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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ITS RELATIONSHIP

TO A CHILD'S EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

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ABSTRACT

There were three primary purposes of this study. One purpose of the study was to increase the understanding and awareness of parental involvement with regard to their children's education. The second purpose of the study was to analyze two schools' poverty levels in regard to their students' academic goals. Last, the study was to analyze and understand parental involvement in regard to the academic goals parents have for their children. Demographic data regarding two schools' level of poverty were collected from the Indiana Department of Education. The study was to add more information to the existing data in regard to parental involvement. Evidence was provided from a literature review and the responses from 158 parental surveys. The surveys were mailed directly to the parents and returned anonymously to me. Each respondent was asked to answer five questions. The study sample included two Indiana public schools, one with a poverty rate of 65.5% and the other 16.8% poverty. The data was analyzed using Chi-square, t test, and single ANOVA to the test the null hypotheses. The data supported there was a relationship between the educational level of the parents and the educational goals for their children. In addition, the data supported a significant difference between the amount of time a female parent spent and the mean amount of time a male parent spent assisting with schoolwork.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The demands placed on schools and children to perform are rising at a rapid pace. "In this complex world, it takes more than a good school to educate children" (Rich, 1994, p. 240). All students need to learn advanced skills to make it today. The classes in core academic areas should be demanding and never watered down and parents should play an active role in the school (Guggenheim, 2010). "Teachers and educational leaders are extraordinarily busy, inundated with demands for more work and better results with fewer resources-and less time" (Reeves, 2004, p. 1). "As educators, we have two choices. We can rail against the system, hoping that standards and testing are a passing fad, or we can lead the way in a fundamental reformulation of educational accountability" (Reeves, 2004, p. 5). Involvement in a child's schooling, like involvement in the political arena, begins close to home and, depending on your time and appetite and need, expands outward to encompass broader concerns (Chase & Katz, 2002).

> This sharp increase in the proportion of U.S. children who do not live with their own two married parents makes it important to understand how changes in family structure influence important areas of children's lives. One such area is educational outcomes. (Center for Marriage and Families, 2005, para. 3)

Families, in general, feel more stress to obtain material items while the constantly rising prices keep parents under continued pressure to provide these extras. "In 2006, the real (adjusted for inflation) median annual household income rose 1.3% to $50,233.00 according to the census bureau" (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2007, p. 12.). More expectations than ever are demanded from each child, educator, and parent. As the demands for rigor increase, one needs to observe our national drop-out rate. The status drop-out rate declined from 14% in 1980 to 8% in 2008 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2008).

> Parents who remain actively involved in their children's school activities, especially their learning curriculums, can help their children to excel academically. Teachers and national policymakers know that the more involved a parent is in their child's education, the greater the chance that the child will excel at school. (Campbell, 2009, para. 1)

According to Needermeyer (2012),

> At its best, education inspires and fosters the child to learn at the speed of their personal potential. As part of the educational experience, real learning also demands that students be challenged to live up to their potentials as students, citizens and as leaders of the future. (para. 1)

> The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC; 2006) stated,

> The day-to-day reality of many families is different today than a generation ago. Family members spend far less time together and adults often face an on-going struggle to balance the demands of their families and their jobs. While these pressures can cause parents to participate less in their children's lives, there remains a great need for them to be involved in their children's education. (para. 1)

Family and school represent the primary environments in which young children grow and

develop, and good schools value parental involvement. The foundation for good parent–

teacher relationships is frequent and open communication, mutual respect, and a clear

understanding of what is best for each individual child. (NAEYC, 2006, para. 13)

Parents and teachers tend to agree that parent participation is important in a child's education,

but the discrepancies occur between both parties as to how the communication should take place

and how often. The simple cultural and verbal discrepancies between home and school often

affect the preferred outcome for the parent–teacher communication. In order to accomplish the

outcome wanted in both home and school, these variances need to be acknowledged and worked

out (Peterson, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

In November 2006, the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) indicated 24% of high

school students were not graduating with a high school diploma (IDOE, 2006). With staggering

statistics like these, we as a society must work together towards a common goal.

According to the Orton Dyslexia Society, illiterate adults account for 75 percent

unemployed, one-third of the mothers receiving Aid to Families with Dependent

Children, 85 percent of the juveniles who appear in court, 60 percent of prison inmates,

and nearly 40 percent of minority youth; of people in the workforce, 15 percent are

functionally illiterate, including 11 percent of professional and managerial workers, and

30 percent of semiskilled and unskilled workers. (Adams, 1990, p. 27)

It is evident that there are many outstanding parents who do a wonderful well-rounded job at

parenting.

Schools have become the place where teachers not only educate but also fulfill the basic needs in life for a lot of the children. Many children are showering at school, eating all three meals at school, having emotional needs met at school, and much more. Schools continue to add more but are not giving up other things. Most educators would agree this is where focus is needed to move forward. However, support is needed from parents to make this process move more smoothly for the child. Parents have so much power and control over the values, goals, beliefs, friendships, and many other traits that their children are developing.

The common goal of educators and parents should be to produce healthy, productive, educated children. Children today must be able to read, write, and contribute to society in positive ways. Parental involvement is fundamentally necessary and needed by their children. The schools require support at the national, state, and local levels to embrace this changing world. This is a difficult time in education. Electronics, television, role models, curfews, and other temptations in life play a role in the effects on education as well.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was threefold. One purpose of the study was to increase the understanding of parental involvement with regards to their children's education. A second purpose was to analyze two schools' poverty levels in regard to student academic goals. A third purpose was to understand parental involvement and their academic goals for their children. This research study benefits educators and parents and raises awareness in this high-speed and highly competitive world.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. Is there a difference between a college-educated parent and a less-educated parent regarding their children's educational goals?

2. Is there a difference between male and female parents or guardians regarding the amount of time spent involved with their children's schoolwork?

3. Are there differences among a parent whose child qualifies for free lunch, a parent whose child qualifies reduced lunch, and a parent or guardian whose child does not qualify for any meal cost reduction regarding the amount of time spent on school work?

4. Is there a difference between a parent or guardian from a school with 50% or more poverty and a parent or guardian from a school with less than 25% poverty regarding their children's educational goals?

5. Is there a difference between a parent or guardian from a school from a school with 50% or more poverty and a parent or guardian from a school with less than 25% poverty regarding the amount of time spent involved with their children's schoolwork?

Null Hypotheses

$H_0 1$. There is no significant difference between a college-educated parent and a less-educated parent regarding their children's educational goals.

$H_0 2$. There is no significant difference between male and female parents or guardians regarding the amount of time spent involved with their children's schoolwork.

$H_0 3$. There are no significant differences among a parent whose child qualifies for free lunch, a parent whose child qualifies reduced lunch, and a parent or guardian whose child does not qualify for any meal cost reduction regarding the amount of time spent on school work.

H_04. There is no significant difference between a parent or guardian from a school with 50% or more poverty and a parent or guardian from a school with less than 25% poverty regarding their children's educational goals.

H_05. There is no significant difference between a parent or guardian from a school from a school with 50% or more poverty and a parent or guardian from a school with less than 25% poverty regarding the amount of time spent involved with their children's schoolwork.

Limitations of the Study

The following were limitations of the study:

1. The questionnaire asked for data that reflected self-perceptions and could have subjective responses. It was possible the respondents answered in a way they thought was socially acceptable. If parents did not report accurate information, it may have inflated the amount of time spent studying. In addition, if parents responded with their future goals for their children inaccurately, the study could reflect what parents thought was the correct response.

2. The cover letter was addressed to the parent. However, it is possible the parent reported the amount of time another individual spent assisting the child with schoolwork.

3. The survey was subject to a lower response rate. Parents could have felt threatened by the nature of the questions in regard to their parenting practices. A lower level of response could have affected the reliability of the data gathered. If only a certain group of parents responded to the study, it would not reflect varying backgrounds and socioeconomic groups appropriately. This could have caused the study to be skewed and reflect one subgroup more than another.

4. The survey required a little time. Parents could have chosen not to participate simply because they did not want to take a few minutes away from their days. With lack of parent participation in this study, it may not have accurately represented all of the varying parent groups involved.

Delimitations for the Study

1. Only a select group of parents in the state of Indiana were surveyed. Two schools were selected to participate in the study and may not accurately represent other schools with similar demographics.

2. The study was conducted from March 9, 2012, to March 23, 2012. Responses were collected over a short period of time and parents could have felt pressured for time.

3. Only 50% of parents of children who attended both schools were given the survey. This was a small sample of parents in the state of Indiana and may not represent the same data as other parents with similar demographics.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study the following definitions are provided:

Motivation "can be defined in a number of ways. Generally, it is defined as a driving force that initiates and directs behavior. In other words, motivation is a kind of internal energy which drives a person to do something in order to achieve something" (Romando, 2007, para. 1)

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), "signed into U.S. law in 2002, sought to increase accountability for student performance in public schools. Schools whose students do not demonstrate mastery on standardized tests may face certain penalties, and if they do not improve, parents may transfer their students to other schools" (Mauro, 2009, para. 1).

Network is "a system of connections and relationships in a group of people that provides help, information, and support to each of its members" (Keyser, 2006, p. 10).

Parental involvement is defined as "the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities" (NCLB, 2002, p. 3).

Parenting "is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood" (Smart Counselling and Training Centre, 2011, para. 1)

Partnership "is a relationship between equals each person in a partnership is equally valued for his or her knowledge and contribution to the relationship" (Keyser, 2006, p. 4).

Poverty is defined as

> a family's total income is less than the dollar value of the appropriate threshold, then that family and every individual in it are considered to be in poverty. Similarly, if an unrelated individual's total income is less than the appropriate threshold, then that individual is considered to be in poverty. The poverty thresholds do not vary geographically. They are updated annually to allow for changes in the cost of living (inflation factor) using the Consumer Price Index. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013, para. 2)

Success is defined as the "favorable accomplishment; prosperity; one who has achieved success" ("Success," 1992, p. 378).

Summary

This study is presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 entailed an introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, null hypotheses, limitations of the study, delimitations of the study, definition of terms and a summary. Chapter 2 provides a review of

the literature used in the study. Chapter 3 provides the methodology used in this specific study.

Chapter 4 provides the presentation and analysis of data. Chapter 5 provides the findings,

discussions, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter examines the literature concerning the involvement parents have on the success of their children in regards to education. The purpose of this study was to examine existing literature.

