The Relationship Between Academic Achievement and Economic Level at Selected High Schools in Western Pennsylvania and Their Impact on the Degree and Success of Parental Involvement Strategies

Harry Bauman

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the School of Education

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Education

By
Harry A Bauman

December 2011
DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
INTERDISCIPLINARY DOCTORAL PROGRAM FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND ECONOMIC LEVEL AT
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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND ECONOMIC LEVEL AT SELECTED HIGH SCHOOLS IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE DEGREE AND SUCCESS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT STRATEGIES.

By

Harry A Bauman

December 2011

Dissertation Supervised by Dr. Jean R. Higgins

Education accountability has risen due to the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) legislation, and practitioners are working harder, and with more creativity, than at any other time in recent history to find ways to improve student achievement. If a school fails to meet what has been determined to be “adequate yearly progress” (AYP), a mandated set of prescriptive guidelines, requirements and sanctions, are imposed by the government. One of these requirements is that an improvement plan be developed and approved by the department of education. This plan
must include a listing of policies and procedures that define how the school will improve and increase the involvement of its parents and community.

The involvement of parents in the education of their children has been shown to have a significant impact on the student’s achievement in school. Improving parental involvement has become an increasingly evident theme in federal legislation over the last two decades. NCLB and other educational legislation require the adoption of parent involvement policies that will build the schools’ and the parents’ capacity to work together.

Since a great number of high schools are preparing these improvement plans, now is an advantageous time for gathering information on programs, activities, and initiatives being instituted by high schools that are improving the number, as well as the quality, of the parents’ involvement in the education of their high school age children. Idea sharing, brainstorming, and heated debate are happening any time two or more educators get together.

The work of this study will be to survey high school principals, teachers, and involved parents, to determine what, in this fertile and active education environment, is working to increase the amount and quality of parent involvement at the high school level.

This information will add to the body of collective educational tools used to increase the quantity and quality of parental involvement practices at the secondary level. Special attention will be given to parental involvement programs that are proving effective in districts facing the added educational and social challenges that arise from poverty.
DEDICATION

I wish to thank my beautiful, wonderful and incredibly patient wife, Dianne and my talented and beautiful daughters, Alyssa and Tessa. These three amazing women have been an inspiration for me to be my best. They have been supportive throughout all of my schooling, career and life. They have created and fostered a lovely and caring life and a household full of laughter that we all cherish. I am incredibly proud of us as a family. It is a gift beyond measure.

I would like to acknowledge the support of my committee chairperson, Dr. Jean Higgins, who continued to support my pursuit of this dissertation and my doctorate through those times when it looked like the challenges of life would derail it. She nudged and prodded me when inertia set in. This strong and accomplished person is an impressive role model to me.

Another of my mentors and role models served on this dissertation committee as well. Dr. Steve Tomaino was my school district’s superintendent when I began this journey. He, like Jean, kept after me to finish and supported my efforts.

I thank the superintendents and principals of the participating schools in this study. Though their jobs are already challenging and full, they found time to help me. I also appreciate the input of the teachers and the parents who completed my surveys and provided valuable information.

Most of all I want to thank my God for His never ending support in my life. I know, without a doubt, that He hears me when I pray. A lot of prayers were sent and answered while I pursued this dissertation. My God has greatly blessed all aspects of my life.
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CHAPTER I

AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Statement of the Problem

Schools in Pennsylvania and all over the country have come under immense pressure to improve student performance over the last few years. A strong push toward accountability came in the form of the high stakes testing requirement of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). NCLB is a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA, 1965).

In 1999, Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code was revised and now has established statewide academic standards that require the assessment of student achievement in reaching the Pennsylvania State Standards (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1998). This legislation established the PSSA (Pennsylvania System of School Assessment) as our state’s high stakes testing vehicle.

The NCLB Act is a federal law with prescribed benchmarks of achievement by students. The No Child Left Behind Act had its beginnings in the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. This Act requires all states that wish to continue to receive education funds from the federal government to establish high achievement standards for all students. According to this federal law, all students must be educated to the extent that each will achieve either an advanced or proficient level on the State sponsored test by the year 2014. The law allows the individual states to determine the sliding scale of required achievement standards each year until the 2014 deadline. If a school fails to meet what has been determined to be adequately yearly progress (AYP), that school will be labeled by the State’s department of Education as a school in warning, a school in need of improvement, a school in corrective action, or a failing school. Each
of these indicators comes with a set of prescriptive guidelines from the state government. These prescriptions vary in severity from the requirement to write and submit improvement plans to the state, to providing third party tutors at the district’s expense, to offering students the opportunity to switch to other schools, to the restructuring of the school’s design, to restructuring of school leadership, and finally, to the complete takeover by the state board of education. No Child Left Behind and the Pennsylvania State laws mandate the reporting and publicizing of both the school district’s overall performance on the State test, and the disaggregated data of all groups of students represented in individual school. The State judges schools to be failing if sub-groups such as minority populations, economically disadvantaged populations, English as a second language populations (ESL), and special education populations are not meeting with success, even if the majority of their population is performing at an advanced or proficient level. All schools must find the best practices for bringing all students, including the sub-groups of minority, English as a Second Language students, economically disadvantaged students, and special education groups up to the proficiency standard. The No Child Left Behind legislation has made it clear that a school may not accept the status quo of allowing sub-groups of students to fall behind the others. A school cannot use excuses or blame the families for not preparing students to be better students. With the philosophy that all students deserve a quality education and that all students can achieve proficiency, regardless of economic standing, ethnic background, or exceptionality, the federal and state governments have required schools to find ways to ensure that all students meet with success.
Accountability in Relation to Parental Involvement Requirements

President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Legislation into law in 2001 in an attempt to improve the quality of our public schools. The strong involvement by the family and partnerships with the home and community has become an increasingly evident theme in this and other federal legislation over the last two decades.

Family-school and community partnerships are high priorities of many of the initiatives included in this education altering law. This law makes sure that parents have many, substantial, and meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children (NCLB Executive Summary, 2004). Other federal legislation, even before NCLB, also emphasized the importance of family and community involvement in schools.

Barton and Coley (1992) claimed that the improvement of education in American society needs to begin with a national commitment to improve the family as an educational institution (Barton & Coley, 1992). Epstein of Johns Hopkins University asserted that the value of a strong school-family-community partnership has been a recurring theme in educational policy and practice for the past several decades (Epstein, 2003). Epstein (2002) further claimed that the field of school-family-community partnerships has been energized by activities in research, policy, and practice, since 1990.

The Educate America Act of 2000, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA), and Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 are three important pieces of legislation that require increased parental involvement opportunities in the education of children. These laws build support for the involvement of parents and the community (Goals 2000: Educate America Act).
A number of current studies also support the value of strong school-family & community partnerships. Many of these studies find that strong partnerships lead to improved student performance, improved school attitudes, and increased parental support of the education system (Gonzalez, 2001; McNeal, 1999). In a 2007 study, Hoang found that stronger parental involvement helps children adopt goals that reflect their enjoyment of learning. Hoang (2007) further determined that students whose parents attend school functions and maintain regular contact with the teacher tended to get better grades so as to render a positive report for his or her parents.

