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by

Tammica Traylor-Craft

May 2015

IS PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT A PREDICTOR OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT?:
ADMINISTRATORS' INSIGHTS

A Doctoral Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education
in Professional Leadership

by

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May, 2015

ADMINISTRATORS' INSIGHTS

A Doctoral Thesis for Degree
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Approved by Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Cheryl J. Craig, Committee Chair

Dr. Gayle Curtis, Committee Member

Dr. M. Wayne Emerson, Committee Member

Dr. John Schwartz, Committee Member

Dr. Laveria Hutchison, Committee Member

Dr. Robert H. McPherson, Dean
College of Education

May 2015

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Abstract

This study addresses the critical issue of parental involvement in the educational process. Educational research overwhelmingly reveals the importance of parental involvement for students. In addition, education theorists and national education goals mandated by legislators conclude that parental involvement is essential to increased student learning. The purpose of this study was to identify the beliefs of assistant principals regarding parental involvement. The results of this study will add to what is known about the views and practices of assistant principals. It additionally will provide useful information that can be distributed at professional development sessions for educational leaders as they prepare to become the future leaders of tomorrow.

This qualitative survey research used open-ended questions and responses to supplement the research findings emphasizing the need for parental involvement in the educational process. The data supports the literature in finding that parental involvement is crucial because it contributes to increased academic achievement in schools. Effective parental involvement is significant because the role of the educator is changing drastically due to government policies such as *No Child Left Behind* (2002). Both the literature and the survey results indicate the often unmet need for parental involvement programs on campuses. The findings in this study not only add to the literature, but they can practically inform campus administrators and school districts as a whole.

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Chapter I:

Introduction

Studies suggest that students who have greater parental support are more successful in academics and have higher career aspirations and goals. If the involvement of a student's guardian can be increased, his/her resistance to academics could potentially be decreased. For instance, the students could be less likely to use alcohol, participate in illegal activities, or get involved in using and/or selling drugs (Schunk & Meece, 1987). Strategic interventions are required to keep teenagers who are at a disadvantage because of poverty, cultural obstacles, and other barriers, from dropping out of school before graduation. Thus, parental involvement is a critical component of increasing academic achievement and a student's overall academic success (Edwards-Alldred, 2000; Jansor-Van Vorhis, 2002).

Henderson and Berla (1994) note that the benefits of parental involvement include higher grades, higher test scores, better attendance, and a higher ratio of completed homework. Given that parental involvement levels are the most accurate predictor of a student's achievement, schools should look for ways to strengthen parental participation in outreach programs (Henderson & Berla, 1994). The focus of this study will be on the factors that have the biggest impact on student achievement: parental involvement in the school.

At the national level, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2002) requires involving parents, in an organized, ongoing, and timely way, in the planning, review, and improvement of school programs including school parental involvement policy and the joint development of the school wide program plan under section 1114(b)(2) of NCLB.

Even before the NCLB Act, Goal 8 of the Goals 2000: Education American Act states, “By the year 2000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children” (National Education Goals Panel, 2004).

Despite researchers struggling to conclusively define the construct of parental involvement, the federal government created a definition as a part of NCLB. This definition was included in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) legislation guiding NCLB. In its 2004 publication, *Parental involvement: Action guide for parents and communities*, the federal government defined parental involvement as a meaningful, two-way communication involving student academic learning and other school activities.

Since these guidelines were established by the federal government, the focus has turned to local school districts. Each district and school that receives Title I money must develop a written parent involvement policy. As these policies have been developed, schools have sought ways to enact the government’s desires while building on already existing relationships within the school and the district. For this reason, school systems and individual schools have attempted to work closely with parents to develop strong involvement policies to help improve classroom learning. But the challenge still persists. While the government defined parental participation and educators have developed involvement policies, a disconnect remains between what educators and parents believe constitute the actual practices that meet the criteria for effective parental involvement.

Problem Statement

Parental involvement is critical to a student's academic success as well as a student's education as broadly conceived. Positive effects and benefits for parents and schools have been documented in the professional literature across time. As noted by Henderson and Berla (1994), the benefits to parental involvement include higher grades, higher test scores, better attendance, and a higher ratio of completed homework. Research also states that one of the most accurate and crucial predictor's of whether or not a student will be successful is not the student's income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family is able to support their child's academic career (Cibulka-Kritek, 1996; Henderson-Berla, 1994; Stevenson- Baker, 1987).

This thesis work intentionally examines assistant principals' insights regarding parental involvement. Specifically, the goal of this study is concerned with the perceptions of assistant principals with respect to (1) the appropriate and necessary level of parental involvement in a student's education; (2) the type of encouragement and support that parental involvement provides for academic student success; and (3) research literature on parental involvement versus parent engagement. Answers to the research questions that follow were sought.

Research Questions

To more comprehensively understand the importance of parental involvement in the educational process, this study focus on the following queries:

- 1) What are assistant principals' insights regarding what the necessary level of parental involvement should be?

2) Parental engagement vs. involvement... Why is it necessary to distinguish between the two?

3) Is there anything new about parental engagement/parental involvement that can be added to the literature base as a consequence of this research?

Definition of Terms

1. Assistant Principals –Serve as intermediate instructional leaders to enhance and collaborate on the school campus;
2. Parental involvement – refers to such things as home-school communications, attending schools functions, parents serving in voluntary roles in the classroom, parent- teacher conference assistant, homework help and parental involvement in decision making
3. Teacher Attitude/Beliefs – An individual's viewpoints or disposition toward a particular object. An attitude can have three components: affective (feelings toward the matter), cognitive (beliefs or knowledge about the matter), and behavioral (predisposition to act toward the matter) (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

This study contributes to the understanding of the importance of parental involvement in the educational process. With responses derived from a widely circulated survey, this thesis work is useful for educators who are searching for ways to improve parental involvement within their school contexts.

Chapter II:

Review of Literature

Parental involvement is a significant element in the educational process. Parental involvement has been part of education because legislation over the past decades has stressed its critical influence on student achievement as well as its importance in developing lasting relationships between schools and families. Educators' awareness of the importance of parental involvement, as it relates to having a positive impact on overall student academic performance in their school community, has increased. With additional students from a multiplicity of cultures, many barriers are presenting challenges for schools as campuses try to increase parental participation within their school communities.

The assistant principal-parent relationship and communication are additional aspects connected to parental involvement in schools, as many parents leave the responsibility of their children's education to the campus. Assistant principals and other administrators often feel that parents are not sufficiently involved in the educational process of their children (Epstein, 1995). They are of the belief that parents are not capable of providing quality academic support to students. Joyce Epstein, a leading researcher in the field of parental involvement, identified and studied multiple measures of parental involvement in the middle grades (Epstein, 1995; Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn & Van Voorhis, 2002). As a result of this research, Epstein and her colleagues developed a framework of six types of involvement with associated activities, challenges, and expected results. The following are the types of parental involvement that Epstein identified: 1) parenting, 2) communicating, 3) volunteering, 4) learning at

home, 5) decision making, and 6) collaborating with the community. In these ways, parental involvement has led the way as a key indicator of academic success.

A new wave of evidence, a report from Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (2002), concludes that when all school stakeholders work together cohesively to support learning, students perform better academically and school discipline problems decrease. The report, a synthesis of research on parent involvement over the past ten or so years, also found that, regardless of family income or background, students with involved parents are more likely to:

- *Earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs,
- *Be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits,
- *Attend school regularly,
- *Have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school,
- *Graduate and go on to postsecondary education.

The school plays a vital role in determining the levels of parental involvement. Specifically, schools can outline their expectations of parents and regularly communicate with parents about what children are learning. In addition, the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) recommends that parent/family involvement programs welcome parents as volunteer partners in schools and that these programs invite parents to act as full partners in making school decisions affecting children and families (National PTA, 2002). The report suggests that parents who talk to their children about the importance of attending school daily, with an understood expectation that academic success is not an option, perform better in school. School campuses that build partnerships seek to increase parental engagement and overall academic success school wide and produce an

environment that has a culture of high excellence.