"The No Child Left Behind Act was passed by the federal government in 2002 to improve failing schools. The Act is supposed to make sure all students get the education they need. All schools in the nation are expected to perform at 100% by the 2013-2014 school year" (NCLB, 2002, p. 1). This act has prompted the need for more rigor in education and more parental involvement in education as well. The NCLB works from the assumption that *good* parents prepare their children for school by taking them to the library and reading to them (Poetter, Wegwert, & Haerr, 2006).

> Similarly, the authors of the law forgot that parents are primarily responsible for their
> children's behavior and attitudes. It is families that do or do not ensure that their children
> attend school regularly, that they are in good health, that they do their homework, and
> that they are encouraged to read and learn. But in the eyes of the law, the responsibility
> of the family disappears. Something is wrong with that. (Ravitch, 2010, p. 163)

As a parent, it is important to understand one's role in helping achieve these goals. To do this, one must stay informed, communicate regularly with teachers and other parents, and be

willing and ready to exercise parental rights regarding a child's best interests. In a May 2006

memo release, U.S. Secretary of Education Spellings reported that only 1% of parents of students

eligible to transfer out of a low-performing school had exercised their children's right to do so

(National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2006).   In addition to this, only

about 17% of parents nationally are taking benefit of the supplemental educational services their

children are eligible for (Molland, 2007).

> Our research tells us that children entering kindergarten who understand the structure and
>
> sounds of words, the meanings of words, the rudimentary elements of the writing system,
>
> and the concept that print conveys meaning, have significantly higher reading scores at
>
> the end of the first grade than children who do not have these skills. In fact, the
>
> difference between children who do and do not have this knowledge upon entering
>
> kindergarten is approximately one year's worth of reading development at the end of the
>
> first grade. We also know that well over 80 percent of children reading poorly at the end
>
> of the first grade will be reading poorly at the end of the fourth grade. We know that if
>
> we do not close these gaps by nine years of age, there is an overwhelming probability that
>
> reading failure will follow the individual into adulthood. Data obtained from the NICHD
>
> Connecticut Longitudinal Study show that approximately 75 percent of students reading
>
> poorly at nine years of age continue to flounder in reading into the adult years. (Lyon,
>
> 2003, para. 3)

Researchers have recommended that parent assistance causes a surge in reading success (Fitton

& Gredler, 1996; Hook & DuPaul, 1999).

Parenting and Education

Parents need to communicate with their children about school in a positive way. Modeling how to communicate with school personnel in an encouraging way sets a noble example for the child and shows the child the parent has respect for school employees. Parents should be familiar with the various staff members working with their children (Cerra & Jacoby, 2005).

> Parents have a voice like no other voice. Children turn to their parents for approval or correction. Performing the role of a parent by care-giving, nurturance, and protection of the child by a natural or substitute parent. The parent supports the child by exercising authority and through consistent, empathic, appropriate behavior in response to the child's needs. PARENTING differs from CHILD REARING in that in child rearing the emphasis is on the act of training or bringing up the children and the interaction between the parent and child, while parenting, emphasizes the responsibility and qualities of exemplary behavior of the parent. (BioPortfolio, 2014, para. 1)

Parents need to be effective listeners when their children speak about school. Asking children questions about their day at school demonstrates that the school day is essential to the parent. School will be as important to the child as it is to the parent (Cerra & Jacoby, 2005).

> *Education* is

> the act or process of educating; the result of educating, as determined by the knowledge skill, or discipline of character, acquired; also, the act or process of training by a prescribed or customary course of study or discipline; as, an education for the bar or the pulpit; he has finished his education. To prepare one for complete living is the function which education has to discharge. ("Education," 1998, p. 135)

Evolving Role of Parenting in Education

This section will offer more insight on parenting in education as it once was and how it has evolved over the years. A child's education once was the sole responsibility of parents. Each parent put a dissimilar emphasis on the importance of an education. There are many aspects of parenting that influence a child's education (Whitaker & Whitaker, 1999). Many years ago, near the time of the nation's birth, parents had total control over their children's schooling. Because compulsory attendance laws did not exist, parents had complete authority in deciding how much schooling, if any, their children were to receive (Whitaker & Whitaker, 1999). Parents were provided with direction in regards to their children's educational but the responsibility fell on the parent. Parents were not monitored to ensure their children were progressing with their academics. Parents were advised to begin early with the Lord's prayer, the Creeds, and the Decalogue, then to teach reading following the "ordinary road of the hornbook, primer, Psalter, Testament, and Bible" and then to ensure that "the Bible itself was systematically studied as the foundation of all morality" (Cremin, 1970, p. 277). The Judeo-Christians use to live by and shadow the Ten Commandments but some feel that the commandments are no longer something we follow, just modest suggestions. An education is an intellectual requirement but not a necessity in life (Kimmel, 2004). In time, the world and the pace began to move a little speedier. Parents and children were not merely at home functioning. As time progressed, parents saw their roles and the degree of their engrossment change somewhat. Over time, a new undertaking for education emerged (Draves & Coates, 2004). As this nation became more global and industrialized, educational theories from other parts of the world quickly infiltrated the American beliefs (Whitaker & Whitaker, 1999).

We, in this country, being far removed from the more cultivated parts of the world, had

need to use utmost care and diligence to keep up learning and all helps to education

among us, lest degeneracy, barbarism, ignorance and irreligion do by degrees break in

upon us. (Mitchell as cited in Cremin, 1970, p. 177)

Slowly, the country evolved and parents found themselves spending additional time out of the

home environment and in the work place. As employers began employing more individuals, the

necessity for additional education was evident in workers. The most important natural resource

the work force was looking for was knowledge (Draves & Coates, 2004). Both the metropolitan

sponsors and the colonial planters early manifested an interest in schools. In Virginia, there were

plans for a "public free school" to be located in Charles City (Cremin, 1970, p. 177). In 1683, an

ordinance of the new colony of Pennsylvania provided that all parents and guardians

shall cause such to be instructed in reading and writing, so that they may be able to read

the Scriptures and to write by time they attain to twelve years of age; and that then they

be taught some useful trade or skill, that the poor may work to live, and the rich, if they

become poor, may not want; of which every country court shall take care. (Cremin, 1970,

p. 125)

Parents were teaching self-discipline at home prior to children attending schools. In order for

individuals to practice self-discipline independently, parents should be practicing it at home early

on. These disciplines then transcend into the public schools and the work place (Draves &

Coates, 2004).

One of the major goals or purposes of the first public schools in this country was to teach

children to read. By the 1830s, schools in the northeast and Midwest were district schools,

"organized and controlled by a small locality and financed by some combination of property

taxes, fuel contributions, tuition payments, and state aid" (Poetter et al., 2006, p. 78). Schools in the south during this time were more likely to be staffed by itinerant schoolteachers and funded by parents (Poetter et al., 2006). Many people were feeling undecided about saying goodbye to the industrial age, but it was time to move onward. It was not just essential to the adult population but to children and their evolving education (Draves & Coates, 2004).

Some states fund programs to help parents help their children. In 1988, Missouri set up programs in which the parents of 50,000 preschoolers attended evening classes to learn more about parenting and ways to prepare children for school. Teachers visited homes, telling parents how to enhance their children's development through reading, conversations, and family activities (Sherrow, 1991).

"The Indiana compulsory attendance law is applicable to any student age seven to 18 who resides in Indiana, without regard to legal domicile" (Indiana Office of Code Revision, n.d., p. 1). "Administrators of any educational, benevolent, correctional, or training institution are responsible for ensuring that any person within their jurisdiction, and of compulsory school attendance age, be enrolled in school" (IDOE, 2006, para. 1). In the meantime, the thought of education for all became tightly recognized in the United States. An extraordinary amount of children astounded the schools, colleges, and universities, an abundance that has continued to cultivate, with minimal variations, to this day (J. W. Guthrie, 2002).

Schools remain immovable in ways far beyond years, days, and phases. Decades ago, to make a telephone call, one had to go to the teachers' lounge or work room and use a pay telephone. Nearly a century after the invention of the telephone, the school design did not integrate the ability for a teacher to communicate easily with a parent or for a parent to speak easily with a teacher. In 1995, 88% of U.S. classrooms still had no telephone (Whittle, 2005).

The term *nine shift* is used to describe the great changes taking place in our lives right now. What we are experiencing in how we use our time and how we experience life derives from the phenomenon that nine hours in your day will be spent entirely different in 2020 than they were spent in 2000. There are 24 hours in a day. We have no real discretion with roughly 12 of those hours. We need to eat, sleep, and do a few other necessary chores in order to maintain our existence. (Draves & Coates, 2004, pp. 1-2)

"When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more" (National Education Association [NEA], 2002, para. 1). The report, a synthesis of research on parent involvement over the past decade 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; and

- graduate and go on to postsecondary education. (NEA, 2002, para. 2)

Like teachers, families have a range of feelings about their relationships with their children's teachers. Some families don't even consider that there could be a place for them at school; some would like to have a relationship with teachers but are uncertain about how to do it; some families have clear ideas of how they would like to be involved but perceive roadblocks in communication; and some are actively frustrated with their interactions with teachers. (Keyser, 2006, p. 3)

In today's shift, schools are much more rigorous than they once were. This ever changing world has forced schools, teachers and parents to step up and expect more from each child. Students continue to lack some of the self-discipline skills they once learned from parents long ago. Educators are working hard to instill a good work ethic that carries over to the workforce. (Draves & Coates, 2004).

Schools begin not with parents, or organizational schemes, or academic theories, or special lessons, or new buildings, but with teachers. "Get enough good teachers together under the leadership of a teacher who understands all the ingredients of learning and something very good, I won't call it quite a miracle, happens" (Matthews, 2010, p. 183). The most important advice on learning comes from early history when Sophocles said, "The learning is in the doing of the thing" (McIntire, 1997, p. 220.) Today, the biggest shift in the educational system has been from parents working with their children at home to technology. The internet has offered many ways to make education more exciting and has driven many costs downward (Draves & Coates, 2004).

Aspects of Parenting: Best Models of Parenting at an Early Stage

"Congratulations! Being your child's greatest advocate and supporter also means being his representative, guiding and advising him as he faces each new school year and each challenge" (Cerra & Jacoby, 2005, p. 14). Our culture today has detached many of the moral boundaries and parenting is not as clear cut as it once was (Kimmel, 2004) Developing an intentional plan from birth to college is fundamental for parenting in order to produce productive children. Investing more time in your children will help with raising more respectful and intelligent children (Brooks, 2009).