Other studies offer suggestions to improve these partnerships and analyze feedback from the perspective of various stakeholders, including parents, teachers, students, and campus administrators. Van Velsor and Orozco (2007) determined that schools serve parents better and increase their chances of improving parental involvement of low-income parents by implementing community-centered strategies for parental involvement. They specifically recommended that the school develop groups that make home visits. They recommended that these visits helped to reduce the power imbalance between school officials. They claimed that home visits also address the barrier related to work and transportation problems (VanVelsor & Orozco, 2007).

Research supports the concept that parents can have a tremendous impact on their student’s academic achievement, school attendance, adaptability, and classroom behavior (Epstein, 2002). A study by Barton and Coley (1992) used data derived from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 to determine that parental contact in their students’ lives, rather than parental contact with the school, provided the best predictor for test scores.
Parental involvement can be defined as a combination of commitment and active participation to both the school and the student. Through involvement in their children’s education, parents can increase academic success and reduce the risk of academic failure and dropout (Drake, 1995). However, parents report many roadblocks to their involvement in the education of their children. Obstacles to parent involvement can be intertwined with issues of race, culture, and economic standing. Social issues such as work schedule, availability of childcare, and transportation will also impact school-family partnerships (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Henderson and Mapp (2002) also suggested that despite these barriers to parent involvement, parents want their children to be successful. In an earlier study, Henderson and Mapp (1997) found that parents want to be involved more in the education of their children, but do not know how to do it. Becker and Epstein (1982) listed outside family responsibilities, stress, parental unawareness, and school intimidation as additional barriers to parent involvement.

It has been shown that teachers and parents can often have very broad and different views on the various types of parental involvement (Becker & Epstein 1982). Epstein (1996) claimed that the field of school, family, and community partnerships is growing and improving with the development of better approaches. It is the intent of this study to explore the impact that strong parental involvement strategies, implemented by high schools, may have on the academic achievement of the students of that school.
The Focus District's Demographics, Academic Achievement, and Parental Involvement Activities

Demographics of the Focus School District:

This researcher has chosen the high school in the McKeesport Area School District as the main focus of his interests in the ability of parental involvement to impact economically challenged schools. He has a keen interest in this as he has been employed by the district for 29 years as a teacher and as an administrator.

McKeesport Area School District is a school district about 15 miles southeast of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, that educates about 4500 students in pre-kindergarten through the twelfth grade. The district services families from five neighboring municipalities. The largest is the City of McKeesport which has a population of 24,040. The others, in descending order of population, are White Oak, Pennsylvania, population of 8,437; Dravosburg, Pennsylvania, population of 1,893; Versailles, Pennsylvania, population of 1,724; and South Versailles, Pennsylvania, population of less than 1,000 (Pennsylvania State Data Center, 2000).

Poverty and the social ills associated with poverty are currently the biggest challenges facing McKeesport Area schools. Over 65% of the students come from families that receive free and reduced lunches. Only 15 of the 501 school districts in the state of Pennsylvania have higher percentages of poverty than does the McKeesport Area School District (Pennsylvania Department of Education, Office of Child Development and Early Learning).

Two thirds of the students in the McKeesport Area School District come from single parent households. Many of the neighborhoods that send students to the district
are troubled by drugs, violence, crime, poor school attendance, and a high dropout rate. The education level of the majority of the families in the district is low, with generations not achieving a high school diploma or its equivalency. Over 19% of the adults residing in the district do not have a high school diploma or its equivalency, according to the 2000 Census of Population and Housing (Pennsylvania State Data Center, Penn State, Harrisburg, 2000). The percentage of students who receive special education services (21%) is much higher than the state average. Minority populations represent 49% in the district and 48% in the high school.

As an established municipality, McKeesport Area School District has been graduating students since 1884. The City of McKeesport grew and thrived as an important steel production town from the late nineteenth century until the early 1980s when the steel industry laid off the majority of the workforce. Today the population of the city, as well as that of the school district, has greatly decreased in size from its peak in the period in 1940 through the 1970s. In 1970, the City of McKeesport’s population was approximately 38,000. In 2005 that number had dropped to approximately 22,500 (City-Data, 2008; Pennsylvania State Data Center, 1997). In the early 1970s, the Borough of White Oak’s population was approximately 10,000. In 2005 that number had dropped to about 7,500 (City-Data, 2008).

The median household income of City of McKeesport residents is below the state average (McKeesport’s median household income is $25,700; the state median household income is $44,537) (City-Data, 2008; Pennsylvania State Data Center, 1997). The median house value in the City of McKeesport is significantly below the state average (the median house value in McKeesport is $39,800 and the median house value in the state is $131,900) (City-Data, 2008). The percentage of the city’s population with a
bachelor’s degree is below the state average. The unemployment rate is above the state average (McKeesport’s unemployment rate is 5.5% and the state’s is 4.1%) (City-Data, 2008).

Twenty-two and a half percent of the households in the district have incomes between $30,000 and $49,999. Twenty-six percent of the households in the district have incomes between $15,000 and $29,999. Twenty-two point seven percent of the households in the district have incomes between $0 and $14.999 (City-Data, 2008; Pennsylvania State Data Center, 1997). This data is reported for the purpose of demonstrating that a very high percentage of students of McKeesport Area School District are from families that face very challenging economic conditions.

PSSA Scores of the Focus District

Just as the socio economic levels of the district are below the state average, likewise, student scores and achievement, as measured by the Pennsylvania System of School Achievement (PSSA), are below the state average. The 2008 Pennsylvania State System of Assessment (PSSA) data for the 2007-2008 school year demonstrates the challenge that lies ahead. Only 29% of the overall eleventh grade population is scoring in the proficient range in math. Only 51% of the overall eleventh grade population is scoring at the proficient range in reading.

No Child Left Behind Act requires that at least 54% of all students reach the proficiency standard in math and that 63% of all students reach the proficiency standard in reading. The law also requires that the data of specific targeted groups be compiled and published. It is here that McKeesport Area High School faces its biggest hurdles. The data demonstrates that only about 10% of the minority eleventh grade students
reached proficiency in math and only 25% of the minority population achieved proficiency in reading. This same trend is reflected in the reading and math scores for eleventh grade students who are determined by the state to be economically disadvantaged. Only about 17% of the economically disadvantaged eleventh grade students reached proficiency in math and only 33% of the eleventh grade economically disadvantaged population achieved proficiency in reading. Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) score even lower than this. With the inclusion of the scores from this group, and the calculation of their disaggregated data, McKeesport Area High School and hundreds of other schools in the state, have fallen under the watchful eye of the State. Now determined to be a school in “Corrective Action II (Year 3),” it falls on both the McKeesport Area School District and the McKeesport Area High School to prepare and submit an improvement plan to the Pennsylvania Department of Education. It requires that students and their families be made aware of the district’s testing results and be given opportunities to switch schools within the district.

These sanctions are not unique to McKeesport Area School District. Many affluent districts are being labeled failing schools as a result of their special education population or another sub-group not achieving the desired level of proficiency. The level of concern among schools all over the country is high and policies are being adopted everywhere that are aimed at adapting curriculum with the sole purpose of increasing the percentages on state tests. Among all the efforts to improve education, the creative brainstorming, the reallocation of district, federal, and state funds and resources, and the changes of district and school policy all aimed at improvement of student achievement, few have the potential for success as do those that strive to increase parental involvement (Gonzalez, 2001; Greenberg, 2002; Lepkowska, 2003; McNeal, 1999).
partnerships between the school and home have shown to lead to improved student performance, improved student attitudes regarding school, and increased parental support of the education system (Gonzalez, 2001; McNeal, 1999).