Research has shown that all families want their children to be successful and that they care about them profoundly (Epstein, 1995). At the same time, parents and guardians in the United States do not have total control over their children as in previous eras. Society and government agencies have become more involved in family matters. Currently, over one in fifty American children are homeless (Noll, 2010). The question often arises, “What type of academic support is beneficial for the students/families that fall victim to the many barriers that exist in communities stricken with poverty?” On the contrary, the average parent is eager to obtain better information from schools about how to develop a partnership between school and home. Students want to see parents and teachers collaborate and communicate about school activities, homework, and school decisions (Epstein, 1995).

In China, family traditions under the Confucian system prevail and parental involvement is vital to student success. Zhao and Akiba (2009) reported that over 95% of the school assistant principals participating in their study expected parents to let the school know about their children’s problems and to ensure that homework had been completed. Thus, parents and assistant principals need to have a better understanding of each other’s expectations for parental involvement (Craig, Zou & Poimbeauf, 2015). Once this is accomplished, both groups can work better to ensure their collaboration will positively influence student learning (Zhao & Akiba, 2009).

School administration could become more responsive to the needs of parents, and parents would feel more empowered. Thus, parents are more likely to take an active role in the education of their children. In addition, assistant principals who facilitate parental

involvement activities are more likely to recognize that all parents can help their children (Zhao & Akiba, 2009).

A useful tool for parents can be accessed at <http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Parents.shtml>. This website provides parenting resources about the following topics: 1) child care (child care finder, safety checklist, provider resources, etc.), 2) child support (enforcement handbook, FAQs, state child support websites, etc.), 3) Education issues for parents (student grants, homework help, special needs, etc.), 4) Health issues for parents (nutrition, hospital comparisons, vaccines, etc.), 5) safety and crime prevention for parents (internet safety, sex offender registry, car seats, etc.), and 6) youth employment (career options, student jobs, volunteering, etc.).

The National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE) and the Public Education Network (PEN) proposed online Action Briefs for the major themes covered in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2002). NCPIE (2009) stresses parental programs that educate parents on how to support their children at home is greatly connected to the overall academic performance in school. Used in various forms, the briefs are tools for professional development, parental training workshops, and so forth. As studies show when schools and families work together to support learning, everyone benefits:

- Students do better in school and in life
- Parents become empowered
- Teacher morale improves
- Schools get better
- Communities grow stronger.

While parents are referenced over 300 times in various part of the No Child Left Behind act, Section 1118, Title I of the Act (2002) is the part that deals exclusively with parents. It is the only section in the Act dedicated to parental involvement, and if implemented or enacted effectively, provides core elements that address many of the other parental involvement provisions of NCLB (2002). The National Coalition for Parental Involvement in Education (NCPIE) places a strong emphasis on its belief that communication is the root of effective partnerships. As educators become familiar with NCLB through the various other PEN/NCPIE Action Briefs, other parental involvement roles are also defined.

Specifically, Section 1118 requires that every school district and every school receiving Title I dollars must have a written parent involvement policy, as well as a plan to build school capacity to effectively enact the parent provisions documents. This policy must be developed jointly with, approved by, and distributed to parents of participating children and the local community. It must ensure that strong plans for parental involvement are in place in every Title I school. Such plans must encourage and sustain active parental participation. The policy is the “plan,” and requires both parents and schools to identify procedures and elements believed to comprise the most effective partnering of the school and families. Since Section 1118 does not contain enforcement provisions (for instance, nothing happens to a school if it does not have a policy, follow the provisions of the law, or fails to implement the policies), school districts and schools often overlook this provision, or fail to make it an educational priority. In that instance, parents need to take the lead in assuring the development of an effective parental involvement policy (2004).

NCPIE is a coalition of major education, community, public service, and advocacy organizations working to create meaningful family-school partnerships in every school in America. Many parents encounter obstacles becoming involved in their children's schools. In developing parent involvement programs, school, parent and community leaders need to take these barriers into consideration (NCLB 2002):

- Differing ideas among parents and teachers on what constitutes involvement,
- A less-than-hospitable atmosphere toward parents and other visitors in schools and classrooms,
- Negative or neutral communication from schools,
- Insufficient training for teachers on how to reach out to both mothers and fathers,
- Lack of parental education and parenting skills,
- Time and job pressures,
- Language barriers,

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2002) describes parental involvement as a non-negotiable condition for States to appropriate funds from the federal government. States hoping to receive the federal funding available must be in compliance with the policies that are in place to regulate and ensure practices for involving parents in the education of their children are followed accordingly. Understanding that parents have a major influence on the academic success of their children, the following conditions are a part of the Title I plan as it pertains to No Child Left Behind (2002):

- That parents must be consulted by their state in developing their Title I plan. The plan must indicate how each level of the school system in the state will support parental involvement, and how Title I parental involvement is coordinated with other programs under NCLB, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998, the Head Start Act, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
- That a school district does not qualify to receive Title I funds until it implements the parent involvement requirements found in Section 1118, but very few schools lose their funding if found to be in non-compliance with Section 1118 provisions.
- That every Title I school district and Title I school is required to have a written parent involvement policy develop jointly with, and approved by parents.
- That NCLB provides funds for Title 1 schools to use to help parents better understand standards, assessments, and report cards.
- That Title 1 schools are responsible for holding meetings to discuss parent involvement policies, programs and activities with flexible hours designed to accommodate working parents.
- Parents must be involved in deciding how Title 1 funds are allotted for parent involvement programs and activities.
- Monies from Title 1 schools can be used to provide support to parents for transportation, childcare, or home visits, in cases where these things prevents a parent from becoming involved in their child's school.

Additionally Title I schools are to ensure programs have effective parental involvement by:

- Providing assistance to parents of Title I children served by the school or local educational agency in helping them to understand such topics as:
 - The state's academic content standards and state student academic achievement standards,
 - State and local academic assessments, and
 - How to monitor a child's progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their children;
- Supporting partnerships among each Title I school, parents, and the community to improve student academic achievement.
- Providing materials and training to help parents to work with their children at home to improve their children's achievement and providing opportunities for full participation of parents with limited English proficiency, parents with disabilities, and parents of migratory children, including information and school reports, to the extent practicable, that parents can understand
- Educating teachers, personnel, principals, and others, with the assistance of parents, on the value and utility of parental contributions, and how to reach out and communicate with parents as equal partners, implementing and coordinating parent programs, and building ties between the home and school;
- Coordinating and integrating parent involvement programs and activities with

Head Start, Reading First, Early Reading First, Even Start, the Home Instruction Programs for Preschool Youngsters, the Parents as Teachers Program, and public preschool and other programs, to the extent practicable

- Conducting other activities, such as parent resource centers, that encourage and support parents in participating more fully in the education of their children;
- Sending information to parents relating to school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities.

Various aspects of parental involvement have different influences on student achievement (Fan & Williams, 2010). There are different activities that parents can do at home to help their children with school-related matters. Children whose parents engage them in positive conversations about school and education are more likely to project the same positive attitude toward learning. Parents exposing their children to diverse cultures through traveling and vacationing help educate them on various cultural practices. In short, parents should educate and instill in their children that environment is conducive to academic excellence.

Assistant Principals' Insight

Richardson (2009) examined principals' perceptions of parental involvement with respect to their attitudes and found that parental involvement increases academic achievement. According to that research, the following characteristics add value to parental involvement as we know it: 1) a needs assessment; 2) collaborations; 3) long-

term plan; 4) engaging for parents; 5) a liaison between parents and school; 6) resource inventory; 7) develop strategies; 8) open communications; and 9) utilize a variety of meeting locations.

Lack of parental involvement is one of many pernicious problems challenging public schools (Mazzotti & Higgins, 2006). Therefore, schools must have an open door policy for parents, especially those who have a child or youth involved in the juvenile justice system. Offering parents the option to visit the school, as needed, may reduce their feelings of fear and anxiety around their child's return to the public school environment (Mazzotti & Higgins, 2006). There is also a need for school district administrators to develop collaborative relationships with parents. "Educators and schools must create an environment that is fair and just for every student," declare Wald, Mazzotti and Higgins (2006).