A parent is a child's first mirror. Each person a child encounters is the architect of that child's self-image. If the child sees the look of disgust, he or she believes that he or she is disgusting. If a child sees anger, he or she believes that he or she is unworthy. If a child sees fear, he or she will be afraid. On the other hand, if the infant or child receives the love and nurturance needed, he or she will decide that the world is good and can be trusted. The child internalizes this belief to mean, when I express my needs, someone cares and something good happens to me. My needs must be good. Therefore, I must be good. (Kersey, 1990, p. 47)

Parenting is the most important and difficult job anyone could have. A parent's day-to-day job is to routinely prepare, organize, supervise, train, and provide a safe atmosphere for their child to be successful and thrive (Brooks, 2009). Many parents today are living by this dictum:

Cram as much as you can into their little skulls and they will be better and smarter and more successful than all of their friends, or at least all of your friends' children. The research tells us that they are all capable of much, much more, if only one had the patience, time, and dedication to teach them. Of course, we will not know the results for years; our children are a promise we throw at the future. Wouldn't we be negligent if we didn't at least try? (Guthrie & Matthews, 2002, pp. 25-26)

Working collaboratively between the parent and the teacher at a young age allows the child to learn that learning is a team effort. It also allows the child to see that parents and teachers communicate. Teachers have an opportunity to learn some more insight from the parent and the experiences the child has at home. The learning culture is different at school and the teacher can help the parent understand how the child learns with other children (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003.) Guthrie and Mathews (2002), however, poked fun at the idea of cramming learning into skulls of

little children so much that maybe it is too much. Reading is so important it cannot be stressed it enough. From the moment a baby is born (some say even while still in the womb) start reading aloud to that child. "The secret to teaching a child to read is one that excellent parents have known for a long time. You can teach a child to read by reading aloud to him or her" (Young, 2006, p. 48). Beginning early is one of the recipes for success in school. Think about a kindergartner child who goes away from Mommy for the initial time, enters a strange room, and does not know any of the alphabet, numbers, colors, shape, school and classroom rules (Petrosino & Spiegel, 2005). The mother is the first teacher of children. Messages received from her are carried into the world, thus beginning the child's world view. Teaching young children is a formidable task. To learn, young children must develop appropriate behaviors, which facilitate the mastery of knowledge, skills, and concepts. "Teaching children is one of the more natural functions performed by parents" (Young, 2006, p. 42). When children enter school at a young age the social interactions begin shaping the child. The classroom becomes a large stage that children perform in. Teachers feel the many pressures for children to perform and do well. The pressure is then placed on the child and some handle that pressure quite well and others buckle under the added pressure. Parents often find themselves begging for teachers to see their child as they do and teachers do the same (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003.) The bottom line message is very simple. One has the power (and now the knowledge) to make a significant positive difference in one's child's education. Fears of parents define parental strategies in life. Good educational goals and boundaries can lead parents on a better path when parenting children (Kimmel, 2004).

> The question is not just, 'What can I do to ensure that my child receives the best possible education?' Your child's school has the means necessary for him/her to be successful;

you must provide the foundation, confidence, and support. You need to be your child's

first teacher and advocate. (Petrosino & Spiegel, 2005, p. 117)

Good intentions are not enough. Each parent begins with good intentions, but it does not take

long before one finds that one has been set up for letdown by situations that one did not plan on

or ask for. Decent parenting skills are not enough either (Kimmel, 2004.)

Culture has removed many of the moral boundaries that made raising children more

clear-cut. Right and wrong used to be black and white. Lying, cheating, stealing, and

pushing your weight around at someone else's expense was wrong. Disrespect to people

and property were obvious calls for parents to make. (Kimmel, 2004, pp. 2-3)

Parents rely on teachers during the school day to assist with the influences of other children

while educating. School becomes a playground of life for children that is much different than

being at home in a very controlled environment. Parents have to let go of some of their control

and put trust in the teacher and school to deliver the best possible education (Lawrence-

Lightfoot, 2003). No doubt the most effective rewards used are verbal praise and

encouragement. An additional improvement comes when the attitude is imitated. "Some parents

and teachers may devalue the effect of their attention because they observe only an immediate

target behavior. In the longer view, however, a child's disposition will become a close copy of

the surrounding adult attitudes" (McIntire, 1997, p. 61).

Comfort and success in school are crucial ingredients in the happiness of children and

parents. The way to success goes beyond just feeling pride in the learning basic skills. In

the first few grades, the most important development is a child's self-confidence and

positive expectation for what school has to offer. And that success not only builds

confidence in academic abilities, it influences feelings of competence and usefulness

outside of school as well. (McIntire, 1997, p. 205)

Parents often labor many hours and many years to guide their children. Parents try to put all the

pieces into place just right for their children. Sometimes parents get disappointed as they feel

their work for many years can end in disappointment. Many parents would rather feel good

about their parenting than do a great job parenting. Society can be punitive and mean when it

comes to parents making the right decisions for their child. Unfortunately, being accepted and

going along with the crowd is more popular. As parents shape their children at an early age it

begins to shape children for school (Kimmel, 2004).

According to Campbell (2009),

It is not uncommon for parents, even parents of students who make the honor roll, to be

concerned about the grades that their children will be assessed throughout the academic

year. Establishing effective, stress free study, homework and test habits in their children

can diminish even eliminate these concerns for parents. (para. 3)

As each educator knows, families are the children's first teachers. When it is time for

children to attend school, there are major variances in children's readiness to learn at school. As

a result of different proficiencies being mastered in early childhood, some children start school

with a substantial background of vocabulary words, and other children barely have the

fundamentals (Ravitch, 2010). When children enter school, teachers become territorial over

school regarding the children they teach. Teachers and parents have to work hard to find

common ground that works toward the goal of educating a child with confidence. The growth

and development of the child is key to a successful school journey (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003.)

Nothing strengthens families more than when parents take an active part in the lives of their children, especially during the formative years of growth and development. These years lay the foundation for the quality of life. The home, school, and church must join forces for the sake of our next generation. (Young, 2006, p. 21)

Guggenheim (2010) observed this with other parents while making the documentary, *Waiting for Superman*. Guggenheim spent a couple years talking to families in various regions to gain a better understanding of children in schools. The concentration was not on ethnicity or economic status. Guggenheim found that each parent looked for different signs to learn: Is the teacher knowledgeable and ambitious? Are children coming to school for a purpose? Is there a general feeling of excitement? Many parents are not accustomed with their children's learning surroundings. So parents should take a little time to research the school, and if suspicion is found in the child's educational pathway, then, parents should take the time to investigate. If the situation is found to be poor that things worsen it is time for a parent to shop for a new school. (Carpenter, 2009). The parents are one of the fundamental sponsors to their children's successes at school (Rumberger, 1995). One of the best ways a parent can assist their child in school is to be a concerned parent and advocate when necessary. Not all mothers and fathers have the opportunity or encouragement to be as involved as they would like. Parents should take the time to shop with their child for the necessary school supplies. It is important the parent allows the child to help make basic choices on the type of folders, notebooks, and other required items for school (Cerra & Jacoby, 2005).

Each year 37% of incoming kindergartners are not prepared to succeed in school. Although some children enter school with an understanding of more than 20,000 words, others understand fewer than 3,000, according to Carol Rasco, executive director of

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF), the nation's largest family literacy organization. Why the

huge gap? "The richness of the language a child hears before kindergarten is a huge

element," she says. "Some kids are simply spoken to more, and hear more words per

day, than others" (as cited in Rowley, 2010, para. 1).

Parents should spend the time to start reading with their child at any location to begin

early literacy skills (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). If learning is fun, easy, and part of everyday

life, the child will want more and more. The idea is to make learning familiar and effortless

(Petrosino & Spiegel, 2005). Parents often wonder how to reward effort. It depends on the child

and their age. "You need to keep rewards for learning in perspective. Parents often lose sight of

the notion that learning should be its own reward. Some children respond to simple praise"

(Guthrie & Matthews, 2002, p. 182). If parental involvement is initiated when there is a

problem, he or she knows how to better guide the child. Parents are aware of the many

challenges that their children face in order to attend a college or university. The goals are for

children to succeed in school and are productive citizens (Sainz, 2010). Highly involved parents

who were once involved are disappearing as can be seen by falling numbers of parent teacher

organizations (PTO) members. It is a serious problem (Mendoza, 2010).

> The effects of family structure on academic success continue through high school.
>
> Children growing up with non-intact families engage in more adolescent misbehavior,
>
> which harms grades and test scores. Family structure substantially influences outcomes
>
> such as high school dropout rates, high school graduation rates, and age at first
>
> pregnancy. (Center for Marriage and Families, 2005, para. 9)

Parental nonappearance is highest among parents whose children are not making the necessary

progress as anticipated and are exhibiting behavior concerns or non-attendance. Parents do have

some accountability to working people who have paid taxes to have these children succeed in school. On the other hand, schools need some direction as to how to move the child forward. When parents are not present at meetings, many times they do not feel welcome at school or even comfortable. Many parents are too busy trying to make a living. Many parents feel that they have nothing to offer the group. Some parents lack the education themselves, and some parents may not have any idea how important an education is. A parent may not have a yearning to return to a school that reminds them of their failures and lack of involvement (Sam, 2010). Children are not born with attitudes, a value system, knowledge, or a personality. They are born with a body, innocence, and in most instances, a healthy mind. The interactions between parents and children are essential because these interactions lay the foundation for the developing self-concept.

> Parents who understand the importance of their interactions and behaviors with children focus on enriching the experiences and exposures provided. Conversely, parents who are ignorant of the developmental needs of children miss many opportunities to help their children learn and grow. (Young, 2006, p. 42)

Children naturally get enthusiastic and eager about learning when they are self-assured. Children can be successful at school when they are having fun, and when they are applauded for their effort (Clark, 1999). If letters and numbers are familiar to a child, when that child enters kindergarten with some background knowledge of his or her own, that child will look around the room and feel more confident. When children are comfortable and proud they are much more willing to try new things at school. If the child likes school and has a solid foundation for learning the rest of his or her education will be much easier to approach (Petrosino & Spiegel, 2005).

In their younger years, children do not know who they are and how they fit into this

world. It's Mom and the rest of the family that supply the model for their education and

development. It's the structure and interactions of the family that prepare your child to

become a member of society. (Adler, 1999, p. 150)

Involvement by a parent in their children's schooling begins close to home and, depending on

their time, appetite, and need, expands outward to encompass broader concerns. Parents have the

ability to heavily impact their children's outlook on their education (Chase & Katz, 2002).