Parental Involvement Activity of the Focus District

Due to the fact that this researcher grew up in McKeesport, graduated from McKeesport Area High School, worked at the high school as a teacher for 15 years, and worked as the high school principal and other administrative positions for another 15 years, the researcher is in a position to view the workings of the school and community from an insider’s perspective. There seems to be a hesitance on the part of the parents of McKeesport High School students to involve themselves in their children’s schooling unless the school insists on it for disciplinary purposes. Countless conversations and interactions with parents demonstrate to this researcher that there is often a lack of trust on the part of the parents of the school. Parents may doubt that the school will be fair and welcoming of their input. Parental involvement in school sponsored activities is low. It is not unusual for the Parent, Teacher, and Student Association (PTSA) meetings to be attended by only six or seven parents.

Because of this researcher’s lifelong affiliation and commitment to the McKeesport Area School District, it is of great importance to this researcher to find best practices for improving the academic achievement of the students. The involvement of a parent in a child’s education is important to the success of that student in meeting the school’s academic demands. The involvement of parents in schools is shown by many studies to be vital in maximizing the academic success of students (Jacobi, 2003; Leon, 2003; Greenberg, 2004; McNeal, 1999).
Educators and researchers have long recognized that the development of programs and opportunities that encourage and support parental involvement in a child’s educational program is of importance. Henderson and Mapp (2002) demonstrated the link between academic performance and parental involvement. Epstein (2002) linked parental involvement to improved attendance and Fan and Chen (2002) documented improved behavior in school, as documented by fewer discipline referrals, as related to increased parental involvement. This task, though recognized by educators as important, is a challenging one, especially at the secondary level due to real and perceived barriers such as cultural differences, parents’ fear of authority, illiteracy, and parents’ negative educational experiences (Plevyak 2003). Until now, those challenges were enough to cause many schools to treat this issue as a lost cause. The schools would go through the motions but expectations of parent involvement at the secondary level were low (Van Voorhis, 2002).

In McKeesport, parent involvement in the high school, if measured only by the standard of how frequently parents walk through the high school doors, is very poor. The PTA for instance has only three or four active members most years and open houses and parent/teacher visitation days document the attendance of only about 15% of the parents. This may be a result of the societal issues mentioned earlier as well as the national trend of lower parental involvement at higher grades (Leon 2003). In a study undertaken in 2006, O’Bryan, Braddock, and Dawkins (2006) analyzed African American parental involvement and cited reasons for the decline of parental involvement as students’ age increased. They found that this decrease of involvement resulted from the parent’s belief that their involvement is not as important as it was when their children were in lower grades. They also claimed that as children moved into higher grades, they may
discourage the active participation of their parents in their schooling experiences, as they attempt to form autonomous identities separate from that of their parents. Finally, these researchers, claimed that parents found fewer opportunities for involvement as their children reached higher grade levels (O’Bryan et al., 2006). Chen, Dornbusch, and Liu (2007) recognized that the trend for parental involvement declines from mid adolescence to late adolescence. This reflects the decline in parent monitoring, family organization with routines and rules, parental involvement in school work, and the time that parents spend with adolescents (Chen et al., 2007).

Structures are in place in the McKeesport Area School District that should facilitate better and more frequent involvement of parents if measured by the view that parents can involve themselves in a variety of ways. All classrooms are equipped with phones and voicemail. The district has demonstrated a commitment to the development of a great deal of technology, including the use of electronic grade books that can be accessed by the students and their parents from home at any time. The district has a professionally designed web page that is updated constantly, which includes a parent involvement policy. This web site also has letters of compliance with Title I parent involvement policies. The PTSA, though poorly attended, is well supported by a central core of parents and the administration.

The district offers workshops to the public on a variety of topics throughout the school year. The following are a few workshops that were offered by the district during the 2008-2009 school year: Mom’s Day Out, Dad’s Day, autism support spectrums, Grandparent Breakfasts with Books, Literacy Night, a parent mentor project, a middle school mentor support group (7UPP!), Read Across America, a community health expo
to showcase the community support agencies, and regularly scheduled technology classes.

Along with this infrastructure in the school district, the district has a working relationship with several of the local social service agencies in McKeesport. These relationships include positive and open communication with the two local low-income housing authorities and their recreation boards, several mental health agencies, the Boys’ and Girls’ Club, the YMCA, and the local library. The district is also involved with the UPMC McKeesport Hospital in a McKeesport Healthier Communities PartnerSHIP (SHIP). Still, with all of the above in place, parental involvement is conspicuously low in McKeesport, especially at the high school level.

Parental Involvement is Correlated with Student Performance

It is essential that schools across the country find ways to involve the families of students in the education of their children. Many studies have demonstrated a high correlation between parental involvement and individual student success (Epstein, 1999; Jacobi, 2003; Sartor & Youniss). Other studies strongly suggest that parental involvement is correlated with overall district success. The lack of parent involvement is particularly prevalent in the secondary school years. Many studies demonstrate that this is a near universal finding at the secondary level (Leon, 2003; Sartor & Youniss, 2002; Van Voorhis, 2004). Many reasons have been cited by various studies that suggest reasons that the parent involvement experienced by elementary schools drops off dramatically in the high school (Leon, 2003; Sartor & Youniss, 2002). One reason cited for this drop in parental involvement at the high school level is that, though parents of students in the elementary grades are attracted by school-wide activities, parents of
secondary students tend to only attend functions and events in which their own child is directly involved (Leon, 2003).

Another reason that schools should and must involve parents as partners in the educational process is that it is mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. No Child Left Behind is the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. In the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), parents are mentioned more than 300 times, demonstrating the importance placed on them as partners in their children’s education. Parental involvement is specifically spelled out in the Act’s section 1118(a)(2), Title I (NCLB Executive Summary, 2004). It is here that parental involvement requirements for schools and districts are very specifically defined. It is stated that all schools will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement with the goal being to increase social, emotional, and academic growth of children. The section demands that all schools receiving Title I money from the federal government as well as those schools that do not make adequate yearly progress (AYP), have a written parental involvement policy that builds capacity of parents to be involved in the education of their children. All must form a budget for parent involvement activities. Parents must receive written notice and meaningful and regular opportunities for getting involved in the development and review of these budgets and plans. It further requires that schools provide for and promote meaningful consultations with parents.

It also requires the adoption of parent involvement policies that describe how they will build both the schools’ and the parents’ capacity for involvement in the schools, consistent with section 1118(b) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), (Jacobi, 2003). Districts must develop this policy jointly with the input of parents and community. Parents are to be represented on advisory boards and must be considered
important decision makers (§9101(32), EA; ESEA Information Update, 2003). The district must ensure meaningful, two-way communication practices that ensure that parents play an integral part in their child’s education.

Because so much has changed in education accountability due to the requirements of the NCLB act, practitioners are working harder and with more creativity than at any other time in recent history to find ways to improve student achievement. Idea sharing, brainstorming, and heated debate are happening any time two or more educators get together.

Although it is challenging to achieve or to improve, parental involvement is correlated with student achievement. Given that the NCLB act specifically requires that districts have parental involvement plans, and given that the state’s department of education polices these plans, more efforts are being focused on the parent than at any time in recent memory (Epstein, 2003).