Assistant principals, teachers, and parents differ on their beliefs and understanding of the importance of parental involvement in their children's lives (Driessen, Smith, & Sleggers, 2005). The amount of time parents contribute towards being actively involved in their child's education affects the level and type of cooperation observed between assistant principals and parents.

Cooperation of school administrators and teachers in helping parents feel that they belong to the school is a critical component in parental involvement in schools from family and other community stakeholders. Partnership in the education of children implies mutual respect and open communication between parents, teachers, and assistant principals. Hood and LoVette (2002) found that parents' perceptions of the school administration are good predictors of school performance scores. Turney and Kao (2009)

reported assistant principals believe that if teachers communicate with parents about the learning difficulties and discipline problems of their children, parents can intervene in time to help their children that are struggling and having difficulties in school. Assistant principals believe that when parents are involved in the educational process of their children, there are fewer discipline concerns in comparison to students who have higher discipline concerns. Assistant principals also are of the belief that a parent's involvement in his/her son or daughter's education is deeply influenced by the opportunities and resources to which parents have access (Driessen, Smith, & Sleggers, 2005).

Pushor (2009) believes the difference between parental involvement and engagement is that involvement focuses on what a parent can do for a school, while engagement is more of a shared responsibility in which power and authority is shared by educators and parents. As a result, the agenda being served is mutually determined and beneficial to all. Pushor additionally believes that subtle differences ensure a collaborative approach to everything from literacy building to fundraising, and she thinks it is the key to student success.

"Engagement," in comparison to involvement, comes from *en*, meaning "make," and *gage*, meaning "pledge" – to make a pledge (Harper, 2002), to make a moral commitment (Sykes, 1976, p. 343). The word engagement is further defined as "contact by fitting together; ... the meshing of gears" (engagement). The implication is that the person 'engaged' is an integral and essential part of a process, brought into the act through care and commitment. By extension, engagement implies enabling parents to take their place alongside educators in the schooling of their children and bridging their knowledge of children, teaching and learning, with teachers' knowledge. With parent

engagement, possibilities are created for the structure of schooling to be flattened, power and authority to be shared by educators and parents, and the agenda being mutually determined and mutually beneficial (Pushor & Ruitenberg, 2005, pp. 12-13).

In attending to “an educationally oriented ambiance” it is important to look to what happens out of school, in the world of the home and community, as well as what happens in school. “What children achieve academically is the product not only of what they learn in school, but of a wide variety of factors, including home and neighborhood influences, and social and economic conditions” (Rothstein, 2005). Knowing this, “there is much more to attend to both within and outside of the boundaries of the school’s agenda of student achievement” (Pushor & Ruitenberg, 2005, p. 14).

Such considerations include the difference culturally appropriate programming makes to school attendance and participation, and to positive identity formation for both students and their parents; the influence of adult education classes on student engagement and retention and on parental success and well-being; the provision of easy and open access to computers, internet, newspapers and resources in enhancing both school and home literacies; and the provision of opportunity for voice, for sharing personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1986; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). All of this influences decision making of personal, family, and community consequence in strengthening students’ and parents’ sense of personal power and autonomy (Pushor & Ruitenberg, 2005, pp. 14-15).

The most significant implication of the research on parent involvement/engagement is that educators have to interrupt the scripted story of schools as protectorates (Pushor, 2009) and start looking inward at themselves – at what they do

and why they do it. “Rarely has the education community stepped forward and pointed to itself and its inherent culture, as the possible nucleus of the problem” noted Constantino (2006, p. 6). Instead of looking outward at families or communities as reasons for low parental engagement or unsatisfactory student outcomes, schools have a responsibility to look inward at their own assumptions and beliefs, and how these are lived out in their practices, as a starting place for changing the school landscape. “[T]his moving inward is often multiple, overlapping, and simultaneous: staff move inward as individuals, they move inward together as a school team, and they move inward as a broad school community,” according to Pushor and Ruitenberg (2005, p. 29). As individuals, they look at themselves, their attitudes, and where their own hearts are at in regard to the respect they have for parents and community members. As a school team, they additionally focus on their collectively-held beliefs.

The Parent Institute for Quality Education was established in 1987. It is a free program where parents are trained for nine weeks on how to create a positive environment and apply strategies to support their children in their academic curriculum. Its support is consistent methodologies that help children become dedicated stakeholders in their own academic success. Schools play an important role as well. They contribute by inviting the Parent Institute to hold sessions at their school, recruiting participants, providing facilities and support for the courses, and then following up with parent involvement programs (PIQE, 2010). Schools also provide matching funds for the cost of the program, making it cost-free to participants. In addition, many schools that start a PIQE program stay with it year after year, as new parents come into the school community (PIQE, 2010).

PIQE's efforts have a positive effect upon students. Several years ago, Stanford Research Institute performed a comprehensive evaluation of the PIQE program, and found that children of PIQE graduates had fewer disciplinary problems, spent more time on homework each night and were more motivated to attend college (PIQE, 2010). PIQE creates partnerships between parents, students and educators to further students' academic success. As a consequence of their parental involvement/engagement work, more than 1.5 million under-served student's educations have been impacted since its inception in 1987. Public schools need and value PIQE, as parents need, and students use PIQE as a springboard to their own personal and career success (PIQE, 2010). PIQE graduates parents who have attended 80% of the weekly sessions that are ongoing for nine weeks. Upon graduating from the program, graduates have an opportunity to help other parents in a volunteer role.

Parent Engagement versus Parent Involvement

An old saying is roughly analogous to the issue facing schools today as they consider the kind of relationships they want to build with the parents of their students. It has been characterized as the difference between parent involvement (the chicken) and parent engagement (the pig) (Ferlazzo, 2009). The author first become aware of this contrast through a study of organizing work by the Industrial Areas Foundation in Texas schools. Boston College professor Dennis Shirley wrote about the IAF's decades-long efforts in his 1997 book *Community Organizing for Urban School Reform*. When schools *involve* parents they are leading with their institutional self-interest and desires – school staff are leading with their mouths. When schools engage parents, they are leading

with the parents' self-interests (their wants and dreams) in an effort to develop a genuine partnership. In this instance, school staff members are leading with their ears (Ferlazzo, 2009). A few differences that separate the two are outlined in the following section.

Whose Energy Drives It? Who Initiates It?

When we involve parents, ideas and energy tends to come from the schools and from government mandates. We tend to sell ideas. School staff might feel they know what the problems are and how to fix them. "When we are engaging parents, ideas tend to be elicited from parents by school staff in the context of developing trusting relationships. More parent energy drives the efforts because they emerge from parent/community needs and priorities" declares Ferlazzo (2009, p.21?). "At Luther Burbank High School in Sacramento, an internationally recognized family literacy project was started to provide computers and home Internet access to immigrant families after parents suggested the idea, organized other parents, and worked with teachers to develop an implementation plan." Ferlazzo continued:

When we're involving parents, we might be irritating them – pushing them to do something about what we as staff might perceive as important. We may be asking them to do things without necessarily having a trusting and reciprocal relationship with school staff. Perhaps their only previous conversations with teachers have been when their child has been in trouble (Ferlazzo, 2009, p. 22).

When parents are engaged, they are challenged to do something about what they feel is important to them.

Home Visits, Parental and Staff Responsibility

A huge part of effective parent-teacher communication is parental involvement, as

teachers feel that parents are not supportive and involved in their children's education as they would like for them to be. While this is the belief of some teachers, there are other teachers that also feel the parents are not educated or equipped with the knowledge necessary to support their children in academics. Developing a relationship is critical and educators can best learn what parents believe is important by conducting home visits for their students. The work of the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project in Sacramento, and the Industrial Areas Foundation in Texas and around the United States, always begins with home visits to initiate conversations and learn about parent hopes and dreams. The IAF contrasts this "conversation" approach – which is two-way – with the typical "communication" approach schools take – which is one-way (Ferlazzo, 2009) and top-down in terms of expertise.