Consequently, any child who does not come to school with some foundation becomes

labeled and tracked based on the school's assessments. Each teacher knows the job ahead if a

child comes to school without any pre-exposure to the basics (Poetter et al., 2006).

Parents shape their children. Children shape themselves. Both are true. The answer to

this paradox is not to eliminate it but rather embrace it by changing one small

preposition: "We are not responsible *for* our children; we are responsible *to* them.

(Runkel, 2007, p. 63)

Each time parents and teachers come together their childhood school experiences play out

in dialogue. When parents and teachers have conferences the child should be present each time.

The child is the only person involved that has experiences in both the school and home. When

the child is present it helps keep the meeting focused and positive. This type of situation allows

for the child to begin learning how to self-evaluate (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003).

Parenting can have a strong effect upon school achievement. According to Pat Henry,

first vice president of the national PTA, "research has shown again and again that parents are

children's first and most important teachers. Just having parents involved in their children's

education helps children learn and having them involved in their children's schools improves those schools" (as cited in Sherrow, 1991, p. 113).

Head Start programs are similar to those in other preschool classrooms. Head Start children start with the very basics numbers and the alphabet. Head Start programs also engage in learning about good health habits and behavior. These programs try to promote learning about the basics and the introduction to school in a fun and inviting way. Parental involvement is an essential part of this program as well. The Head Start program allocates money each year to educate parents on their role in their child's education (Sherrow, 1991). "We know what a difference early childhood programs make in the lives of our kids" (Education Week, 2009, p. 226).

"Obama researchers show that early experiences shape whether a child's brain develops strong skills for future learning, behavior, and success. Investing in early learning also makes economic sense. For every dollar invested in high-quality, comprehensive programs supporting children and families from birth, there is a $7-$10 return to society in decreased need for special education services, higher graduation and employment rates, less crime, less use of the public welfare system, and better health" (Education Week, 2009, p. 226).

Parents need to introduce their children to technology at home prior to children attending school. As we are in the middle of a new era, technology is relevant and necessary at some level to all children. The more comfortable parents become with using technology the more they can assist their children. Technology is going to go away rather only increase and be required by all individuals at some point (Draves & Coates, 2004).

A large part of our parental mission is to launch our child into the world as well equipped as possible to survive and, we hope, succeed. The trouble can develop when we take our

cues from current parenting culture rather than from our child. For many parents and

their children the race, toward Harvard, Princeton, or their near equivalent, begins early

and becomes the informing spirit behind many parenting decisions. (Guthrie &

Matthews, 2002, p. 17-18)

Each child is born with special gifts.

When a child has bonded with or been validated by one adult, he is then free to discover

those natural talents. His energy is unleashed, and he has the enthusiasm and courage he

needs to follow his dreams and reach for the stars! (Kersey, 1990, p. 22)

Parental Connections Between Home and School

Parents are a child's representative throughout his or her life. Increasing the level of

parental involvement is not easy. Many of the parents want to be involved in their children's

education, however, they did not have positive experiences when those parents attended school.

If the parents' only association with educators and schools were negative, then those parents are

likely to be reluctant to revisit childhood experiences (Whitaker & Whitaker, 1999). High

expectations come with a price, however. Remember the question: What are you willing to do?

As parents, that means we must take the necessary steps to help our children achieve

those goals. That may mean some personal sacrifice: Reading a book with your child

instead of watching television. Taking your child to church instead of sending him with

someone else while you stay home. Being consistent in disciplining children, even when

you are tired. Getting to know your child's friends when all you really want to do is talk

about adult matters to a friend. (Young, 2006, p. 11)

As teachers enter the profession of teaching they receive almost no training as to interact

with parents and families. Many principals and colleagues are not supportive of others in the

arena of parental relationships. The lack of support leaves teachers with the option to learn as they go. Depending on what the teacher's school experiences were will determine how they interact and deal with parents (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003.) Social habits and skills do not come naturally. Children learn how to get along in the world through the advice and example of their parents. This training is too important to leave to chance, so parents need a lot of information about what is going on with their children. "Through careful listening and communication, parents can find opportunities to coach, teach and pass along good advice" (McIntire, 1997, p. 147). Families make a massive difference in the education of children. Parents can simply make a difference by visiting the school and calling teachers (Guggenheim, 2010). "One of the most critical components to reading readiness and success is providing a child with a language-rich environment" (Guthrie & Matthews, 2002, p. 104). Children are very intuitive. They know if their parents are being helpful regarding school. Parents set the example how to communicate with the school. Children watch and imitate the actions of their parents (Petrosino & Spiegel, 2005).

> Sometimes putting too much pressure on a young child can actually have the opposite effect that you intend. You may find your son resenting the time he spends in reading class and deciding that learning isn't much fun after all. A child looks at reading as a tedious chore is not well prepared for academic success. (Guthrie & Matthews, 2002, pp. 179-180)

Parents need to make good and wise decisions about the amount and type of involvement they have at school. Parental participation in the school setting can have a pivotal impact on the engagement the child has with school. Children are more likely to perform better in school if their parents sit down and go over their homework with them. When parental involvement

occurs in the school setting and at home the connections between school and home become more developed (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003.)

Raty (2010) stated,

Parents with positive recollections showed more satisfaction than those with negative recollections did. Over the years, the level of satisfaction decreased in all other groups except the fathers with positive recollections. Parents' recollections may be seen as an experience-based component of their attitudes towards education. (p. 581)

Families embed the foundation for their children's attitudes and values about learning, as well as the self-disciplined and decent etiquettes necessary for learning with a group. It's imperative families remain involved with their children, boost them, monitor their schoolwork. Parents need to limit their children's exposure and time with electronic devices, meet with their teachers, and model appropriate behavior when interacting with school personnel (Ravitch, 2010).

According to Gorman (2010),

When parents volunteer in the classroom, one of the primary reasons they do so is to check out where their child stands in the class—to ascertain who the stars are, who occupies the lower tier, who can read, and who cannot. At parent conferences in November, they always want to know how their child is doing vis-à-vis the group. (Gorman, 2010, p. 54)

Parents can curb fears about their children in school by being involved and not intimidated. By a parent reaching out to the school lets the child know they are capable of handling anything that is put in front of them or causes an obstacle. Parental involvement can instill confidence (Kimmel, 2004).

Johnson and Johnson (2005) added,

Placing a telephone call to your child's teacher is probably the best way to contact them, although you can always try the old *ambush-at-the-basketball-game* routine if you like. Leaving a brief message gives the teacher time to compose a response and get back to you with the answers you want. Writing an email is also an effective method, although not all schools (or teachers) are technologically accessible. (p. 2)

Parents love and support their children and are always thinking of them. This gives children a sense of security when facing their day (Petrosino & Spiegel, 2005). School activities should be just as important and well attended as sports events and weekly practices (Cerra & Jacoby, 2005). Parents have many challenges today, but the children have many things to balance as well. Children are working hard to produce good grades, participate in athletics, join an extra-curricular club, maintain friendships, complete their schoolwork, do their chores, and steer clear of any trouble from home or school that comes their way (Clark, 1999). Schools cannot exist without some type of partnership. Schools are part of a much larger society. Educating our children requires the active involvement of many, including the student, families, community members, local organizations/clubs, and the larger society (Ravitch, 2010).

Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) referred to parents and teachers as "natural enemies" (p. 43). She wanted to convey the inevitable tensions between parents and teachers shaped by the different roles and functions they play in the lives of children. Parents, she claimed, have a "particularistic" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003, p. 43) relationship with their children, where the bond is deeply passionate individualistic. Teachers, on the other hand, have a "universalistic" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003, p. 43) relationship with their students, which is more distant and dispassionate.

What is important to parents their children will tend to care about as well. The impact parents have on their children's attitudes towards life is astounding. Parents are very dominant individuals with eyes watching them at all times (Clark, 1999). Although attention has been increasingly focused on the benefits of parental involvement in schools, the notion of this participation is hardly new. To the conflicting, parental involvement in schools, both when it is powerfully present and noticeably absent, has been a key component in determining everything from scheduling to extra-curricular offering since before the birth of this country. Allowing parents to believe they are vital members of our school communities is not simple to accomplish (Whitaker & Whitaker, 1999).

Parents should spend time monitoring their children's friends. If a child no longer mentions his or her friends or the child becomes defensive when asked, a parent should be concerned and ask questions. Parents should monitor any changes in their children's grades. If a child has a sudden drop in grades, this could be a sign of the pressure that is taking place in school. Parents should talk to their children and be sure they are not excluded at school (Clark, 1999). There are ways in which parents can make a difference.

Visit your state's school report to learn more about your high school's graduation, dropout, literacy, and school safety rates. Visit with your child's counselor or teacher to ensure him or her graduates on time. If your child's grades or teacher indicates that it is needed, make sure he or she gets additional tutoring. Contact your school superintendent to find out whether the district has a plan to implement high school reforms. Write an article for your local newspaper about your observations. Start or become active in your school's PTA. Contact your local school board for a meeting schedule. Request a meeting with, call, or send a letter to your mayor and or city council members to discuss

strategies for raising community awareness about reform. (Alliance for Excellent

Education, 2010, p. 221)

Teachers should be sure that they can display exactly where children are when they start

the school year and how much academic growth has taken place during one school year.

Teachers should be interested in sharing that information and parents should be happy to receive

it (Needermeyer, 2012). According to the Obama education plan proposal, schools should

encourage parents and communities to support teaching and learning. The school should work

collaboratively with parents and take responsibility for instilling in young children the best

values, integrity, hard work, and planning—for good citizenship (Education Week, 2009).

For parents, there is nothing more precious or more important than their children. The

parents come to parent–teacher conferences eager, often desperate, to hear good news about their

children's life in school. They approach the conference with fear and trembling, with terror in

their hearts. Even for parents with children who are thriving in school, who have every reason to

believe that the teacher will deliver only laudatory and appreciative comments, there is always a

lingering worry that they will hear about a blemish on an otherwise perfect report (Lawrence-

Lightfoot, 2003). Research shows that when parents have positive experiences in the school,

they pass on that attitude to their children. If their only experiences in school have been

negative, they consciously or unconsciously convey those attitudes to their children.