This is now an advantageous time for gathering information and data on programs, activities, and initiatives being instituted by high schools that are successful in improving the number, as well as the quality, of parental involvement in the education of their high school age children. One of the goals of this study will be to determine what, in this fertile and active education environment, is working to increase the amount and quality of parent involvement at the high school level. With this information, a list of parental involvement activities happening frequently in both higher achieving schools and schools facing achievement challenges will be inventoried. Special attention will be paid to activities that are working in districts similar to this researcher’s that are faced with educational and social challenges that arise from poverty.
Because of this researcher’s long term relationship with the McKeesport Area School District and high school as the focus district in this study, it is important to this researcher to determine and then promote best-practice parental involvement strategies that hold the promise of improved academic achievement of the district’s students. This study is undertaken with this motivation in mind, and with the aspiration for developing a strong and empirically supported understanding of the activities that work best to involve parents in the educational lives of their children. After first documenting, through statistical analysis, the variations in the parental involvement practices between high and low achieving high schools and between high affluence and low affluence high schools, closer analysis will focus on the school leader’s perceptions of the practices in place. A list of the practices used most frequently in both high academically achieving and more affluent schools is inventoried and recommendations for the adoption of these strategies into the practices and policies of the less academically and economically challenged high schools is put forth by this researcher. The following section introduces the four research questions that inform the development of these lists and recommendations.

Research Questions and Hypothesis that Guide this Research Study

Four research questions guide this study. Those research questions and the hypothesis that accompany each of them follow:

1. Research Question 1: Is there a significant difference in academic achievement (as measured by math and reading PSSA scores) among students at schools that rated the school’s parental involvement strategies as high and those that rated their parental involvement strategies as lower in southwestern Pennsylvania high schools?
Hypothesis: High schools that rate their parental involvement strategies as higher will have students who have greater academic achievement in reading and math than Southwestern Pennsylvania high schools that rate their parental involvement strategies as lower.

2. Research Question 2: Is the reporting of parental involvement, through self-rating, related to the economic status of the school district as measured by the percentage of students receiving free/reduced lunch?

   Hypothesis: High schools whose percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch is lower than 14% will have a higher self-rating of their school’s parental involvement than those high schools whose percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch is between 14% to 24%, who, in turn, will have a higher self-rating of their school’s parental involvement than those high schools whose percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch is greater than 25%.

3. Research Question 3: In high schools that have been required to submit school improvement plans to the Department of Education, as a result of a negative school improvement classification, what parental involvement strategies were seen by the principal as occurring frequently or extensively in their schools?

   Hypothesis: The School Improvement Classification has led to the adoption of additional or heightened efforts to involve parents.

4. Research Question 4: In high schools that have demonstrated overall improvement in student achievement, as demonstrated by rising reading and math proficiency rates in the “all student” category throughout the
course of eight years of published PSSA and AYP data, what parental involvement strategies were seen by the principal as having occurred frequently or extensively?

Hypothesis: Schools that have demonstrated over-all improvement in student achievement, as demonstrated by increased reading and math proficiency rates, have parental involvement strategies that differ in frequency from those occurring in lower achieving schools.

Study Goals

This study has four major goals. The first goal is to test the hypothesis that there is a positive correlation between a high school’s strong parental involvement strategies and a school’s academic performance of the “All Students” sub-group as indicated by the published PSSA and AYP data over the school years from 2002-2009.

The second goal is to determine if the self-rating of the parental involvement level of a high school is positively related to the economic status of that high school.

The third goal is to determine if the failure to achieve adequate yearly progress, thus resulting in the school being classified by the Pennsylvania Department of Education as a school in need of Improvement, has led to the adoption of parental involvement strategies that differ in frequency from schools that have not been on the school improvement lists. The fourth goal is to determine what parental involvement strategies are being employed most frequently by schools who are meeting with success as indicated by steadily raising math and reading scores on the PSSA over an eight year period.
Study Significance/Need

The strongest push for accountability of high schools to improve student achievement has come in the form of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). If a school fails to meet what has been determined to be adequately yearly progress (AYP), then that school will be labeled by the state’s department of education, as a school in warning, a school in need of improvement, a school in corrective action, or a failing school. Each of these indicators comes with a set of prescriptive guidelines from the state government.

A strong involvement by the family and partnership with the home and community has become an increasingly evident theme in federal legislation over the last two decades. Parental involvement is specifically spelled out in the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) legislation §1118(a)(2), Title I. It is here that parental involvement requirements for schools and districts are very specifically defined. Laws now require the adoption of parent involvement policies that will build both the schools’ and the parents’ capacity for involvement in the schools. Districts must develop policies jointly with the input of parents and community. Parents are to be represented on advisory boards and must be considered important decision makers (§9101(32), EA). The district must ensure meaningful, two-way communication practices that ensure that parents play an integral part in their child’s education.

Because so much has changed in education accountability due to the requirements of the NCLB act, practitioners are working to find ways to improve student achievement. Increasing parental involvement hold a promise to improve student performance (Sartor & Youniss, 2002). Much discussion is occurring in districts that hope to improve academic achievement. Many of these conversations involve discussions of ways to
increase the probability that the family will join the school in the efforts to raise student scores.

Given that the NCLB act specifically requires that districts have parental involvement plans, and given that the state’s department of education reviews these plans, more efforts are being focused on the parent than at any time in recent memory (Epstein, 2003).

Now is an advantageous time for gathering information and data on programs, activities, and initiatives being instituted by high schools that are being successful in improving the number, as well as the quality, of parental involvement in the education of their high school age children. This study will survey high schools, PTAs, and other educational providers to determine what, in this fertile and active education environment, is working to increase the amount and quality of parent involvement at the high school level. This study also promotes the concept that various parental involvement practices fall under the six parental involvement types described by Epstein (2002). The study further informs struggling high schools of parental involvement strategies and practices that are occurring more frequently in the higher achieving and more affluent high schools. This information will add to the body of collective educational tools used to increase the quantity and quality of parental involvement practices at the secondary level. Special attention will be given to parental involvement programs that are proving effective in districts facing the added educational and social challenges that arise from poverty.

Definition of Terms

*Parental involvement.* Any of the many forms of involvement by a parent with a child’s educational process. This may include in-school activities such as attendance at school
functions, attendance at meetings or volunteerism. This may also include communications of various forms with the school (initiated by either the parent or the school). This may also be defined as involvement with the child in activities that occur outside of the school, such as the building of the child’s educational capacity. Examples of this include reading with the child, helping with homework, having discussions about school issues or of future educational plans, or facilitating exposure to museums, libraries, etc. Parental involvement is also defined as involving oneself in the decisions of the school (Epstein 2003).

_No Child Left Behind (NCLB)._ The most recent in a long history of federal educational reform legislation. This legislation, signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2002, is based on four important principles. These guiding principles were increase in local control, research-based decision making, increased parental options, and increased accountability. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is especially focused on helping parents whose children attend failing or underachieving schools by increasing the requirement of parental involvement in the educational decisions involving their children (NCLB Introduction, 2004)

_Adequate yearly progress (AYP)._ The term developed by the No Child Left Behind legislation as the government’s expected growth expectations of student performance. Schools can achieve this standard by getting ever higher percentages of their student populations to score at prescribed levels on the state’s math and reading achievement tests.

_Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)._ The standardized yearly assessment adopted by the State of Pennsylvania to determine student achievement in math and
reading. This test is given yearly to all students in grades one, three, five, six, seven, eight, and eleven.