When parents are involved, the parent is generally directed towards completing tasks selected by the school staff – or the parent may be a client who receives services and information. When parents are engaged, the parent is considered a leader or a potential leader who is integral to identifying a vision and goals. He/she encourages others to contribute their own vision to that big picture and helps perform the tasks that need to be achieved in order to reach those goals (Ferlazzo, 2009). The city of West Sacramento organized a community program of gardens at neighboring school sites that provided resources, food, and other important items related to the health and nutrition welfare of students and the families residing in the school community. In addition, curriculum opportunities were available as well. Ferlazzo (2009) believes that when parents are involved, school staff can fall into the role of a social worker who does things for parents, or who tends to tell them what they should be doing with their child. In

addition, Ferlazzo (2009) states that when we engage parents, the school staff act more as community organizers who help parents do things for themselves, and who elicit from parents ideas about what parents and school staff could be doing to better help their child and their community.

When parental involvement is a priority, schools focus on supporting students by implementing and increasing parental involvement through school community programs. When engaging parents, it is extremely important to build relationships that will help support students by working with their parents. For example,

Richard Rothstein and others have documented how schools on their own might be able to narrow the achievement gap, but without adequate affordable housing, accessible health care, and the availability of good jobs, it will be impossible to eliminate it. Schools in Texas and Los Angeles have worked with the Industrial Areas Foundation and member institutions that connect to parents of their students (e.g., religious congregations, labor unions, community groups) to gain neighborhood, city-wide, and state-wide improvements in these areas (Ferlazzo, 2009, p.24).

Ferlazzo concludes that not all parent involvement is bad, as most research has shown that just about any kind of increased connection between schools and parents is beneficial for the student. He goes on to say that parent engagement is better, and offers opportunities for transformational beneficial change – for the school, for the community, for the family and for the student.

Traditions in China and family values offer pros and cons in the educational programs. Confucian family ethical system supersedes even after an ongoing effort to discredit the philosophy in order to maintain obedience to the government. However,

parental rights have been the same. For a male, the traditional family structure in the Chinese culture is one that fosters attention. The family unit is strong, supportive of one another and they watch out for their own. Children in China still reside with their parents after marriage and birth of their own children. Teachers find support in the family with classroom behavior and student discipline, developing responsibility and ownership for academics.

In comparison, parents in the United States are not given enough rights as parents where discipline is concerned and their children have grown aware of that (Noll, 2010). Research states this is one of the reasons why one in fifty children that reside in America do not have a place of residence. In education, parents should be in contact with teachers and administrators on a consistent basis as needed to offer support whenever needed. By doing so, the parents become knowledgeable of what is necessary for their children to increase academic success personally.

Chapter III:

Methodology

The data for this study was drawn from a large data pool that included Assistant Principals in Greater Houston and surrounding school districts. This study was designed to better understand and make suggestions for the role of the assistant principal as it relates to parental involvement and student academic achievement. The section of the data pool for this particular study includes general information about parental involvement, teachers, and assistant principals. This thesis study focuses on the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of assistant principals regarding the necessary level of parental involvement?
2. Is it necessary to distinguish between parental engagement and parental involvement?
3. Is there anything new about parental engagement/parental involvement that can be added to the literature base as a consequence of this survey research study?

This chapter describes the research methods that will be used to investigate these questions and includes the following subsections: (1) research design; (2) participants; (3) instruments; (4) procedures; (5) data analysis; (6) validity and reliability; (7) limitations and (8) implications.

Research Design

This study utilizes a survey research method that has produced an archival data set. The survey included two open-ended questions. To examine and analyze differences between groups, a mixed methods approach was used. According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) accountability system, each school is given a rating of Exemplary, Recognized, Acceptable, and Low Performing based on its cumulative high stakes testing scores. For the survey, the assistant principals represented 33 Exemplary, 95 Recognized, 186 Acceptable, and 17 Low Performing campuses. 35 schools did not have a rating because they were charter schools or private schools and were not part of TEA's public school rating system.

Instrument

This study revolved around assistant principals' responses to three questions regarding their beliefs about parental involvement as it relates to academic achievement. The survey questions that were used were open-ended, which allowed for greater flexibility for participants to provide answers. The archival data was collected from a portion of identical principal and assistant principal surveys that replicated surveys previously developed by Dr. Angus MacNeil of the University of Houston. This study revolves around Section F of the survey. It centers on collected data having to do with the value that principals and assistant principals place on the role of parental involvement in their students' educations.

A copy of the complete survey instrument is included in Appendix A. This section captures the perceptions of assistant principals relating to students' academic achievement. As explained earlier, this thesis research is based on the archival data set

from the Likert-scale and open ended questions.

Procedures

The data and information used for this study on the perceptions of assistant principals and academic student achievement were accessed and analyzed. The open-ended survey questions were intended to give the assistant principals the most freedom and flexibility in offering their responses. This helped to capture insightful information from the assistant principals. Although different sections of the survey included Likert scale questions, the sections analyzed focuses on the open-ended questions with assistant principal descriptors.

Data Analysis

Participants' answers were coded and grouped. Commonalities and differences between the two groups were established by analyzing the survey results from the study. The answers relating to the three research questions were analyzed to search for common themes among answers and participants. The three questions were:

- 1) What are assistant principals' insights regarding what the necessary level of parental involvement should be?
- 2) Is it necessary to distinguish between parental engagement and parental involvement?
- 3) Is there anything new about parental engagement/parental involvement that can be added to the literature as a consequence of this study?

The open-ended questions particularly provide information about the assistant principals' insights on parental involvement and the effect it has on academic achievement. The data that was produced was then used to determine how parental involvement appears to affect student achievement in schools. The research questions

were designed to better understand and make suggestions concerning the importance of having parents involved in the educational process. In section F concerning parental involvement, several questions were made available to the assistant principal participants. The data was then further analyzed to determine if there is a difference in assistant principals' insights based on the participants' level of teaching experience, race and gender. The data was also examined to determine if there is a difference between common responses based on the socioeconomic status of the school, TEA accountability ratings, and whether or not the school is an elementary or secondary campus. Special attention was paid to findings that introduce new considerations that have not already been taken into account in the literature review.

Validity and Reliability

The survey asked open-ended questions and provides opportunities for respondents to elaborate their answers. Reliability was maintained by reassessing the coding. The surveys distributed to, and completed by, the assistant principals and principals were, in themselves, reliable. They asked identical questions of both the principals and assistant principals. The study was based on a well-developed, open-ended archival instrument. The data and the survey were valid and reliable.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, the sample involved archival data. This means a second person—other than the one who generated the data—is using it. The integrity of the data is thus decreased and questionable because of its archival nature. Further to this, only a portion of this data was used. The U.S. data, as opposed to the international data pool was selected. Second, the data collected from the

administrators cannot be presumed to be an accurate reflection of views of all administrators (principals and assistant principals) in the Greater Houston and surrounding areas in the Gulf Coast Region of Southeast Texas. Put simply, a random sample was not possible for this study. Hence, the sample is a convenience sample and not a random sample, which is a third limitation of this thesis study.

Implications

The data and research in this thesis research was used to determine the implications and usefulness of the study as well as to make recommendations for staff development in the areas of parental involvement and student academic success. The data and research connected information about the importance of involving parents in their child's educational process, planning effective staff development, as-well as making recommendations about teacher/parent effective communication.

Chapter IV:

Data Analysis

The literature review stressed that parent involvement is a common vehicle for bringing together stakeholders in the educational process (Pushor 2009). To effectively put into practice a solid parental program that will be sustainable throughout the test of time, the administration must be knowledgeable and aware of what is required. The support and methodologies generated on campus must be communicated in a positive manner to all because it has a bearing on student achievement. The purpose of the study was to analyze archival data using the instrumentation described in Chapter 3. After analyzing the results of the survey, 366 useable responses were included in the final data set for the purpose of examining assistant principals' insights concerning parental involvement and student achievement. Employed as assistant principals from urban, suburban, and rural school districts, the respondents formed a convenience sample warranting their eligibility to participate in the study. Both qualitative and quantitative questions focusing on the beliefs of assistant principals were measured via Dr. Angus MacNeil's locally-enacted questionnaire. As shown in Table 1, the participants included 262 female assistant principals and 104 male assistant principals. The assistant principals included a representation of various ethnicities: 51% white/Non-Hispanic, 25% black/non-Hispanic, 19% Hispanic, 3% Asian/Pacific Islander, less than 1% American Indian, and 3% unreported. The study included assistant principals employed in various settings (public schools, private schools, charter schools) in the Greater Houston and Gulf Coast Region. The average level of education of the participants was 16 years.