When parents find acceptance in the classroom, and a place where they can be useful,

their own self-esteem is enhanced. This in turn enables them to improve their child's

self-esteem. There are many ways parents can be involved in the school. (Kersey, 1990,

p. 97)

It is profoundly important that study time becomes a part of the daily schedule. Whatever children learn in school daily should be reviewed at the end of the day with a parent. Utilizing this method helps children with accelerating learning capabilities to preserve, retain, and recall information rapidly. When children spend time reviewing new information learned within 24 hours of obtaining it, efficiency exceeds expectation (Brooks, 2009). "Recent studies show that when families are involved in their children's education in positive ways, the children achieve higher grades and test scores, have better attendance at school, complete more homework, and demonstrate more positive attitudes and behavior" (NAEYC, 2006, para. 2).

This is not to insinuate that parental involvement is a completely inconsequential factor in success. Poverty stricken parents are often diverted trying to make ends meet. Once parents see the school making a distinct effort with their children, they provide the kind of support found in suburban schools. Respectable schools must come before parental involvement, not the other way around (Matthews, 2010). Children incapable of comprehending instructions, regarding homework, chores, and behavior are robust indicators of ineffective visual communication skills being used by the parent (Brooks, 2009). In the absence of parents having a school choice, schools lack the positive incentive for better performance that most other types of service institutions take for granted. Hospitals know they must do a good job or else they lose patients. Colleges must provide a good solid education (and other amenities and opportunities that parents anticipate from universities) or else they lose students. If a free public school is providing satisfactory services, parents can feel confident leaving their children at school to excel. But if not, parents have the opportunity to enroll their child in a private school that will serve their children better. Either way, schools know that parents have the authority to hold them accountable (Berlatsky, 2010).

Parental Relationship With the School

Parents should support the school both financially and emotionally. Parents have the right to expect school personnel to treat them in a manner that reflects a shared concern for children (Gurian, Stevens, Henley, & Trueman, 2011). The fact that public school teachers are state employees paid with tax dollars seems to give parents the right to raise the point their money is paying the teacher's salary. Some parents take it upon themselves to communicate with parents regarding their flawed lessons and what they should be teaching instead. Based on a parents past relationships with school will heavily impact their current relationship with their child's school (Crosby, 2002).

Parents who agreed with the administrators' and teachers' definition of partnership appeared to offer an educational advantage to their children; parents who turned over the responsibility of education to the professional could negatively affect their child's schooling. Educators have many of the academic answers but it certainly requires a team approach for children to maximize their learning (Lareau, 2003).

> Clearly, continuous positive interactions between home and school are essential and can offset many potentially negative external influences on developing children. Parents, it is true than when your child enters school your role changes, but that doesn't mean you are no longer teacher. In many ways, your revised role as teacher has just begun. (Young, 2006, pp. 53-54)

There are good schools all over the country. Schools where students and teachers relish working together and where achievement and expectations are high. Schools with high levels of parental engagement offer more personalized attention for the child. Principals who do their part to work

with the staff and students to develop a school environment conducive to learning often contribute to the success of the school (Sherrow, 1991).

Many parents are quite flabbergasted to discover that schools, for all their political decisions, are often tremendously accessible and open to outside involvement (Chase & Katz, 2002). Parents need to communicate with their children to be respectful of their teachers, encouraging them to consider teaching as a career path, not as a final resort (Crosby, 2002). This goal is not to govern but to influence. A point to remember is parents are not solely responsible for their children's actions. Parents want to incessantly hold up and respect their children's aptitude to make choices, even if choices are not agreed with. Unless a child is permitted to make his or her own choices at times, a child cannot learn the association between choices and consequences (Runkel, 2007).

> It is absolutely essential that parents and teachers sign up on the same team with the child. If either pulls against the other, or undermines the other, or belittles or criticizes the other, the effect is lower performance on the part of the child. (Kersey, 1990, p. 102)

Parents need to feel that their input is welcomed. They need to know that the teacher values the support, information, and perspective which they can provide. Therefore, they should be encouraged to call, write, and/or come in for conferences any time. "Teachers set the stage for the conference. First they must build a rapport with the parent" (Kersey, 1990, p. 105). The relationship between a teacher and principal seems to have an astonishing magnifying effect on the desired outcome of a school building. It models what all relationships will be. Principals have the ability to model and demonstrate how to build and maintain good working relationships with all school employees (Barth, 1990).

In previous reports and conferences I have told parents all I know about their children's

strengths and weaknesses, improvements and lack of improvements. Things haven't

changed much since January. What more can I say now? What more is there to say? I

wish I could appraise children's work the way I want and not be compelled to use the

official form. How can I possibly summon the time and energy to pull together my ideas

about twenty-eight children, write the reports, each of which must be unique for each to

child, and then schedule and hold another round of conferences? (Barth, 1990, p. 23)

Some people also blame parents who seem to be too tired, busy, unwilling, or lacking in skills to

promote a child's learning at home or to work with the school. "Some parents don't do their

job," says a middle school principal in a New Jersey suburb. "They let the kids watch too much

TV and stay up late. Many don't supervise their kids' behavior or homework" (Sherrow, 1991,

p. 6).

Most adults are too busy, too stressed, worried, and preoccupied to sacrifice the time and

energy it takes to 'be there' for the child. Children know us better than we know them.

They watch, listen, and can predict our reactions. They can imitate us to a 'tee.' That is

because they are so dependent on us. They realize that they could not survive without us.

They need for us to be okay. In fact they will go to great lengths to make things okay for

us. (Kersey, 1990, p. 20-21)

Schools that reach out to families and include them in character-building efforts greatly enhance

the chances for success with students. Parents appreciate the inclusion and desire to part of their

child's education (Kimmel, 2004.)

They take pains at every stage to communicate with families via newsletters, e-mails,

family nights, and parent conferences about goals and activities regarding character

education. To build greater trust between home and school, parents are represented on

the character education committee. Finally, schools and families enhance the

effectiveness of their partnership by recruiting the help of the wider community in

promoting character development. (Miller, 2010, p. 114)

A growing number of families choose to teach their children at home. Americans of all

races, socioeconomic backgrounds, and religions now home school their own children. Parents

of homeschoolers are, on average, better educated than other parents. A greater percentage of

these parents have college degrees although their income is about the same. Families are able to

select a curriculum or textbooks that meet their approval and standards. Some families simply

choose for a less-structured learning environment without a regimented schedule driving their

day. Many families rely on their own materials, borrow materials heavily from local libraries, or

require more project-based learning like raising rabbits or building homes for the needy,

obtaining Boy Scout honors, or utilize technology by taking on line classes (Williams, 2005).

In Indiana, a child is required to attend school beginning with the school year in which

the child becomes seven years of age (Indiana Office of Code Revision, n.d.). A child who

attends a non-accredited, nonpublic school is required to attend school no later than the date on

which the child becomes seven years of age (Indiana Office of Code Revision, n.d.). Note that

the starting age for kindergarten (age five by August 1) does not affect the starting age for first

grade. There is no requirement that a child must be six years old by August 1 in order to attend

first grade (Indiana Office of Code Revision, n.d.).

Parenting is a hard job, but you are a natural for it. You're the one most interested in the

welfare of your children, and you're close at hand every day. To enjoy successful

parenting, stick to good habits, show a good model, listen, and cultivate some close

advisors to discuss problems and solutions. We humans are busy with our complex lives, but we have an extra advantage: we learn well from each other. (McIntire, 1997, p. 255) As our children are being managed and perfected with expert help, travel experiences, and classes, we become, whether we know it or not, increasingly anxious and stressed out. Even the satisfaction of producing accomplished children with impressive resumes is small reward when a tiny voice is telling us that we've sacrificed our role as teacher and protector, and we've squandered the only truly valuable thing we have: time. (Guthrie & Matthews, 2002, p. 48)

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

There were three primary purposes of this study. One purpose of the study was to increase the understanding of parental involvement with regards to their children's education. A second purpose of study was to analyze two schools' poverty levels in regards to student academic goals. A third purpose of the study was to understand parental involvement and parents' academic goals for their children. This research and study benefits educators and parents and raises awareness in this high speed and highly competitive world in which we live.

Research Questions

In seeking to analyze the varied degrees in which parents see themselves as involved, by specifically studying parent or guardians involvement and the success of their children, this study asked the following questions:

1. Is there a difference between a college-educated parent and a less-educated parent regarding their children's educational goals?

2. Is there a difference between male and female parents or guardians regarding the amount of time spent involved with their children's schoolwork?

3. Are there differences among a parent whose child qualifies for free lunch, a parent whose child qualifies reduced lunch, and a parent or guardian whose child does not

qualify for any meal cost reduction regarding the amount of time spent on school work?

4. Is there a difference between a parent or guardian from a school with 50% or more poverty and a parent or guardian from a school with less than 25% poverty regarding their children's educational goals?

5. Is there a difference between a parent or guardian from a school from a school with 50% or more poverty and a parent or guardian from a school with less than 25% poverty regarding the amount of time spent involved with their children's schoolwork?

The examination of the identified questions was researched by means of a survey. The instrument was intended to gather basic demographic information, insight into personal perceptiveness about education, attitudes regarding education, parental practices, and degrees of motivation to produce a successfully educated child.

Procedures for Data Collection

1. I reviewed the Indiana Department of Education website containing school data.

2. Two schools were selected based on the identified characteristic of a school with more than 50% poverty and a school with less than 25% poverty. The first school selected consisted of approximately 65.5% poverty, and the second school selected consisted of approximately 16.8% poverty.

3. Once the schools were selected, a permission letter was requested and granted from both school districts.

4. A total of 50% of parents from each public school were given the opportunity to contribute to the study. A systematic sample was used to select parental names. The

administrative assistants from both schools pulled every other name from the school database and the list generated was provided to me. The list of parental names and addresses were included.

5. A cover letter was mailed to the parents to explain the purposes of this study, voluntary participation, and how the results would remain anonymous for both the participant and the school.

6. A return envelope containing my address and a stamp were included. The school with a higher poverty level was issued the survey on light blue paper and the school with a lower poverty level was issued the survey on tan paper.   An equal proportion of parents were surveyed from a school district with less than 25% poverty and over 50% poverty.

7. The survey (see Appendix) was professionally copied and mailed to the parents selected from the database.

8. The parent received a self-addressed envelope to be returned to me. Surveys were mailed to the parents on March 9, 2012, and surveys used in the study were accepted until March 23, 2012.

9. I analyzed the results, so more information was contributed to increase the knowledge and understanding of parents and their children's educational attitudes and involvement. The contribution goal was to increase awareness to improve children's educational outcomes and success in K-12 school.

Null Hypotheses

$H_0 1$. There is no significant difference between a college-educated parent and a less-educated parent regarding their children's educational goals.

$H_0 2$. There is no significant difference between male and female parents or guardians regarding the amount of time spent involved with their children's schoolwork.