Limitations

Although there is a great deal of data on the academic achievement levels of the high schools that is provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, there are certain limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, this researcher chose to limit the study to the “All Students” category of reported PSSA math and reading scores. This is limiting in that it does not address the many sub-groups’ academic performance levels that are reported by the Pennsylvania Department of Education for each high school. Therefore, relationships that may vary between the impacts of parental involvement activities on sub-groups are not analyzed in this study. For example, the black student, the economically disadvantaged student, or the special education student, may be impacted very differently by varying levels of parental involvement.

This study on the relationships between parental involvement, poverty and academic achievement focused on the data that was collected from a single survey instrument (Measure of School, Family and Community Partnerships Survey, created by Salinas, Epstein, and Sanders). This poses a limitation on the study in that the responses regarding parental involvement practices can only be in the form of the Likert scale and respondents do not have the opportunity to qualify responses further.

Since the study was also limited to responses from nine members of each school district, it may provide a restricted view of the parental involvement strategies in use in each high school. The study was also confined to responses from 15 high schools in and around Allegheny County, in Western Pennsylvania.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Parental involvement has been thoroughly studied for several decades. Studies are predominantly supportive of parent involvement (Leto, 1995; Sartor, 2002; Smalley, 2001; Yan, 1999). The expectation that a high school can experience improved test scores, as a result of improving parental involvement, is one that is supported in much literature. Most studies over the last 20 years have linked increased or improved parent involvement with school improvement as defined by student academic achievement, student improved behavior, student school satisfaction, improved student identity achievement, lower student dropout rate, and lower student non-normative behaviors such as truancy, drug and alcohol use, and gang involvement. Research also points to improvement in school and teacher satisfaction and improved morale (Jacobi, 2003).

Given this research, it would seem a simple leap of faith that the concept of parental involvement should be embraced by all high schools. This is obviously a magic pill for improving student performance in high school. Why then is parental involvement so elusive and so hard to achieve in our schools, especially in our high schools?

In this chapter a summary of the supporting research for parental involvement in a child’s education will be reviewed. The term school-family-community partnerships (Epstein, 2003) will be used repeatedly to define the complex interaction of the school and the child’s outside-school support systems.

These overlapping spheres of influence in the student’s school experience will be reviewed and supported by literature. Intertwined throughout, will be the work of Epstein (2003). This review of the literature surrounding parental involvement will
demonstrate justification that her model of six types of school, family, and community interactions will underpin this study.

Also reviewed in this chapter will be the account of the federal legislation, both presently under law and historically, that support and require schools to involve parents in the education of their children.

The benefit of increased school-family-community partnerships is strongly supported throughout the literature. The requirement to formalize systems to achieve these partnerships is mandated in current legislation and throughout legislation over the last several decades.

The pressure to improve student achievement is stronger than it has ever been. The schools are trying everything in their power to raise student scores and to stay off the failing schools lists of the state and federal governments. Sub-groups of students are proving to be especially problematic in this effort. Economically disadvantaged students, minority students, students in the vocational-technical track of high school, and students requiring special education are falling behind the other students. Schools are being labeled failing schools for not bringing students up to the prescribed levels. Although parental involvement has found support in research for impacting student performance, schools have not been successful in improving its quantity and quality. The support for parental involvement’s positive effects can be found in the following studies.

Parental Involvement is Correlated with Student Achievement

In his study of parental involvement and its impact on student achievement, Lepkowska (2003), found that parent support was eight times more important than the child’s social class in determining academic success. Greenberg (2002) claimed that
children benefited tremendously when schools help bridge the gap between their two most important worlds. The author continues by saying that a child’s education is equally impacted by the relationship that parents form with their child’s teachers. Greenberg concluded that a successful parent-teacher partnership shows a child that an entire team of adults is working together for their success.

McNeal of the University of Connecticut (1999), equated parent involvement with increased social capital. Social capital is defined by Carbonaro (1998) as the sum of the collective interactions and relationships that can potentially provide social benefit to a person. It refers to connections within and among social networks, as well as connections among individuals. Coleman and Hoffer (1991) found that social capital in students' families and communities attributed to the much lower dropout rates. It has been demonstrated by many studies that the amount of parents’ engagement in education and at school is highly correlated with the amount of social capital those parents have in a community (Calpan, Choy, & Whitmore, 1992; Kahne & Baily, 1999).

This social capital, McNeal (1991) claimed, plays a crucial role in determining a child’s academic success. A parent’s involvement in a child’s schooling and activities creates extra sources of this social capital, which in turn, translates into improved academic success. This happens because a child equates the parent involvement as a strong message that education is important. Examples of parent involvement according to McNeal (1991) were joining school activities and forming networks with other parents in the school and with the parents of their child’s friends. It also includes discussion between the parent and child about school, joining the PTA, monitoring of the child, and parental rule setting (McNeil, 1999). With the parents displaying the above forms of involvement, the student is more likely to exert greater effort to perform well
This all works to stem non-normative behaviors like truancy, alcohol and drug use, and acting out behavior in classes. These non-normative behaviors, if left unchecked, have a great chance of leading to dropout behavior (McNeil, 1999). When parents involve themselves in the positive ways mentioned above, especially if they are monitoring and rule setting, then they will more likely know when the child begins to disengage from school. This disengagement is a key predictor of lower academic performance and also predicts a greater likelihood of student dropout (Gonzalez, 2002; McNeil, 1999).

Gonzalez (2002) agreed with McNeal (1999) when he found that the lack of parental involvement and excessive peer influences may lead to improper social attitudes and behaviors, as well as a host of other negative outcomes such as truancy, drug use, depression, low grades, poor attendance, discipline problems, and dropout behavior.

Sartor (2002) claimed that there is a positive correlation between adolescence achievement and parental support. When parents monitor teens’ behavior, it serves as an induction into the norms of society, by teaching appropriate conformity. He determined that parental knowledge of the daily activities of adolescence and emotional support by parents are positively associated with higher identity achievement. This identity achievement is associated with social attributes that contribute to school success.

A study by Leon in 2003 claimed that children want their parents to be involved in their education. Leon’s study determined, through surveys of students and families, that the words of protest by students about not wanting their parents involved, were actually just examples of posturing. Leon’s study claimed that most high school students did not feel unfavorably toward the increased involvement of parents into their school lives (Leon, 2003).
Several studies tied minority students' success to parental and family involvement in the school setting. Studies determined that if family involvement was more frequent and of a certain quality, then academic performance by minority students would improve (Leto, 1995; Smalley, 2001; Yan, 1999).

Justice and Morrow (1999) studied the relationship of self-perceptions to achievement among African American preschoolers. They examined the relationships of self-concept, self-esteem, and race to the academic achievement of African American preschool children. The findings suggested that efforts at improving academic self-esteem are important for school achievement of minority children. The implications are that interactions with parents that aim at helping minority children develop a positive view of themselves in regards to school activities may contribute to their academic success (Justice, Lindsey, & Morrow, 1999).

Yan (1999) touched on this theme in his study titled, “Successful African American students: The role of parental involvement.” He attempted to demonstrate that certain characteristics held by successful African American families add to the chance that children in those families will meet with more success in school. These characteristics, Yan (1999) argued, are types of social capital. The analysis of the data revealed that the successful African American students' families were higher in two social capital measures than the successful Caucasian students' families. These social capital measures, according to Yan (1999), were home discussion and school contact.