The locations of the elementary and secondary schools where the participants serve as assistant principals were varied.

Attributes of Assistant Principals Represented in the Survey

366 respondents participated in the study by answering all of the queries. These assistant principals are now being described according to their gender, ethnicity, school level, school location and school accountability rating.

Gender

There were 104 male assistant principals who participated and 262 female assistant principals who were part of the study. (Table 1)

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of the Participants by Gender

Variable	Number	Percent
Gender		
Male	104	
Female	262	70
Total	366	100.00

Ethnicity

Survey participants' ethnicity were divided into six distinct categories for this study. There were 187 assistant principals, approximately 50 percent, who reported their ethnic status as Anglo and 93 or 25 percent who indicated their ethnic status was African American. Additionally, 68 or 19 percent of the assistant principals indicated their ethnic

identity was Hispanic and 11 or 3 percent revealed their ethnicity as Asian. 1 percent identified his or her ethnic background as American Indian (see Table 2).

Variable	Number	Percent
Ethnicity		
Anglo	187	51.6
African American	93	24.9
Hispanic	68	18.2
Asian	11	3
America Indian	1	.3
Missing cases	6	1.6
Total	366	100.00

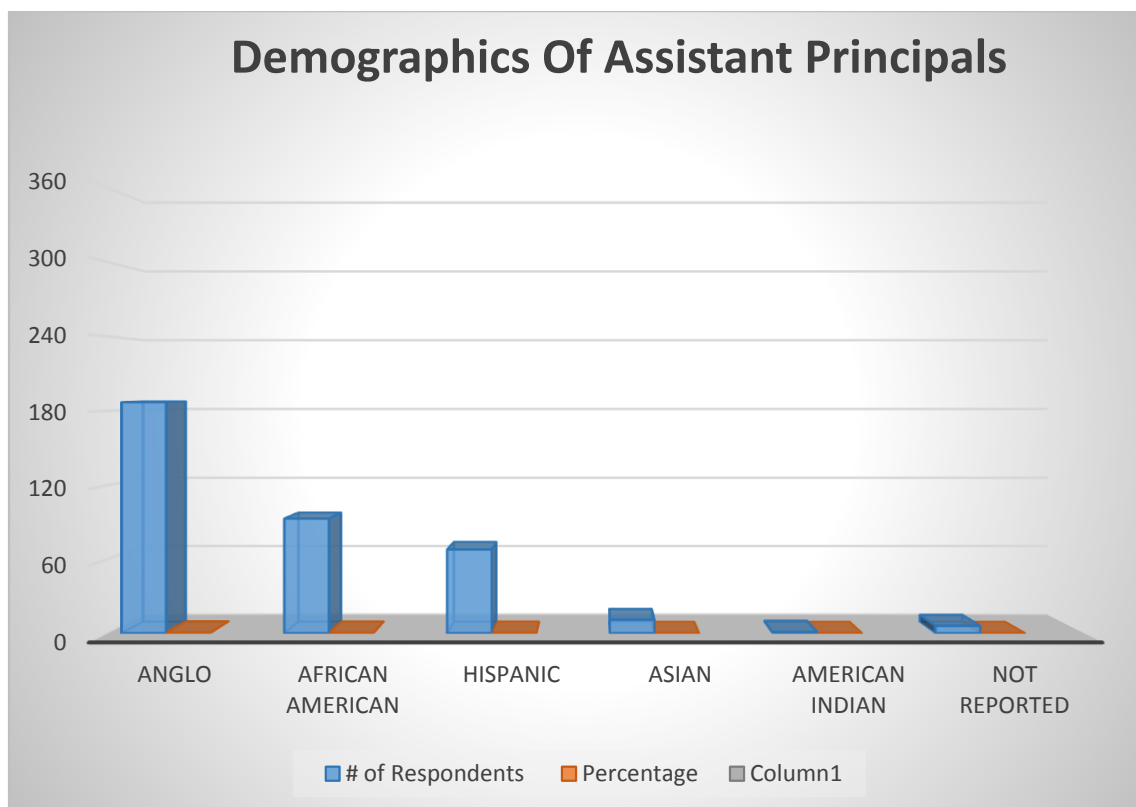


Figure 1. Demographic distribution of participating Assistant Principals

School Level

Regarding school level, 168 or 45 percent of the assistant principals were employed in elementary school and 90 or 24 percent of them were employed in middle schools. In comparison, 100 or 27 percent of the assistant principals were employed in high schools and 10 or 3 percent were employed in mixed- grade schools (see Table 3).

Table 3

Frequency Distribution of the Participants by Grade Level

Grade Level	Number	Percent
Elementary	174	46.5
Middle	90	24.1
High	100	26.7
Mixed Grade	10	2.7
Total	366	100.00

School Location

The variable school location was categorized into three groups. Two hundred and two or 54 percent of the assistant principals were employed in schools in urban areas and 162 or 43 percent were employed in schools in suburban areas. Finally, 10 or 3 percent of the assistant principals were employed in schools in rural areas (see Table 4).

Table 4

Frequency Distribution of the Participants by School Location

School Locations	Number	Percent
Urban	202	54.0
Suburban	162	43.3
Rural	10	2.7
Total	366	100

School Accountability Rating

The schools' accountability ratings were measured in four categories determined and assigned by TEA. Of the 366 campuses, there were 33 or 9 percent of the assistant principals who worked at schools rated exemplary, 95 or 25 percent of them working at schools rated as acceptable and 17 or 5 percent of them worked at school rated low performing. There were 35 or 11 percent that were missing a TEA accountability rating (Table 5).

Table 5

Frequency Distribution of Participants by School Accountability Rating

School Accountability Rating	Number of Campuses	Percent
Exemplary	33	8.9
Recognized	95	25.4
Acceptable	186	49.7
Low Performing	17	4.5
Missing Cases	35	11.5
Total	366	100

Examination of Research Questions

Section F of the investigative instrument, “Assistant Principal Survey” was used to address the three research questions formulated for this investigation. Section F consisted of two open-ended questions and one close-ended question. These open-ended questions provided an opportunity for the participants to elaborate their responses.

The first question under section F was:

What level of parental involvement do you believe is necessary and adequate in a student’s education?

It continued:

What do you do to encourage and support parent involvement in their students' educations? Explain your answer here.

The instrumentation utilized in the survey for this section addressed the insights of the assistant principals and elucidated their views regarding parental involvement. The information was based on open-ended questions and archival data yielded from the Likert-scale survey. The assistant principals' insights concerning the necessary level of parental involvement in a student's education is indicated in their qualitative responses from the first question of Section F.

Research Question 1

One: What is the assistant principals insight regarding what the necessary level of parental involvement should be?

Reported in Table 6 are assistant principals' insights regarding the appropriate level of parental involvement as it relates to academic achievement. Of the 366 assistant principals who provided comments regarding the appropriate and necessary level of parental involvement in students' educations, 247 or 66% of the assistant principals rated level of parental involvement as high in students' educations and 2.9 percent (11) of the assistant principals rated level of parental involvement as low in students' educations (see Table 6).

Table 6

Assistant Principals' Insight about the Level of Parental Involvement in Students' Education

Level	of	Parental	Number	Percent
Involvement				
High			247	66.0
Moderate			110	29.4
Low			11	2.9
Missing Cases			6	1.6

Research Question 2

Is it necessary to distinguish between parental engagement and parental involvement?

The instrument was too grossly designed for the subtleties between parental engagement and parent involvement to be extrapolated. However, when the responses were qualitatively analyzed, less than half of the responses suggested a parental engagement approach and more than half of the responses suggested that parental involvement was occurring. An example suggesting parent engagement would be parents participating on the vision committee of the school and having input into what field trips students would experience in any given year. An example that suggested parent involvement, on the other hand, would be supervising field trips, being parent volunteers at the prom celebration and providing snacks for sports day. In addition, a large number of comments demonstrated neither characteristic.