$H_0 3$. There are no significant differences among a parent whose child qualifies for free lunch, a parent whose child qualifies reduced lunch, and a parent or guardian whose child does not qualify for any meal cost reduction regarding the amount of time spent on school work.

$H_0 4$. There is no significant difference between a parent or guardian from a school with 50% or more poverty and a parent or guardian from a school with less than 25% poverty regarding their children's educational goals.

$H_0 5$. There is no significant difference between a parent or guardian from a school from a school with 50% or more poverty and a parent or guardian from a school with less than 25% poverty regarding the amount of time spent involved with their children's schoolwork.

Data Analysis

Responses from parents and/or guardians representing varied demographic backgrounds were analyzed using a series of statistical tests. $H_0 1$ stated, "There is no significance difference between a college educated parent and a less educated parent regarding their child's educational goals." This was tested with Chi-square test of contingency. $H_0 2$ stated, "There is no significant difference between male and female parents or guardians regarding the amount of time spent involved with their child's schoolwork." This was tested with t test of two sample means. $H_0 3$ stated, "There is no significant difference between a parent whose child qualifies for free lunch, reduced lunch and a parent or guardian whose child does not qualify for free or reduced lunch

regarding the amount of time spent on school work." This was tested with ANOVA test of three treatment means. H_04 stated, "There is no significant difference between a parent or guardian from a school with 50% or more poverty and a parent or guardian from a school with less than 25% poverty regarding their child's educational goals." This was tested with Chi-square test of contingency. H_05 stated, "There is no significant difference between a parent or guardian from a school with 50% or more poverty and a parent or guardian from a school with less than 25% poverty regarding the amount of time spent on schoolwork." This was tested with t test of two sample means.

Method of Data Collection

The surveys (self-rating) were distributed to parents who were selected with school administrators' assistance. A systematic sample was used, meaning every second name from each school's enrollment was selected to fill out a voluntary survey. The survey was then mailed to the names selected and was used to expand insight into personal incentives for parents to make education a priority for their children. Approximately 460 parent surveys were given to two separate schools.

The parent survey consisted of five questions. The questions directly relate to their educational involvement with their child or the variables that were testes. Most of the questions requested the parents or guardians to simply select a category that best described their background and current situation. A few questions simply required parents or guardians to fill in the blank. The parents or guardians were given a self-addressed envelope to be returned to me with a due date for the return of the survey. The identity of the parents was not asked and the school's identity was kept confidential.

Summary

This chapter contained the methodology components of the research study. It contained an introduction, research questions, the null hypotheses, procedure for data collection, data analysis and the method of data collection. The main purpose of this study was to examine the involvement parents or guardians have and their educational goals for their children. This exploration was intended to glean more information from parents about their goals and involvement with their children's education and to research a connection between poverty levels. The more educators can learn from parents the more equipped they are to better educate children.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to analyze two schools poverty levels in regard to student academic goals with relationship to the amount of time parents assist their children's studying. The chapter also includes a descriptive analysis from the 158 parents who responded to the survey. Demographic data regarding the parents income level was collected directly from the parents who responded to the survey.

Prior to the study, two schools were selected from the Indiana Department of Education website with varying poverty levels. One school selected contained less than 25% poverty while the other school contained more than 50% poverty. On March 9, 2012, the parent survey was mailed directly to 460 parents. The addresses were provided by the school districts and the computer selected every other parent in the database system. In total, 158 parent surveys were returned to me by March 23, 2012, and used in the study. The parents were provided with a self-addressed envelope with the postage provided. The study sample included 158 parents who had children attending two different elementary schools which included 50% of both elementary schools in Indiana.

Hypothesis Testing

In this chapter a descriptive analysis of the data is included and inferential statistics. I performed the statistical procedures utilizing Excel Analysis ToolPak. Chi-square, *t* test, and

single ANOVA were used to test the null hypotheses. The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

$H_0$1. There is no significant difference between a college-educated parent and a lesser educated parent regarding their children's educational goals. This hypothesis compared two categorical variables each of which effectively has two levels. The educational goal variable was presented to respondents with four levels but two were omitted since they were not selected by any respondents. A null hypothesis that two categorical variables are independent is analyzed with a chi-square test on the numbers in the contingency table. A two by two contingency table has one degree of freedom.

$H_0$2. There is no significant difference between male and female parents or guardians regarding the amount of time spent involved with their children's schoolwork. This hypothesis compared the means of a single continuous variable, time spent, between two populations. The null hypothesis that the two means are identical is analyzed with a t test of two sample means. The two samples presented noticeably different standard deviations, so a t test assuming unequal variances is appropriate.

$H_0$3. There is no significant difference between a parent whose child qualifies for free lunch, a parent whose child that qualifies for reduced lunch and a parent or guardian whose child does not qualify for any meal cost reduction, regarding the amount of time spent on school work. This hypothesis compared the means of a single continuous variable, time spent, between three populations. The null hypothesis that the three means are identical is analyzed with a one-way ANOVA.

$H_0$4. There is no significant difference between a parent or guardian from a school which has 50% or more poverty and a parent or guardian from a school with less than 25% poverty

regarding their children's educational goals. This hypothesis compared two categorical variables each of which effectively has two levels. The educational goal variable was presented to respondents with four levels but two were omitted because they were not selected by any respondents. A null hypothesis that two categorical variables are independent is analyzed with a chi-square test on the numbers in the contingency table. A two by two contingency table has one degree of freedom.

$H_0$5. There is no significant difference between a parent or guardian from a school with 50% or more poverty and a parent or guardian from a school with less than 25% poverty regarding the amount of time spent on schoolwork. This hypothesis compared the means of a single continuous variable, time spent, between two populations. The null hypothesis that the two means are identical is analyzed with a t test of two sample means. The two samples presented noticeably different standard deviations, so a t test assuming unequal variances is appropriate.

Descriptive Analysis

The study sample included 158 parents of K-6 children enrolled in a public school in Indiana. Table 1 displays data regarding the parental educational level and future goals for their children at school 1 (more poverty). On survey Question 4, four levels of goal choices were available; however, the first two choices, None or GED, were not selected. Therefore, those two categories were omitted from the test. Of the parents who did not attend or complete college, 9.5% selected high school graduation as their educational goal for their children and the other 90.5% of the parents selected college as their educational goal for their children. Of the parents who completed college, 3.0% selected high school graduation as their educational goal for their children and 97.0% selected college as their educational goal for their child.

Table 1

Parental Education Level and Educational Goals for Child (School 1)

College Completed Parent	High School	College	Total
No	4	38	42
Yes	1	32	33
Total	5	70	75

Table 2 displays data regarding the parental educational level and future goals for their children at school 2 (less poverty). On survey Question 4, four levels of goal choices were available; however, the first two choices, None or GED, were not selected. Therefore, those two categories were omitted from the test. Of the parents who did not attend or complete college 22.2% selected high school graduation as their educational goal for their children and the other 77.8% of the parents selected college as their educational goal for their child. Of the parents who completed college, none selected high school graduation as their educational goal for their children and 100.0% selected college as their educational goal for their child.

Table 2

Parental Education Level and Educational Goals for Child (School 2)

College Completed Parent	High School	College	Total
No	4	14	18
Yes	0	65	65
Total	4	79	83

Table 3 displays data regarding the parental educational level and future goals for their children for all respondents in the survey. On survey Question 4, four levels of goal choices were available; however, the first two choices, None or GED, were not selected. Therefore, those two categories were omitted from the test. Of the parents who did not attend or complete college, 13.3% selected high school graduation as their educational goal for their children and the other 86.7% of the parents selected college as their educational goal for their children. Of the parents that completed college 1.0% selected high school graduation as their educational goal for their child and 99.0% selected college as their educational goal for their children.

Table 3

Parental Education Level and Educational Goals for Child (Both Schools)

College Completed Parent	High School	College	Total
No	8	52	60
Yes	1	97	98
Total	9	149	158

It appears that most parents wish for their children to attend college after high school. Those few who did not select college mostly did not attend college themselves. The statistical analysis showed that this anecdotal observation, which was equally valid for the individual schools as the merged data, was in fact statistically significant.

The parent survey asked the selected parents five questions. The questions pertinent to Tables 4 through 6 were, "What is the gender of the person that typically helps your children with their schoolwork?" The other important question was, "How many hours each week does the person that assists your children with their schoolwork/reading spend assisting each child?"

Table 4 shows the number of respondents from School 1 (more poverty) of each gender who reported spending a specific number of hours assisting their children with homework/reading. There were 60 female respondents who averaged of 5.29 hours per week assisting their children with homework/reading. There were 15 male respondents who averaged of 2.97 hours per week assisting their children with homework/reading.

Table 4

Parent/Guardian Time Spent Assisting With Homework/Reading (School 1)

Time Spent/Hours	Female	Male
Less Than 1	0.00	0.00
At least 1, less than 2	4.00	1.00
At least 2, less than 3	8.00	5.00
At least 3 less than 4	5.00	5.00
At least 4, less than 5	10.00	3.00
At least 5, less than 6	6.00	1.00
At least 6, less than 7	8.00	0.00
At least 7, less than 8	7.00	0.00
At least 8, less than 9	7.00	0.00
At least 9, less than 10	1.00	0.00
At least 10, less than 11	1.00	0.00
At least 11, less than 12	1.00	0.00
At least 12, less than 13	2.00	0.00
At least 13, less than 14	0.00	0.00
14 or more	0.00	0.00
Mean	5.29	2.97

Table 5 shows the number of respondents from School 2 (less poverty) of each gender who reported spending a specific number of hours assisting their children with homework/reading. There were 67 female respondents who averaged 4.62 hours per week assisting their children with homework/reading. There were 16 male respondents who averaged 4.59 hours per week assisting their children with homework/reading.

Table 5

Parent/Guardian Time Spent Assisting With Schoolwork/Reading (School 2)

Time Spent/Hours	Female	Male
Less Than 1	1.00	0.00
At least 1, less than 2	9.00	2.00
At least 2, less than 3	12.00	2.00
At least 3 less than 4	9.00	4.00
At least 4, less than 5	8.00	1.00
At least 5, less than 6	11.00	2.00
At least 6, less than 7	6.00	2.00
At least 7, less than 8	2.00	0.00
At least 8, less than 9	3.00	1.00
At least 9, less than 10	0.00	0.00
At least 10, less than 11	3.00	1.00
At least 11, less than 12	0.00	1.00
At least 12, less than 13	0.00	0.00
At least 13, less than 14	1.00	0.00
14 or more	2.00	0.00
Mean	4.62	4.59

Table 6 shows the number of all respondents of each gender who reported spending a specific number of hours assisting their children with homework/reading. There were 127 female respondents who averaged 4.94 hours per week assisting their children with homework/reading. There were 31 male respondents who averaged 3.80 hours per week assisting their children with homework/reading.