School Accountability and Laws on Parental Involvement

It is clear that, besides seeming to have positive impact, the concept of improved parental involvement is supported and even required by educational leaders and
governing bodies. Smar (2002), stated that many federal state and local initiatives and legislation over the last 15 years, have placed a great deal of emphasis on parental involvement in schools. The strongest of these is section 1118 of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

In 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the landmark legislation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). This sweeping legislation was enacted to improve the quality of the nation’s school system. Within it, are very specific requirements for schools to address the involvement of families in the education of their children. Before NCLB however, numerous federal and state legislations demonstrated, through their requirements, the importance of parental involvement. These acts and mandates included the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 (IASA), The Individuals with Disabilities Act Amendment of 1997 (IDEA) and the Goals 2000, Educate America Act of 2000. These powerful laws that so greatly impact the way schools interact with the parents of the students in their school, are detailed below.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)

The Elementary and Secondary Education act of 1965 (ESEA) was enacted by President Lyndon B. Johnson as part of the war on poverty. For three decades it impacted the ravages of poverty on America’s youth and moved toward a standards based reforms system in American education. Under Title I of the ESEA, “Better Schooling for Educationally Deprived Students,” a strong campaign was launched to help economically disadvantaged students to reach high standards (Title I in Perspective, 2004). Two educational amendments to the ESEA began the government’s far reaching assurances of
parental involvement in the education of their children. The first was P.L. 93-280. This Educational Amendment of 1974 established the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This gave parents the right to examine student records. The second amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that greatly impacted parental involvement occurred in 1975. P.L. 94-142, known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, ensured parental involvement and protections with the requirement of due process procedures and Individual Education Plans (IEPs). An amendment to EASA in 1983, P.L. 98-199, also helped move the status of parents forward by requiring the development of state parent training and information centers.

Another law at this time increased parental involvement in the education of their children. This law, known as the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 came as an amendment to the ESEA. It gave students and families assurances and rights over their educational records (Legislative History of Special Education, 2004).

Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 (IASA)

The reauthorization of ESEA occurred in 1994 in the form of the Improving America’s School Act (IASA). The purpose of the reauthorization was to augment the law so as to address some of ESEA’s shortcomings. The Improving America’s School Act attempted to address the school-wide reform, recommended by a panel convened by the Department of Education. The IASA of 1994 contained much language that targeted disadvantaged students and families. Important to this study, the Improving America’s Schools Act mandated significant changes in the way schools had to act toward the families of the children that we educated. In Title I, Section 1118 of this act, parents were specifically entitled to be involved in partnerships between families and schools. It
also encouraged communities to get involved in the improvement of schools. To accomplish these goals, the following provisions were advanced. First, schools receiving Title I federal monies were required to develop parental involvement policies with the input of parents. Second, these schools had to develop school-parent compacts. These are described as agreements between schools and families that target improved student achievement. They alter the traditional thoughts by spelling out that the education of children was a “shared responsibility” between school and home. Teachers would be assisted in providing high quality curriculum in safe supportive learning environments. Teachers would also be provided professional development to increase the probability of them positively involving parents in the education of their children. The act declares that parents must play a large role in the education of the children, as demonstrated by this clause: “All parents can contribute to their children's success by helping at home and becoming partners with teachers so that children can achieve high standards” (Archived Information: H.R. 6 Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994, Sect. 1118). The families’ part in the compact was defined as being responsible for supporting the school through the monitoring of attendance, homework, and the behavior of children.

The third provision of the Improving America’s Schools Act (IASA, 1994) which likewise targets the improvement of parental involvement in schools is the training and assistance in building capacity for involvement among parents. The provision recognized the need for parents to be made more aware of academic standards, of how to facilitate the development of their own children’s capacity to acquire literacy skills, and of how to understand and monitor the academic progress of their children. Overall, the Improving America’s Schools Act made the first strong efforts to “bring parents into the educational
process as partners with the school” (Archived Information: H.R. 6 Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994, Sect. 1118).

Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA) also known as P.L. 101-476, was an amendment to the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Law. It was an educational amendment aimed at strengthening the education of handicapped individuals. A strong step for parental involvement came with an amendment to IDEA in 1997. This re-authorization greatly altered parental involvement practices since it strongly addressed the parent’s rights and abilities to advocate for their children and impact the course of their child’s education. It enabled all eligible children to have quality special education and related services available to them in order to address unique educational needs (Legislative History of Special Education, 2004).

This re-authorization of IDEA in the form of P.L. 105-17 in 1997 was seen as an opportunity “to review, strengthen, and improve IDEA to better educate children with disabilities and enable them to achieve a quality education” (Archived Information: H.R. 6 Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994, Sect. 1118).

The means of achieving this goal are related to parent/school partnerships. They are (a) to strengthen the role of parents, and (b) to encourage parents and educators to work out their differences by using non-adversarial means (Archived Information: H.R. 6 Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994). These goals were addressed in Title I, Section 1118. Here parents were assured that they were entitled to be involved in partnerships between families and schools. It also encouraged communities to get involved in the betterment of schools. Title I schools were required to develop parental
involvement policies with the input of parents. School-parent compacts were required. Teachers were to be provided professional development training to help in their capacity to involve parents.

Section 615 of IDEA assures procedural safeguards such as the right to examine all records and rights to participate in meetings with respect to the child’s placement. Sections 682, 683, and 684 establish and regulate parent training and informational centers. “Overall, the Improving America’s Schools Act made the first strong steps toward inviting parents into the educational process as partners in education” (Title I in Perspective).

Goals 2000, Educate America Act

The next large step toward altering and improving the involvement of parents in a child’s education came about as a result of a national report on the state of America’s schools. From this report sprang the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. This legislation, signed into being by President Bill Clinton in 1994, provided a variety of resources to each state to encourage development and implementation of educational reforms aimed at raising America’s students’ academic achievement (Goals 2000 Executive Summary, 2004).

Titles I and IV of the Educate America Act spell out parental involvement provisions. Title I, Section 102, lists eight long-term goals that had a target date of the year 2000. Of these eight goals, five specifically address the importance of parental involvement in a child’s education.

Within Title I section B ii of the Educate America Act, a strong point is made for the importance of parental involvement with the statement: “every parent in the United
States will be a child’s first teacher and will devote time each day to helping their child learn” (Goals 2000 Executive Summary, 2004, Sect. 401).

In Section B iv of the Educate America Act’s fourth goal, a statement addresses partnerships among the different facets of a child’s life. Parents are listed as key contributors among the stakeholders mentioned here (Goals 2000 Executive Summary, 2004).

In Section B ii of the sixth goal, parent involvement programs that target increased literacy and the creation of life-long learners are examined. It states, “Literacy, training, and continued education opportunities for parents are important to improve the ties between home and school and enhance the home and work lives of parents” (Goals 2000 Executive Summary, 2004, Sect. 401).

In the seventh goal (Section B ii) is the statement that parents are viewed as “one of the many people responsible for ensuring that students are able to study in safe and secure environments that are free of violence and drugs” (Goals 2000 Executive Summary, 2004, Sect. 401).

The final goal of Goal 2000, Educate America Act spells out a parental involvement goal in Section B. It states that, by the year 2000, “every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation” It also states, “Schools will actively engage parents and families and will share school decision-making with families” (Goals 2000 Executive Summary, 2004, Sect. 401). This section of the eighth goal of the Goals 2000, Educate America Act also informs parents that they are to hold schools and teachers to high standards of accountability.
Goals 2000, Educate America Act, Title IV, Section 401 also resulted in the formation of a Parental Information and Resources Centers. Section 401 required that these centers be instituted to do the following:

1. To increase parents’ knowledge in child-rearing activities, such as teaching and nurturing their young children.
2. To develop partnerships between professionals and parents to help meet the needs of children from birth to age five.
3. To enhance the developmental progress of children.
4. To fund at least one parental-information resources center (PIRC) in each state.