Richardson (2009) examined principals' perceptions of parental involvement with respect to their attitudes and found that parental involvement increases academic

achievement. According to that research, the following steps add value to parental involvement as we know it: 1) a needs assessment; 2) collaborations; 3) long-term plan; 4) engaging for parents; 5) a liaison between parents and school; 6) resource inventory; 7) develop strategies; 8) open communications; and 9) utilize a variety of meeting locations.

Research Question 3

1. Is there anything new about parental engagement/parental involvement that can be added to the literature base as a consequence of this study?

Based on the survey results, both terms, parent engagement and parent involvement, may be misnomers, given the rate of marital breakdowns in the urban/suburban populations studied and the extended member family configuration that occurs due to poverty and/or the faltering economy. Also, immigrant families new to Texas tend to live in dwellings with larger numbers of family members than the norm for financial reasons. In the literature review, the word, guardian, was suggested in the literature in addition to parent. It may be that terms will need to be changed in future research studies of this nature to reflect the current nature of Houston-area and Gulf Coast Region families. This also suggests that changes would need to be made at the U.S. level as well because Texas's current composition, according to demographers, reflects the U.S. population distribution of the future with Hispanics forming the majority.

Another phenomenon present in the study results is the fact that for any particular parent engagement/parent involvement activity more than one adult may accompany the child. This is because family members and significant others work multiple jobs and appear to take a tag-team approach to parent involvement/engagement. Together, the adults represent and support the child but in a manner different than the status quo.

The findings of the survey suggest that school districts should consider implementing parental involvement programs in which parents are afforded the opportunity to learn how to be academically responsible for their students' success. When all stakeholders work together cohesively, everyone benefits as a whole.

The assistant principal-parent relationship and communication are additional aspects connected to parental involvement in schools, as many parents leave the responsibility of their children's education to the campus. Assistant principals and other administrators often feel that parents are not sufficiently involved enough in the educational process of their children (Epstein, 1995). They are of the belief that parents are not capable of providing quality academic support to students. Joyce Epstein, a leading researcher in the field of parental involvement, identified and studied multiple measures of parental involvement in the middle grades (Epstein, 1995; Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn & Van Voorhis, 2002). This research agrees with or supports Epstein's work. Epstein and her colleagues developed a framework of six types of involvement with associated activities, challenges, and expected results. The following are the types of parental involvement that Epstein identified: 1) parenting, 2) communicating, 3) volunteering, 4) learning at home, 5) decision making, and 6) collaborating with the community. In these ways, parental involvement has led the way as a key indicator of academic success (See table 7).

Table 7
Six Types of Parental Involvement
 (Joyce EpsteinResearch/ResearchSummaries/ParentInvolvement/tabid/274/Default.aspx)

Type 1	Parenting	Activities are designed to help families understand young adolescent development, acquire developmentally appropriate parenting skills, set home conditions to support learning at each grade level, and help schools obtain information about students.
Type 2	Communicating	Activities focus on keeping parents informed through such things as notices, memos, report cards, conferences about student work, and school functions.
Type 3	Volunteering	Activities incorporate strategies to improve volunteer recruiting, training, and scheduling.
Type 4	Learning at home	Activities allow coordination of schoolwork with work at home (i.e., goal setting, interactive homework).
Type 5	Decision making	Activities are designed to solicit the voice of parents in decisions about school policies and practices.
Type 6	Collaborating with the community	Activities acknowledge and bring together all community entities (i.e., with the community businesses, religious organizations) with a vested interest in the education of young adolescents.

Data Collection Procedures

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to draw conclusions from the sample population tested. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) will be used for all data analysis. Descriptive statistics will be reported for all variables. A General Linear Model of univariate analysis of variance will be used to determine if there are statistically significant differences on the survey by assistant principal years of experience, gender, and school rating. I will use a factor analysis to determine any predominant factors on the survey.

Chapter V:

Findings, Conclusions, and Implications

The research literature and subsequent studies indicated that a link between student achievement and parental involvement exists. The literature review identified the huge impact of parental involvement effecting student performance and increasing academic achievement. To sum up this thesis study, this chapter will remind readers of the purpose, rationale, and research methods of this work. Additionally, this chapter's discussion will include implications for future practice. The conclusions will be presented in detail, including areas where the present study supports or conflicts with the existing literature on assistant principals' insight and actions regarding parental involvement. This chapter furthermore discusses how this study is relevant to parental involvement, as an increase in parental involvement stands to increase academic achievement.

This study analyzed archival data from a survey and open-ended research questions. After analyzing the archival data, the results were categorized according to the response of the assistant principals. This chapter 1) provides a summary of the study; 2) reiterates the findings of the research; 3) addresses limitations, future research, and recommendations; 4) offers some personal thoughts as an assistant principal and minority parent; and 5) concludes the thesis study research.

Summary of the Study

This study revealed the importance of parental involvement and the effect it has on student academic achievement. The metaphor of a "protectorate" has been used to

describe the typical way in which schooling has been, and often continues to be, lived out (Pushor, 2001; Pushor & Murphy, in revision). Parent involvement is a common vehicle for bringing teachers and parents together in schools that help and encourage their children at home, contribute to the growth and academic success of their children (Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvariz, Bloom, 1993, P. 85).

Like the research presented in Chapter 2's literature review, data from the survey supports the argument that there is a strong need for incorporating parental involvement programs and activities inside of schools. Also, school assistant administrators desire ongoing staff development training for increasing parental involvement on their respective campuses. In addition, the special considerations concerning the socioeconomic and rural scenarios, are strengthened by this research study. Furthermore, one respondent succinctly stated that the heart of every successful school is "parental involvement," Parents can support their children's schooling by attending school functions and responding to school obligations.

The most significant research on parent involvement/engagement is that educators have to interrupt the scripted story of schools as protectorates (Pushor, 2009) and start looking inward at themselves – at what they do and why they do it. "Rarely has the education community stepped forward and pointed to itself and its inherent culture, as the possible nucleus of the problem," declared Constantino (2006). Instead of looking outward at families or communities as reasons for low parental engagement or unsatisfactory student outcomes, schools have a responsibility to look inward at their own assumptions and beliefs, and how these are lived out in their practices, as a starting place for changing the school landscape. "[T]his moving inward is often multiple, overlapping,

and simultaneous: staff move inward as individuals, they move inward together as a school team, and they move inward as a broad school community,” suggest Pushor and Ruitenberg (2005, p. 29).

As individuals, faculty need to look at themselves, their attitudes, and where their own hearts are at in regard to the respect they have for parents and community members and school teams. Additionally, they need to ponder their collectively-held beliefs. In education, parents should remain in contact with teachers and administrators on a consistent basis to offer support whenever needed. By doing so, the parents become knowledgeable of what is necessary for their children to achieve academic success personally.

Pushor (2009) argued that the difference between parental involvement and engagement is that involvement focuses on what a parent can do for a school, while engagement is more of a shared responsibility in which power and authority is shared by educators and parents. As a result, the agenda being served is mutually determined and beneficial to all (Pushor, 2009). She additionally believes that this subtle difference ensures a collaborative approach to everything from literacy building to fundraising, and she thinks it is the key to student success (Pushor, 2009).

Engagement,” in comparison to involvement, comes from *en*, meaning “make,” and *gage*, meaning “pledge” – to make a pledge (Harper, 2002), to make a moral commitment (Sykes, 1976, p. 343). The word engagement is further defined as “contact by fitting together; ... the meshing of gears” (engagement). The implication is that the person ‘engaged’ is an integral and essential part of a process, brought into the act through care and commitment. By extension, engagement implies enabling parents to

take their place alongside educators in the schooling of their children and bridging their knowledge of children, teaching and learning, with teachers' knowledge. With parent engagement, possibilities are created for the structure of schooling to be flattened, power and authority to be shared by educators and parents, and the agenda being mutually determined and mutually beneficial (Pushor & Ruitenberg, 2005, pp. 12-13).

