procedure followed by all teachers at all grade levels to regularly communicate with parents regarding their children's academics. To guide this process, the school should find out directly from parents what in particular they are expecting in terms of the type and frequency of the communication. In a future survey, parents who are not satisfied should be asked to elaborate. Also, interviews may yield additional information relevant to parent perceptions about school communication. However, although there is room for improvement, the survey results are not substantial enough to indicate that teacher communication is a problem at the school that was selected for this study.

The school should also explore possible avenues to provide childcare for parents while they attend school functions. On-site childcare may be a desirable option for parents who otherwise could not find a sitter for their children. Most of the parents who indicated that childcare was an issue had completed the Spanish version of the survey. To a smaller extent, they also indicated transportation issues. Further investigation should be conducted to determine why this population in particular has an issue with childcare, and whether they would be comfortable with on-site childcare. Perhaps a parent network can be established within the Spanish-speaking community at the school to provide carpools for parents who wish to attend school functions. Also, these issues could be discussed with parents at future English Learner Advisory Committee meetings to gain greater insight on the matter. Once again, however, the survey results do not support that these issues of childcare and

transportation have a negative impact on parent involvement at the school selected for this study.

Otherwise, the data suggest that parents are satisfied overall with their children's school. Most parents feel welcomed and respected by staff, believe that the school environment is friendly, and have opportunities to participate in the classroom and in making decisions for the school. Parents indicated overall that transportation and childcare were not significant issues, and the times they listed as desirable for school events were consistent with the actual times that the school holds those events. With these factors in mind, the question remains to be answered as to why parents are not more involved at their children's school. McKenna and Millen (2013) conducted interviews with parents who stated they were very interested in being involved in their children's education, yet there was an apparent perception from the school staff that parents do not care. In fact, teachers at the school in this study indicated to this writer that they wished to hear more often from parents regarding behavior and academic achievement. They also desired to see more parents attend school events such as Back to School Night or Parent-Teacher Conferences. In their study, McKenna and Millen posited that this perception by school staff may be attributed to a difference in parenting styles or family constructs to which educators do not relate; therefore, their opinion of what parent involvement should look like may be quite different from the opinion of the parents.

Another consideration to make is that perhaps parents in this study are simply content, and do not feel compelled to be physically present at school. What is

perceived as a lack of parent interest by the school staff may be, in fact, parent satisfaction. It may be that they trust the staff is doing everything right to educate and nurture their children and do not feel the need to “check in.” This seems to harken back to a former time when parents were quite hands-off with their children’s education and allowed the “professionals” to do their job. Also worth noting is that the school in this study is quite a traditional school in the sense that it is a small rural school where most people know one another, staff and parents alike. There exists a level of comfort that can only be experienced within small communities.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

The results suggest that further study should be conducted to determine whether the perceived lack of parent involvement at school directly affects the academic performance of students. A comparison study of the academic achievement of schools with a similar population, yet higher levels of parent involvement could possibly indicate whether there exists a correlation between parent involvement and academic achievement. Future studies also may include interviews with parents to gain more insight as to why they do not attend school functions more frequently nor communicate with teachers and staff regularly regarding their children. Specific parent feedback may help schools determine if there is anything within their capabilities to encourage and facilitate more involvement.

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## REFERENCES

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

Please indicate your child(ren)'s grade level (check all that apply to your child(ren)):

K\_\_\_ 1\_\_\_ 2\_\_\_ 3\_\_\_ 4\_\_\_ 5\_\_\_ 6\_\_\_ 7\_\_\_ 8\_\_\_

**The School Environment**

1. The school makes me feel welcomed and valued.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

2. The school makes me feel acknowledged and respected by all staff members.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

3. The school is a friendly environment to students, parents and families.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

**Communication**

4. My child's school is very good about staying in touch with me in many different ways, such as through newsletters, phone calls, e-mails, information packets and the school website.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

5. My child's academic progress is reported by his/her teacher regularly.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

6. When I have a question, concern or comment, the teacher, principal or other staff get back to me right away.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

### **Decision Making**

7. The school provides opportunities for me to participate in decision making.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

8. The school provides opportunities for me to play a part in deciding goals for my child's learning.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

9. My involvement in my child's education is valued at the school.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

### **Volunteering Opportunities**

10. Parent volunteers are welcomed and encouraged at the school.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

11. I am allowed to volunteer at the school in many different ways (such as helping in the classroom, chaperoning on field trips and participating at school events).

1 Strongly Agree      2 Agree      3 Disagree      4 Strongly Disagree

12. Transportation to school is an issue for me and prevents me from participating in school events.

1 Strongly Agree      2 Agree      3 Disagree      4 Strongly Disagree

13. Childcare is an issue for me and prevents me from participating in school events.

1 Strongly Agree      2 Agree      3 Disagree      4 Strongly Disagree

14. The following time is most convenient for me to attend school events, such as Back to School Night, Parent/Teacher Conferences, Open House and informational meetings:

Mornings  
 After school  
 Evenings (after 5:00 p.m.)  
 Other:

15. My school offers the following supports (check all that apply):

Childcare  
 Transportation  
 Translator  
 Networking with other families  
 Parenting classes  
 Adult education classes

16. I would be interested in the following supports if they were offered (check all that apply):

- Childcare
- Transportation
- Translator
- Networking with other families
- Parenting classes
- Adult education classes

17. I would participate in the following (check all that apply):

- Book Fair
- Conferences
- Clubs/Organizations
- Parent Teacher Club
- ELAC Committee
- School Site Council
- Volunteering
- Family nights (such as Movie Night)
- Other:

18. Which method do you prefer the most as a means of receiving communication from the school regarding meetings, events and other information (please choose one)?

- Fliers
- Newsletters
- E-mail
- Phone message
- School website

## APPENDIX B

## INFORMED PARENT CONSENT LETTER FOR SURVEY

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am conducting a survey to determine the factors that affect parent participation at our school. I am using the information gathered from the survey to use in my thesis that I am writing through the Masters of Education in School Administration Program at California State University, Stanislaus. I am also hoping to use the survey results to determine ways to ensure better parent participation at our school by developing several opportunities for involvement. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey regarding your experience as a parent/guardian at our school. The completion of this survey should take approximately 10 – 15 minutes.

There is no known risk for your participation in this study. Your responses will remain anonymous, and all information collected will be protected from all inappropriate disclosure under law. All data will be maintained for a period of one year after the completion of this study and will be destroyed.

There is no cost to you beyond the time and effort required to complete the survey. Your participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate in this study will involve no penalty to you or your student. You may withdraw at any time without any penalty.

If you agree to participate, please indicate this by signing below. If you have any questions about this research project, contact me, Christina Deverall, at (209) 835 – 2597 or my university chairperson, Dr. John Borba at (209) 667 – 3260. If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the Campus Compliance Department at CSU Stanislaus at (209) 667 – 3747.

Sincerely,

Christina M. Deverall  
Master's Candidate

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_