Section 405 of Title IV of the Goals 2000, Educate America Act also determined that funding be made available for districts to develop training and support for parents of children aged birth to five who also have school aged children as well as to develop and promote improved communication between home and school. Finally, this section spells out that resources be developed in the form of parent support activities that include materials on child development, parent-child learning activities, child development, private and group guidance, and other activities that enable parents to improve learning at home.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2002

A massive reform came in the form of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was used as the basis for President George W. Bush’s proposal of one of the most sweeping and impacting school improvement reforms. This act is based on four important principles. These guiding
principles were increase in local control, research-based decision making, increased parental options, and increased accountability. A very large guiding principle of this act was the increased requirement of parental involvement in the educational decisions involving their children.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is especially focused on helping parents whose children attend failing or underachieving schools (NCLB Introduction, 2004). Options and assistance will be made available for these parents, through the Act’s guidelines, to help assure that all children receive a quality education.

The section of NCLB that focuses on parental involvement is the Title I section. This demands that all school districts that receive Title I funds, as determined by the Improving America’s School Act of 1994, must develop parental involvement policies with input from parents. Districts must implicitly involve parents in the development of this policy. Furthermore, parents must agree to the policy and the district must develop a system to communicate this policy to the parents and the community.

A third mandate of Title I of NCLB that deals with parental involvement requires districts to build capacity for parental involvement. It requires districts to offer training to assist parents in understanding the state and local assessments as well as the repercussions of a district’s failure to achieve adequate yearly progress.

Finally in the Title I section of No Child Left Behind, districts are required to provide parents with vital information on their schools’ achievement. This section also calls for the creation of parental involvement resources centers within the district.

Title IV of No Child Left Behind, also known as Safe and Drug Free Schools, specifically spells out required involvement of parents. It demands that a district have
“meaningful and ongoing” input from parents when planning, developing, and implementing drug and violence programs.

No Child Left Behind requires that schools have plans in place that support and encourage parental involvement. When improvement plans are prepared by a district that has been determined by the state to be under the school improvement part of that plan must address parental involvement and ways that the school or district plan to improve this participation. A required section of a state’s getting results school improvement form specifically requires the school to enumerate the section of the document that addresses the ideas for improving parental involvement.

It is clear that No Child Left Behind demands that parents are to be considered important partners in the educational lives of their children.

Responses to the Parental Involvement Legislation

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 (IASA), the Individuals with Disabilities Act Amendment of 1997 (IDEA) and the Goals 2000, Educate America Act of 2000., and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB) all advocate that parent/school partnerships are vital in student performance improvement.

These legislative directives have resulted in the codification of educational practices and procedures by leading education agencies in the country. The National Education Association publishes a Pocket Guide to Building Partnerships for Student Learning. Head Start has adopted performance standards targeting family and community involvement in children’s education (Administration for Children, Youth, and Families (DHHS), Washington, DC. Head Start Bureau, 1996) and the National Parent
The National Parent Teacher Association (National PTA 2002), outlines and advocates six types of parental involvement in education.

Epstein’s Spheres of Influence and Six Types of Involvement

The National Parent Teacher Association (National PTA 2002) adopted a parental involvement model that groups family involvement in the education of students into six identifiable sub-divisions. These six types are communicating, parent/student learning, volunteering, school decision making, collaboration, and parenting. They are based on the model of six types of parental involvement framed by Epstein, from the National Network of Partnership Schools and Johns Hopkins University (Epstein, 1998).

The National Network of Partnership Schools was established by Epstein and researchers at Johns Hopkins University in the late 1980s. This institute has established itself as a resource for helping with the establishment of parent/school/family/community partnerships. Epstein is one of the foremost researchers of the effects of parental involvement in the country. Her philosophy regarding the influences in a child’s school world is described in her model of overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 1987, 2001, 2002). This spheres model proposes that there are interconnected elements at work in the child’s educational life. At the very center of one of the spheres is the child himself. The second sphere is the school. Another is the family and the final sphere is the surrounding community.

The extent to which these important spheres overlap is influenced by the availability of time and the behaviors of the students themselves and those around the student. It is the overlap of these spheres of influence in a child’s life that makes the difference in the child’s relative success in school (Epstein & Simon, 2001).
From this philosophy of overlapping spheres of influence, Epstein (2001) developed a framework of six types of involvement to demonstrate and organize ways that educators can implement partnership activities and opportunities. Epstein claims that these six types of involvement are important to a strong, diverse, and balanced partnership between the child and the entities important to a child’s education.

Epstein and the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University, describe the six types of involvement as follows (Epstein, 2002):

1. Parenting: The parenting and child rearing skills employed by the parents. This includes the understanding of child and adolescent development and the ability to set home conditions that support children as students at each grade level.

2. Communicating: The two directional, school-to-home, and home-to-school, interaction between the school and family that targets information sharing any information deemed important to either entity.

3. Volunteering: The recruitment and involvement of families as volunteers or audiences at the school or at other locations to support student and school programs.

4. Learning at home: This is defined as the learning experiences and enrichment activities that the home provides for their children that impact a child’s school success. This might include homework or trips to the local library of the museum.

5. Decision making: This is the inclusion of families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy. This might occur through
involvement in parent teacher organizations, school councils, committees, and other parent organizations.

6. Collaboration with the community: This is the coordination of resources and services for families, students, and the school with local businesses, agencies, and other groups that may provide services and support to students, families, and schools.

By analyzing the extent to which a school helps to facilitate these six types of school, family, and community involvements in the lives of students, the relative state of a district’s level of parental involvement can be determined. It is upon these concepts that this study will determine the relative strength of the participating schools’ parental involvement.

Roadblocks to Parental Involvement

Leading and formidable groups in education have listed parental involvement as an important area of focus for schools. Therefore, as well as having an extensive list of studies that affirm that improving parental involvement is associated with a whole myriad of positive results, parental involvement is supported and even demanded by some of the strongest educational institutions in American education. Strong consequences, including the loss of state and federal monies, assure that districts address parent involvement. Still, parent involvement is cited by educational practitioners and parents as well, as being an incredibly challenging issue facing high schools (Leon, 2003; Ramirez, 2001; Smalley, 2003). Why is this goal of parent involvement so hard for high schools to achieve?

Many studies have attempted to answer the question of what gets in the way of achieving the goal of improving parental involvement at the high school level (Epstein,
One roadblock to increasing parental involvement is the negative attitude towards the school by some parents. Some parents are intimidated and feel inferior to teachers and school administrators (Heystek, 2003). They often feel unwelcome and unwanted in the schools. Parents sometimes feel in a “catch-22” situation. They feel they are perceived as nosey or as problem parents if they are actively involved but they feel that they are portrayed as uncaring if they are not involved. Teachers responded in that same way, according to Heystek (2003). Teachers sometimes view active parents as radicals and they sometimes perceive parents who do not attend school gatherings and functions as non-caring. This perceived or real feeling of not being welcome in their child’s education is a roadblock to parent involvement.