Findings

Administrators have direct impact on overall student achievement through the people, purpose, and goals of the school; through the structure of the school and through the organizational culture of the campus (Hallinger, 1996). If a student guardian's involvement can be increased, his/her resistance to academics may be decreased. For example, the same students are less likely to use alcohol, participate in illegal activities, and get involved in using and/or selling drugs (Schunk & Meece, 1987). Strategic interventions are required to keep young people who are at a disadvantage because of poverty, cultural obstacles, and other barriers, from dropping out of school. Thus, parental involvement is a critical component of increasing academic achievement and a student's overall academic performance (Edwards-Alldred, 2000; Jansor-Van Vorhis, 2002).

Henderson and Berla (1994) note that benefits include higher grades, higher test scores, better attendance, and a higher ratio of completed homework. Given that parental involvement levels are the most accurate predictor of a student's achievement, schools should look for ways to strengthen parental involvement in outreach programs. The focus in this study was on the factor that can have the biggest impact on student achievement: parental involvement in the school.

Parental involvement includes a multiplicity of factors as parents are participants in the educational process. In the responses in this study, parenting is one of the few aspects that was mentioned briefly. Several responses did mention “parent nights,” less than a dozen of the respondents stated they also offered a form of parental training sessions. With the complex role schools are now taking in society due to extended working hours of parents, younger individuals becoming parents, and the increase of single parent households, this focus is of the utmost importance. Furthermore, the name of these nights may need to change to parent, grandparent and guardian nights. A recent newspaper article noted that in one of Houston’s six urban school districts a great-grandmother/activist had formed a group, *Great-Grandparents Parenting their Children’s Children*. This development speaks profoundly to the need to shift the parent involvement/parent engagement language from solely focusing on parents and including significant others—grandparents, in this case—in descriptors to more precisely reflect who is electing to participate in support of the child’s academic achievement.

In determining key components of parental involvement, the majority of responses of the surveyed participants indicated communication. While communication should be the first step in outreach efforts to parents, it should not be the only method used to generate parental support. The results of this study indicate an overwhelming amount of the assistant principals believe parental involvement is important. Yet, there is a significant discontinuity between belief and practice when it comes to assistant principals and their efforts to increase parental involvement.

The assistant principal-parent relationship and communication are additional aspects connected to parental involvement in schools, as many parents and other family

members leave the responsibility of their children's education to the campus. Assistant principals and other administrators often feel that the parents are not sufficiently involved in the educational process of their children (Epstein, 1995). They are of the belief that parents are not capable of providing quality academic support to students. The amount of time parents contribute to being actively involved in their child's education affects the level and type of cooperation observed between assistant principals and parents.

Cooperation of school administrators and teachers in helping parents feel that they belong to the school is a critical component in parental involvement in schools from family and other community stakeholders. Partnership in the education of children implies mutual respect and open communication between parents, teachers, and assistant principals. Hood and LoVette (2002) found that parents' perceptions of the school administration are good predictors of school performance scores. Assistant Principals believe that when parents are involved in the educational process of their children, there are fewer discipline concerns in comparison to students who have higher discipline concerns with no parental involvement. Assistant Principals also feel that a parent's involvement in their son's or daughter's education is deeply influenced by the opportunities and resources to which parents themselves have access (Driessen, Smith, & Sleggers, 2005).

Developing a relationship is critical and educators can best learn what parents believe is important by conducting home visits for their students. The work of the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project in Sacramento, and the Industrial Areas Foundation in Texas and around the United States, always begins with home visits to initiate conversations and learn about parent hopes and dreams. The IAF contrasts this "conversation" approach

– which is two-way – with the typical “communication” approach schools take – which is one-way (Ferland, 2009) and top-down in terms of expertise.

When parents are involved, the parent is generally directed towards completing tasks selected by the school staff – or the parent may be a client who receives services and information. When parents are engaged, the parent is considered a leader or a potential leader who is integral to identifying a vision and goals. He/she encourages others to contribute their own vision to that big picture and helps perform the tasks that need to be achieved in order to reach those goals (Ferland, 2009).

Richardson (2009) examined principals’ perceptions of parental involvement with respect to their attitudes and found that parental involvement increases academic achievement. According to that research, the following steps add value to parental involvement as we know it: 1) a needs assessment; 2) collaborations; 3) long-term plan; 4) engaging for parents; 5) a liaison between parents and school; 6) resource inventory; 7) develop strategies; 8) open communications; and 9) utilize a variety of meeting locations.

Limitations and Future Research

The limitations of this study as well as future research options must be reiterated. The first limitation is that a more finely tuned Likert-scale survey that is able to get at the subtleties between parent involvement and parent engagement is needed. A second limitation may be that the survey needs to be accompanied by an interview that has a protocol that directly addresses subtleties that the survey by design cannot address.

Parental involvement, as readers by now understand, presents a vast field for research. This study focused on a small portion of it: the impact of parental involvement in the schooling of children. Further research could focus on the development of parental

involvement strategies in schools, by assistant principals. More studies in this area probably would reveal the extent to which parents are influenced by parent workshops advocating for more parental involvement.

Another future topic to be researched is the type of frequency of involvement of parents/guardians who are legal immigrants and those who are illegal. Some assistant principals expressed that illegal immigration status affects their campus's parental involvement in the school and their support of their student. In this area, the impact of parental involvement on academic success presents an issue that warrants further research, particularly since state policies vary where the education of the children of illegal immigrants is concerned.

Recommendations

This study was expected to contribute to the overall understanding of the importance of parental involvement in the educational process. The responses from the widespread survey provided useful information for educators who are searching for ways to improve parental involvement within their schools. The results particularly help administrators to identify factors having to do with developing and implementing parent involvement program on campuses. The study increases the knowledge and awareness of the administrative role in developing relationships with their parent/guardian/significant other community. Professional development and training for staff eventually will impact student achievement and academic success school-wide.

Additional studies involving a personal interactions of assistant principals with parents would be recommended. Due to the delicacy of the citizenship issue, future studies will need to include respondents who are more inclined to share their opinion and

feelings with the individuals who are educating their students. Also, given that most parents are interested in helping their children with school-related matters, it is important to offer some type of parental involvement training for both the assistant principals and parents/guardians/significant others. Organizers need to keep in mind that trainings without follow up procedures are a waste of time and money.

Any parental involvement in public education increases the opportunity for the academic success of the children who are involved. Parents/guardians/significant others need to know this is the case and need to be provided with concrete examples (i.e., invitations) of how they can more productively be involved with their child's schooling and education.

Personal thoughts

As an assistant principal who has had the opportunity to work and present at teacher staff development days, I personally feel that parental involvement is critical. The activities centered around parental involvement and implementing solid, school-wide programs are also important. Federal funding is available for parental involvement activities and all school districts should secure funds to maintain healthy, positive, program initiatives geared towards parental involvement. Not only does parent involvement have an impact on student achievement, it potentially increases funds for individual campuses. Furthermore, parent involvement in the form of parent engagement stands to have a greater impact on parents' participation and to affect indirectly their children's academic performance.

Conclusion

Parents who are involved in campus parental involvement activities and who are knowledgeable of strategies to support their children's academic success tend to communicate more with school stakeholders and be more informed about their students' welfare. They are more involved in the schooling of their children as opposed to parents who are not involved in parental involvement activities. This study examined the relationship between assistant principals, parental involvement and academic achievement. The findings of this study support a large body of research that indicates that parental involvement and academic achievement are linked. At the same time, certain types of parental involvement have the potential to increase students' overall academic success.

It is critically important for school administrators to build better relationships with their parent community, as parental support of students affects student achievement. This study's findings could have an impact on current and future administrators if tools for developing sound parental programs are developed and parent/guardian/significant other/teacher relationships are improved.

As an assistant principal and parent of three children, it is my belief that parental involvement and engagement is critically important. Parent engagement has the potential to strengthen the relationships of parents, students, and schools, while enhancing learning. The most important thing we can do as administrators is to self-reflect and ask questions about what are we doing to contribute to assisting parents with becoming more involved in their students' educational process. Being an involved parent in all three of my kids' education, I have learned that I play a significant role in the decision making

and learning that occurs at both home and school. My children know that I am morally committed and devoted to their academic success. My involvement and engagement ensures that their attendance is better, that they are less likely to be involved in drugs and gangs, and that they are confident and sure of themselves.