Table 6

Parent/Guardian Time Spent Assisting With Schoolwork/Reading (Both Schools)

Time Spent/Hours	Female	Male
Less Than 1	1.00	0.00
At least 1, less than 2	13.00	3.00
At least 2, less than 3	20.00	9.00
At least 3 less than 4	14.00	4.00
At least 4, less than 5	18.00	3.00
At least 5, less than 6	17.00	2.00
At least 6, less than 7	14.00	1.00
At least 7, less than 8	9.00	0.00
At least 8, less than 9	10.00	1.00
At least 9, less than 10	1.00	0.00
At least 10, less than 11	4.00	0.00
At least 11, less than 12	1.00	1.00
At least 12, less than 13	2.00	0.00
At least 13, less than 14	1.00	0.00
14 or more	2.00	0.00
Mean	4.94	3.80
Standard deviation	3.30	2.38

It appears that women spend more time assisting children with homework/reading. However, the data reported by the respondents seems to show a lot of variation.

The parent survey asked the selected parents five questions. The questions pertinent to Tables 7 through 9 were, "How many hours each week does the person that assists your children with their schoolwork/reading spend assisting each child?" "Do your children at school qualify for free meals, reduced meals, or paid meals?"

Table 7 shows the number of respondents from School 1 (more poverty) of each level of poverty, which is represented by their school lunch subsidy status who reported spending a specific number of hours assisting their children with homework/reading. There were 15 respondents with children eligible for free lunch, with an average of 3.53 hours per week

assisting their children with schoolwork/reading. There were 23 respondents with children

eligible for reduced cost lunch, with an average of 5.61 hours per week assisting their children

with schoolwork/reading. There were 37 respondents with children who paid full price for their

lunch, with an average of 4.86 hours per week assisting their children with schoolwork/reading.

Table 7

Time Spent Assisting Child With Homework by Poverty Status (School 1)

Time Spent/Hours	Free Meals	Reduced Meals	Paid Meals
Less Than 1	0.00	0.00	0.00
At least 1, less than 2	3.00	0.00	2.00
At least 2, less than 3	4.00	2.00	7.00
At least 3 less than 4	1.00	3.00	6.00
At least 4, less than 5	2.00	5.00	6.00
At least 5, less than 6	2.00	2.00	3.00
At least 6, less than 7	1.00	4.00	3.00
At least 7, less than 8	2.00	3.00	3.00
At least 8, less than 9	0.00	2.00	4.00
At least 9, less than 10	0.00	1.00	0.00
At least 10, less than 11	0.00	0.00	1.00
At least 11, less than 12	0.00	0.00	1.00
At least 12, less than 13	0.00	1.00	1.00
At least 13, less than 14	0.00	0.00	0.00
14 or more	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mean	3.53	5.61	4.86

Table 8 shows the number of respondents from School 2 (less poverty) of each level of

poverty, which is represented by their school lunch subsidy status who reported spending a

specific number of hours assisting their child with homework/reading. There were three

respondents with children eligible for free lunch, with an average of 7.17 hours per week

assisting their children with schoolwork/reading. There were three respondents with children

eligible for reduced cost lunch, with an average of 2.0 hours per week assisting their children

with schoolwork/reading. There were 77 respondents with children that pay full price for their lunch, with an average of 4.62 hours per week assisting their children with schoolwork/reading.

Table 8

Time Spent Assisting Child With Homework by Poverty Status (School 2)

Time Spent/Hours	Free Meals	Reduced Meals	Paid Meals
Less Than 1	0.00	0.00	1.00
At least 1, less than 2	0.00	1.00	10.00
At least 2, less than 3	0.00	1.00	13.00
At least 3 less than 4	0.00	1.00	12.00
At least 4, less than 5	0.00	0.00	9.00
At least 5, less than 6	2.00	0.00	11.00
At least 6, less than 7	0.00	0.00	8.00
At least 7, less than 8	0.00	0.00	2.00
At least 8, less than 9	0.00	0.00	4.00
At least 9, less than 10	0.00	0.00	0.00
At least 10, less than 11	0.00	0.00	4.00
At least 11, less than 12	1.00	0.00	0.00
At least 12, less than 13	0.00	0.00	0.00
At least 13, less than 14	0.00	0.00	1.00
14 or more	0.00	0.00	2.00
Mean	7.17	2.00	4.62

Table 9 shows the number of all respondents of each level of poverty, which is represented by their school lunch subsidy status, who reported spending a specific number of hours assisting their children with homework/reading. There were 18 respondents with children eligible for free lunch, with an average of 4.14 hours per week assisting their children with schoolwork/reading.   There were 26 respondents with children eligible for reduced cost lunch, with an average of 5.19 hours per week assisting their children with schoolwork/reading. There were 114 respondents with children that paid full price for their lunch, with an average of 4.70 hours per week assisting their children with schoolwork/reading.

Table 9

Time Spent Assisting Child With Homework by Poverty Status (Both Schools)

Time Spent/Hours	Free Meals	Reduced Meals	Paid Meals
Less Than 1	0.00	0.00	1.00
At least 1, less than 2	3.00	1.00	12.00
At least 2, less than 3	4.00	3.00	20.00
At least 3 less than 4	1.00	4.00	18.00
At least 4, less than 5	2.00	5.00	15.00
At least 5, less than 6	4.00	2.00	14.00
At least 6, less than 7	1.00	4.00	11.00
At least 7, less than 8	2.00	3.00	8.00
At least 8, less than 9	0.00	2.00	5.00
At least 9, less than 10	0.00	1.00	0.00
At least 10, less than 11	0.00	0.00	5.00
At least 11, less than 12	1.00	0.00	1.00
At least 12, less than 13	0.00	1.00	1.00
At least 13, less than 14	0.00	0.00	1.00
14 or more	0.00	0.00	2.00
Mean	4.14	5.19	4.70
Standard deviation	2.66	2.56	3.36

It appears that parents regardless of the level of poverty spend approximately the same amount time assisting their children. Very few parents spend more than eight hours assisting their children with schoolwork across poverty levels.

The parent survey asked the selected parents five questions. The questions pertinent to Table 10 were, "Does the person that assists your children with their schoolwork have a college degree?" "In assisting your children with their future goals, what level of education would you like to see your children complete?"

Table 10 displays data regarding future goals for children at each of the two schools. At School 1 (more poverty), 6.7% of the parents selected completion of high school as their educational goal for their children and 93.3% selected college. At School 2 (less poverty), 4.8%

of the parents selected high school as their educational goal and 95.2% selected college. On survey Question 4, four levels of goal choices were available; however, the first two choices, None or GED, were not selected. Therefore, those two categories were omitted from the test.

Table 10

Parents' Goals for Their Children Regarding Future Education (By School)

School	High School	College	Total
1	5	70	75
2	4	79	83
Total	9	149	158

The parent survey asked the selected parents five questions. The question pertinent to Table 11 was, "How many hours each week does the person that assists your children with their schoolwork/reading spend assisting EACH child?"

Table 11 contains information regarding the amount of time parents assist their children with homework at each of the two different schools. There were 75 respondents from School 1 (more poverty) with an average of 4.83 hours per week assisting their children with homework/reading. There were 83 respondents from School 2 (less poverty) with an average of 4.61 hours per week assisting their children with homework/reading.

Table 11

Amount of Time Parents/Guardians Assist Children With Homework Between the Two Schools

Time Spent/Hours	School 1 More Poverty	School 2 Less Poverty
Less Than 1	0.00	1.00
At least 1, less than 2	5.00	11.00
At least 2, less than 3	13.00	14.00
At least 3 less than 4	10.00	13.00
At least 4, less than 5	13.00	9.00
At least 5, less than 6	7.00	13.00
At least 6, less than 7	8.00	8.00
At least 7, less than 8	7.00	2.00
At least 8, less than 9	7.00	4.00
At least 9, less than 10	1.00	0.00
At least 10, less than 11	1.00	4.00
At least 11, less than 12	1.00	1.00
At least 12, less than 13	2.00	0.00
At least 13, less than 14	0.00	1.00
14 or more	0.00	2.00
Mean	4.83	4.61
Standard deviation	2.64	3.59

The averages of time spend assisting children with their homework between the two schools are fairly close. The amount time parents spend assisting is clustered between one and eight hours per week.

Inferential Analysis

$H_0$1. There is no significant difference between a college-educated parent and a lesser educated parent regarding their children's educational goals. A Chi-square test was utilized to test this hypothesis that the educational level of the parent is independent of their educational goal for their child. The data has a Chi-square value of 10.5 on 1 *df*. The critical Chi-square for $\alpha = 0.05$ is 3.8, so the null hypothesis was rejected. So, there was a relationship between the

educational level of the parents and the educational goals for their children. Parents with a

higher education appeared to be significantly more likely to want their children to attend college.

H$_0$2. There is no significant difference between male and female parents or guardians

regarding the amount of time spent involved with their children's schoolwork. This

hypothesis— that the mean amount of time spent assisting their children with schoolwork was

the same among men as it was for women—was tested with a *t* test. The sample variances were

far enough apart to require the *t*-test which assumes unequal variances. The *t* value of the data

was 2.183. The critical *t* for α = 0.05 was 1.999, so the null hypothesis was rejected. There was

evidence of a significant difference between the mean amount of time a female parent spends

and the mean amount of time a male parent spends.

H$_0$3. There is no significant difference between a parent whose child qualifies for free

lunch or reduced lunch and a parent or guardian whose child does not qualify for free lunch or

reduced lunch regarding the amount of time spent on school work. The hypothesis that the mean

amount of time spent assisting their child with school work was the same in all three groups of

people; the people were grouped according to the lunch assistance qualification was tested using

a single factor ANOVA (Table 12).

Table 12

Difference Between Parents Whose Children Qualify for Free/Reduced Lunch and Parents

Whole Children Did Not Qualify for Free/Reduced Lunch – ANOVA

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*
Between Groups	11.933	2	5.967	0.593
Within Groups	1559.750	155	10.063	
Total	1571.684	157		

The data had an *F*-value of 0.593. The critical *F* was 3.054 so the null hypothesis was not rejected. The data provides no evidence of a significant difference between the mean amount of time the three groups of parents spent assisting their children with school work

$H_0$4. There is no significant difference between a parent or guardian from a school with 50% or more poverty and a parent or guardian from a school with less than 25% poverty regarding their child's educational goals. A Chi-square test was utilized to test this hypothesis that the educational goal for their child is independent of the geographical location of the school the child attended (rural/suburban). The data had a Chi-square value of 0.3 on 1 *df*. The critical Chi-square for $\alpha = 0.05$ was 3.8, so the null hypothesis was not rejected. There was no evidence of a relationship between the geographical location of the school and the educational goals for their children.

$H_0$5. There is no significant difference between a parent or guardian from a school with 50% or more poverty and a parent or guardian from a school with less than 25% poverty regarding the amount of time spent on schoolwork. The hypothesis—that the mean amount of time spent assisting their child with school work was the same at both schools—was tested with a *t* test. The sample variances were far enough apart to require the *t* test that assumes unequal variances. The *t* value of the data was 0.426. The critical *t* for $\alpha = 0.05$ was 1.976, so the null hypothesis was not rejected. There was no evidence of a significant difference between the mean amounts of time parents at the two schools spend assisting their children with school work.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The educational demands placed on children today are rising at a rapid rate. Children once attended school with fewer mandates. Parents face each day by trying to make ends meet and balancing the educational demands. Today children start at an early age and by Grade 3 in Indiana are facing the first high stakes assessment that will determine if they advance to the next grade level. Educators have become efficient at meeting the basic needs of children first thing in the morning; children come to school each day feeling hungry, in need of shower, in need to discuss last evenings events and sometimes sleep; and then educators move on to address the required academic standards. "We can rail against the system, hoping that standards and testing are a passing fad, or we can lead the way in a fundamental reformulation of educational accountability" (Reeves, 2004, p. 5). More expectations than ever are demanded from each child, educator, and parent. As the demands for rigor increase, one needs to observe the national drop-out rate. "Parents who are more involved in their children's lives, as measured by the number of shared activities, are more likely to hold higher expectations for their child's education" (Child Trends Data Bank, 2012, p. 6).

Parents' choices of specific activities within this wide range appear grounded in their (a) child-rearing values and assumptions about learning, (b) understanding of the purposes

and goals of homework, (c) personal knowledge of strategies appropriate for supporting

child performance or learning, and (d) responses to specific information, from teachers or

children, about homework tasks and processes. (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001, p. 203)

"Parents who remain actively involved in their children's school activities, especially

their learning curriculums, can help their children to excel academically" (Campbell, 2009, para.

1). When parents or guardians are more involved with their children's education, children tend

to value their education more. "Teachers and national policymakers know that the more

involved the parent is in their child's education, the greater the chance that the child will excel at

school" (Campbell, 2009, para. 4). "A large percentage (82%) of poor children who participated

with high intensity in both parents as teachers and preschool entered kindergarten ready to learn,

as compared to only 64% of poor children who had no involvement in either service"

(Pfannenstiel & Zigler, 2007, p. 2).

Family and school represent the primary environments in which young children grow and

develop, and good schools value parental involvement. The foundation for good parent–teacher

relationships is frequent and open communication, mutual respect, and a clear understanding of

what is best for each individual child (NAEYC, 2006). Both parents and teachers agree that

parent involvement is important, but the differences become apparent when parents and teachers

are asked *how* communication and collaboration should occur. Due to cultural and linguistic

differences between many urban homes and schools, attitudes and definitions related to parent

involvement seem to be a malleable term. In order to achieve common ground, first examining

the reasons why parents involve themselves in schools is important to study (Peterson, 2010).

Summary of Study

The purpose of this study was threefold. One purpose of the study was to increase the understanding of parental involvement with regards to their children's education. A second purpose of study was to analyze two schools' poverty levels in regard to student academic goals. A third purpose of the study was to understand parental involvement and their academic goals for their children. Several research questions were used to guide this study: Is there difference between college-educated parents and a lesser educated parents regarding their children's educational goals? Is there a difference between male and female parents or guardians regarding the amount of time spent involved with their children's schoolwork? Is there a difference between a parent whose child qualifies for free lunch or reduced lunch and a parent or guardian whose child does not qualify for free or reduced lunches regarding the amount of time spent on school work? Is there a difference between a parent or guardian from a school with 50% or more poverty and a parent or guardian from a school with less than 25% poverty regarding their children's educational goals? Is there a difference between a parent or guardian from a school with 50% or more poverty and a parent or guardian from a school with less than 25% poverty regarding the amount of time spent involved with their children's schoolwork?

The examination of the identified questions was researched by means of a survey. The instrument was intended to gather basic demographic information, insight into personal perceptiveness about education, attitudes regarding education, parental practices, and degrees of motivation to produce a successfully educated child. The design of the study involved the following methods. A total of 50% of parents from each public school were given the opportunity to contribute to the study. A systematic sample was used to select parental names. The first school selected consisted of approximately 65.5% poverty and the second school

selected consisted of approximately 16.8% poverty. The independent variables were school, which had two possible values that were intended to be representative of rural and suburban; gender of the parent or guardian primarily involved with assisting the child with his or her schoolwork, which had two values, male parent or guardian and female parent or guardian; lunch subsidy status, which had three values: free lunch, reduced lunch, and regular pay lunch, which is a reasonable measure of poverty levels; and parent or guardian completion of college degree, which had two possible values: yes or no. The dependent variables were the number of hours the primary parent or guardian spent assisting his or her child with homework; the variable was intended to measure direct parental involvement in their children's education, and the educational goals the parents or guardians had for their children, which had the values of None, GED, High School Diploma, and College Degree; no participants selected None or GED, so these values were excluded in the statistical analysis.

Discussion

The study found a significant correlation between the parents' or guardians' own educational level and the level they held as goals for their children. "However, some people would argue that parents of high-achieving students play a detrimental role by pressuring their children to achieve at unrealistically high levels or to satisfy the parents' needs" (Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth, 2013, para. 1). Each year high schools across the country typically hold a meeting in the spring about how to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) paperwork. It is usually on the schools' checklist of meetings to hold, and it is optional to attendance for parents and students. After attending these meetings at both the high school and college level, it was interesting to observe who attended and the questions that were asked. Parents who are less educated find attending school functions and meetings a bit

intimidating. Schools could offer smaller sessions or groups during the school day or after

school hours to actually reach more parents in order to support children in reaching future

academic goals. Most advisors know which students could use more parental or adult support in

order to actually turn their wishes of attending college into a reality. Advisors could reach out to

parents by calling them to invite them to attend in a small group. In addition, many parents want

their children to attend college but they do not always know how to assist their children to get

there. School personnel could offer parents a time to come to the school with their children to

look at various colleges and the application process. Schools need to be more proactive in

assisting children and parents with that next step.

The study did find a significant correlation between the gender of the person who

primarily assisted the child with schoolwork and the number of hours per week spent on that

assistance. "Parental involvement in children's homework appears to influence student

outcomes because it offers modeling, reinforcement, and instruction that supports the

development of attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors associated with successful school

performance" (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001, p. 203). Schools at all levels could offer more

father/male events or activities to encourage more participation. Often times when school

personnel call the home or make contact, they typically contact the mother; therefore, school

personnel could work on including the father more. Lastly, schools should publicize more about

getting fathers involved in their children's education and how important that role is for their

child. Schools and parent groups could reach out more to fathers and let them know their

involvement is wanted at the school.

The study did not find a significant correlation between which school the respondents'

children attended and their future educational goals for their children. Likewise, the study did

not find a significant difference in the average amount of time parents from each of the two schools spent assisting their children with the homework/reading, nor a significant difference in the average amount of time parents from each poverty level (measured by lunch subsidy status) spent assisting their children.

However, research suggests that on the individual level parental income is correlated with future expectations. "Only about half of low-income parents (those with annual incomes of $25,000 or less) expect their children to attain a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with more than seven out of eight parents earning $75,000 or more" (Child Trends Data Bank, (2012, para. 1). Many parents have the desire for their children to attend college but do not necessarily have the skill level or means to support them to actually attain this desire or goal. Schools could offer some training for parents to assist with attaining these desires. Schools and educators need to assist parents to value education more.

Recommendations for Further Study

Recommendations for further research would benefit from the following:

1. A further study should be conducted to ascertain the specific aspects of the educational process that are impacted by poverty. Schools need to have a better understanding of the direct impact that poverty can have on a child's education.

2. A study should be conducted regarding parental goals for their children regardless of poverty level and how to support them to achieve those desired goals. Schools need to collect more information from parents of poverty in regard to their specific needs in order to support their children educationally.

3. A comparative study should be conducted to analyze the differences between elementary and secondary levels regarding parental involvement. As children age their needs change regarding educational supports.

4. A comparative study should be conducted to analyze the differences between how a female parent supports her child educationally and how a male parent supports his child educationally.

Implications for Further Study

1. My research suggests that poverty does not reduce the hopes and dreams parents or guardians have for their children nor their willingness to be involved.

2. <u>It is observed that parental involvement tends to lessen as children age.</u>

3. My study suggests that females tend to spend more time assisting children with homework but did not address how that time was spent.

Conclusion

It is apparent that parents and guardians want an optimistic future for their children. Many parents are doing their very best but do not always know what more to do. The daily demands of life can cloud the need that children have for their parents to positively support them with their education. Parents with varying economic status and educational levels are willing to spend time each week assisting their children with their schoolwork. Both male and female parents provide their children with educational support. The gaps in the outcomes do not seem to come from parental hopes or willingness to support their children in their educational process. The future of this great country lies in the hands of these young children. Parents and educators have a colossal job to ensure that children are well prepared to face the demands of the future. Educators need to continue to support parents and learn how to help parents support their

children to actually obtain the future goals they have for their child. It is necessary for both

home and school to continue to work together for all children to make a promising future for all.

Schools need to offer more opportunities for parents to be part of the school environment and

parents need reach out to the school to be involved.

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APPENDIX: PARENT SURVEY

1. What is the gender of the person that typically helps your children with their schoolwork?
   Male   or   Female

2. Does the person that assists your children with their schoolwork have a college degree?
   Yes   or   No

3. How many hours each week does the person that assists your children with their schoolwork/reading spend assisting EACH child?

   _____
          Number of hours each week

4. In assisting your children with their future goals what level of education would you like to see your children complete.
   None   GED   High School Diploma   College Degree

5. Do your children at school qualify for:
   Free Lunch   Reduced Lunch   Neither Option (Regular Pay Lunch)