School communities benefit from the parental involvement and engagement I exhibit as a parent. Trust in the teachers and school system is built by parents like me who have a relationship with my children's teachers and have faith that schools have my children's best interest at heart. In my personal experience, I have also found that the more knowledgeable I am about my students' welfare, the easier it has been for me to see that may be brewing where they are concerned.

Over the years, I've learned that effective communication between home and school starts with me, an educator. Second, I have observed throughout the school year how welcoming the school environment is to families and what activities/programs are enacted on campus to invite and generate more parental involvement.

As an assistant principal for nine years, it has been my belief that my role is to foster positive relationships with teachers, parents, and the community stakeholders. My task as an administrator is to develop strong relationships and build cohesiveness with parents in the school. The professional development opportunities available for teachers has proven to be valuable, aided in increasing student achievement, and parental involvement school-wide. The teachers that are trained on parental involvement strategies and tools, have a stronger parent support base.

I strongly believe that exemplary campuses have administrators that are morally committed, and dedicated to holding teachers accountable for ensuring their classroom

parents are informed and aware of their students' academic process. The amount of parental involvement in high performing schools indicates that strong parenting programs are being developed and implemented on campus. It is critical that administrators foster relationships with parents to support academic achievement/student success, as students need a positive learning environment and experience to succeed in school, one that includes support from all stakeholders, a safe learning environment and provides all children with an equitable opportunity to become lifelong learners.

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Appendix A
Survey Questions

University of Houston  College of Education

COLLABORATION

FOR LEARNING & LEADING



Graduate Student's Name _____

Section A:

Demographic Information

The Principal's name

Age in Years: ☐ 30 and Under ☐ 31-37 ☐ 38-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 56-62 ☐ Over 63

Sex: ☒ Male ☐ Female

Years as a Principal

Years in Education

Degrees Held: ☐ Bachelors ☐ Masters ☐ Doctorate

Management Certification	Year
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Institution]

Ethnicity: ☒ White Non-Hispanic ☐ Black Non-Hispanic ☐ Hispanic ☐ Asian Pacific Islander

☐ American Indian Alaskan Native

Non-Resident International

Major teaching field

Extra-curricular activities directed while a teacher

1

The School's name

Location: ☐ Rural ☐ Suburban ☐ Urban ☐ _____ The Grades in the school

Number of: Teachers ☐ _____ Students ☐ _____

Percentage of students: ☐ White / Non-Hispanic ☐ Black / Non-Hispanic ☐ Hispanic
☐ Asian / Pacific Islander ☐ American Indian / Alaskan Native
☐ Non-Resident / International

Other certificated personnel ☐ _____ Non-certificated personnel ☐ _____

TAKS Rating: ☐ Exemplary ☐ Recognized ☐ Acceptable ☐ Low performing

Percentage of students receiving free and reduced Lunch ☐ _____

Name of School District ☐ _____

Section B:

In this section we are trying to establish how principals conceptualize their notions of what makes a school a "good" school as opposed to a "fair or poor" school.

Much of the current educational leadership literature focuses on effective schools and more currently how we develop our schools as community. The new nomenclature currently used is "good school." How would you describe a good school?

For our purposes school culture is described as "What the school values." How would you describe the culture of a good school?

How would you describe yourself as a leader?

To what extent do you allow teachers to take risks to make the school better?

To what extent do you believe that teachers should be involved in leadership roles in your school?

Section F

We are trying to establish the understanding and value principals attach to the role of parental involvement in their student's education.

What do you believe is an appropriate and necessary level of parental involvement in the student's education? Explain.

[illegible]

What do you do to encourage and support parental involvement in their student's education?

[illegible]

When a parent asks you to change their student's teacher how do you react?
Check one category below

<input type="checkbox"/>	I do so willingly
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do so hesitatingly
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do so begrudgingly
<input type="checkbox"/>	I try my best to discourage it
<input type="checkbox"/>	I resist their efforts to have a change

Explain your answer here:

Section G

In this section we are trying to establish the obstacles frustrations and changes principals are most concerned with

On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being most and 1 being least, rate the degree to which each of the following presents a feeling of frustration or being discouraged in being able to carry out your duties.

	1	2	3	4	5
Federal Bureaucracy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
State Bureaucracy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School District Bureaucracy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of Money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of other resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of parent involvement in the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor Preparation of Teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of Teacher Commitment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor instruction of teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of parental involvement at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of Student Motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor basic skills of students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being most and 1 being least rate the degree to which each of the following presents a genuine obstacle or restriction that cause you the most concern as you try to carry out your duties as principal.

	1	2	3	4	5
Federal Bureaucracy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
State Bureaucracy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School District Bureaucracy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of Money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of other resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of parent involvement in the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor Preparation of Teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of Teacher Commitment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor instruction of teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of parental involvement at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of Student Motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor basic skills of students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being most and 1 being least rate the following for the things that you would change to make you more enabled in your role as principal.

	1	2	3	4	5
Federal Bureaucracy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
State Bureaucracy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School District Bureaucracy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of Money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of other resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of parent involvement in the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor Preparation of Teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of Teacher Commitment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor instruction of teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of parental involvement at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of Student Motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor basic skills of students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Graduate Student



University of Houston College of Education

COLLABORATION
 FOR LEARNING & LEADING
**SECURITY CODE:**

Graduate Student's Name

Section A:**Demographic Information**

The Assistant Principal's name

Age in Years: 30 and Under 31-37 38-45 46-55 56-62 Over 63

Sex: Male Female Years as a Assistant Principal Years in Education

Degrees Held: Bachelors Masters Doctorate

Management Certification Year

Institution

Ethnicity: White/Non-Hispanic Black/Non-Hispanic Hispanic Asian/Pacific
Islander

American Indian/Alaskan Native Non-Resident/International

Major teaching field

Extra-curricular activities directed while a teacher

The School's name

Location: Rural Suburban Urban The Grades in the school

Number of: Teachers Students

Percentage of students: White/Non-Hispanic Black/Non-Hispanic Hispanic
Asian/Pacific Islander American Indian/Alaskan Native
Non-Resident/International

Other certificated personnel Non-certificated personnel

TAKS Rating: Exemplary Recognized Acceptable Low performing

Percentage of students receiving free and reduced Lunch

Name of School District

Section B:

In this section we are trying to establish how assistant principals conceptualize their notions of what makes a school a "good" school as opposed to a "fair or poor" school.

Much of the current educational leadership literature focuses on effective schools and more currently how we develop our schools as community. The new nomenclature currently used is "good school." How would you describe a good school?

To what extent do you allow teachers to take risks to make the school better?

To what extent do you believe that teachers should be involved in leadership roles in your school?

Section F

We are trying to establish the understanding and value assistant principals attach to the role of parental involvement in their student's education.

What do you believe is an appropriate and necessary level of parental involvement in the student's education? Explain.

What do you do to encourage and support parental involvement in their student's education?

State Bureaucracy					
School District Bureaucracy					
Lack of Money					
Lack of other resources					
Lack of parent involvement in the school					
Poor Preparation of Teachers					
Lack of Teacher Commitment					
Poor instruction of teachers					
Lack of parental involvement at home					
Lack of Student Motivation					
Poor basic skills of students					

On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being most and 1 being least rate the degree to which each of the following presents a genuine obstacle or restriction that cause you the most concern as you try to carry out your duties as assistant principal.

	1	2	3	4	5
Federal Bureaucracy					
State Bureaucracy					
School District Bureaucracy					
Lack of Money					

Graduate Student

Lack of other resources					
Lack of parent involvement in the school					
Poor Preparation of Teachers					
Lack of Teacher Commitment					
Poor instruction of teachers					
Lack of parental involvement at home					
Lack of Student Motivation					
Poor basic skills of students					

On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being most and 1 being least rate the following for the things that you would change to make you more enabled in your role as assistant principal.

	1	2	3	4	5
Federal Bureaucracy					
State Bureaucracy					
School District Bureaucracy					
Lack of Money					
Lack of other resources					
Lack of parent involvement in the school					
Poor Preparation of Teachers					