Other reasons cited by parents of high school students for not getting involved include the idea that parents of high school kids tend to come to activities and events at school only when their child is directly involved in the activity. This is in contrast to parents of elementary students who are more likely to attend whole school activities (Leon, 2003). When student participation in activities at the high school level is low then parental involvement is going to be low according to Leon (2003). This researcher cited other roadblocks to parent involvement as being the lack of school to home communication, the fact that parents don’t find general purpose meetings to be valuable, that they feel that their presence will embarrass their child, that they trust their high school aged son or daughter more at these ages and therefore feel that there is less of a need for them to involve themselves in school (Leon, 2003).

Parents cite their lack of time, their work schedules, the lack of day care, and lack of transportation as roadblocks to their involvement in their children’s school (Ramirez, 2001). Teachers cite large class size and large number of students’ families that they
must contact each day as a challenge to making communications with their students’ homes (Epstein, 1995). Poor communication is cited as the strongest roadblock to parental involvement. Positive parental involvement is hindered and is not successful due to poor communications between school and home (Epstein, 1995).

The Parental Involvement Challenges for High Schools with High Poverty and High Minority Populations?

Why is the secondary school notoriously harder to gain the involvement of students’ parents than it is in the elementary grades? Is the problem that parents stop caring about their children as they get out of those grade school years? Is it because the students are at the age where they feel embarrassment about having mom and dad involved in their school lives? Epstein (1995) claimed that the lack of familiarity with the curriculum and subject matter at the higher grade levels cause parents to be intimidated and therefore less involved in the school work of their children. Van Voorhis (2004) related that parents often return to the workforce as their children reach higher grade levels and therefore face time constraints that were not there earlier in the child’s school career. There is even some evidence that secondary school teachers may have less experience and training in the skills of reaching out to involve the parents of the children that they teach (Van Voorhis, 2004).

Do the demographics of a district and of a school greatly impact the amount and quality of parental involvement? Is there a difference in parent support if the school is a one with high concentrations of minority students or of students raised in poverty? Wenfan Yan (1999) asserted that parents from lower socio-economic levels report significantly lower levels of positive interactions with their child’s school. Families of
minority students reported that they felt less welcome in involving themselves in the decisions involving their child’s school than do families that report higher economic conditions (Ellenbogen & Chamberland, 1997). Desimone (1999) found statistically significant differences in the relationship between parent involvement and student achievement according to race/ethnicity and family income. Parental involvement affects student achievement positively, regardless of economic, racial, or cultural background (McNeal, 1999). Brookover and Schneider (1986) claimed that parental involvement affected the mean school achievement for white schools differently than the same type of involvement affected schools with large minority populations. They found that parental involvement in minority schools affected student achievement more than that same level of involvement did in a predominantly white school. With poverty, often come social ills that negatively impact families. If the family is viewed by the child as less functional, then that child perceives the parent involvement variable called monitoring as less positive (Sartor, 2002). This researcher determined that, in general, when family life is organized, parental monitoring and involvement are seen as reasonable by adolescents. Parents who provide structure and maintain knowledge of their kids’ activities are not viewed by teens as domineering or intrusive, but rather as concerned and available (Sartor, 2002).

Effective Strategies that Overcome Roadblocks

It starts to become clear that even though most studies say that it improves student achievement and even though it is suggested by important educational groups and mandated by federal and state school law, parental involvement is a challenging aspect of education to achieve. What works in improving this elusive but important part of
education? Are there tricks that improve the odds of reaching success? Many studies document that there are. According to Jocabi (2003), schools have a better chance of successfully involving parents when the school considers the time and place of the activity or meeting. Probability goes up when food is served and when transportation and childcare are addressed by the school. The author advised that parents themselves be part of the planning of events. He suggested that they will be in the best position to foresee roadblocks that might hinder other parents from involving themselves (Jacobi, 2003).

Jacobi (2003) also suggested that workshops be videotaped for viewing by parents who may not have been able to attend the event on the night that it was presented.

Leon (2003) said that parents mostly monitor the high school in two ways. First, they read the school newsletter. They especially like to read about problems, or hot issues that they have heard about through the grapevine being discussed openly in the newsletters. Parents also like to read about new teaching strategies in the newsletter. Besides the newsletter, parents monitor the school via the teacher-parent conferences that are offered once or twice each year. Parents claim that report cards are limited in the amount of information that they convey. The teacher-parent conferences fill these information gaps for the parent. Leon (2003) claimed that parents want to know and see what type of people surround their children. He strongly suggested that the planning details of these conferences be given great attention.

Parents also desire phone calls from teachers, counselors, and principals when problems begin to surface in their child’s education. The parent often feels that these calls reinforce what they are seeing for themselves at home. Leon (2003) suggested that introduction phone calls by teachers, early in the year, that are positive and informative go a long way toward building the home-school bridge. Epstein (1995) asserts that,
communicating personally with parents promotes positive interaction that enhances the communication process.

According to Bafumo (2003) in her “Tips to Increase Involvement,” parents want a team approach to classroom behavior problems. They respond best to home communication when a team, which includes the teacher, counselor, principal, and the parent as an equal partner, work to solve problems associated with their children. Parents also want to be informed of attendance irregularities related to their children as quickly as possible (Morrow & Youssef, 2003).

Parents need to be convinced that the school cares about their children and that the school will provide them with individual attention when it is needed. Morrow and Youssef (2003) suggested that important information can be gleaned by sending home student inventories to parents. This practice further sends the message that the school cares for and values the input from the home (Morrow & Youssef, 2003). These inventories might request information like the student’s best learning style, their favorite subjects or hobbies, or what situations the student might find difficult or stressful. The message is that the school cares (Bafumo, 2003). With these general principles constantly in mind, parent involvement within the schools might be improved and strengthened.

Other tips offered by researchers and authors to enhance parental involvement are to exhibit student work at school functions, vary the meeting times, and hold meetings in accessible venues (Henderson et al., 2007). Schools should advertise meetings and functions one month in advance, place the info on the school marquee, and remind the student body over the intercom (Bafumo, 2003). High schools should be careful to not conflict with elementary school times and dates when planning events and activities. It is
suggested that daycare facilities in the area be informed of teacher-parent conference
days or on the day or night of important high school activities (Bafumo, 2003). She also
suggested that parents should be surveyed to find their needs in regards to
communication and involvement. This author suggested that schools provide the family
with a syllabus in each class with the teacher’s expectations. Schools can also provide
support groups for parents that are experiencing parental challenges that they might have
in common with other parents (Bafumo, 2003).

Parents can also be given advice about their parenting styles and choices. This
can be accomplished by providing empirical data that supports parenting tips. Greenberg
(2002) suggested that one such tip is to advise parents of the importance of their voiced
support for schooling and education. The author advocated that parents be reminded that
even if their own educational experience was negative, they best serve their children by at
least acting like they endorse their kid’s school experience: be involved, be positive, and
teach children to trust teachers and the school.

Models of Parental Involvement

Several models have been developed that educators can use in their efforts to
improve parental involvement. The model advocated by the national PTA was created by
Epstein of the National Network of Partnership Schools. According to this model, the
school should start by asking. The model suggests that schools ask parents, by survey, or
questionnaire, what they perceive as important in parent involvement. The parent
involvement plan for the school should attempt to meet the needs and interests on the
parents (Jacobi, 2003). The second step of the model is to adopt the use of a home-
school journal. This journal is to contain student writings designed to inform parents
what was accomplished in classes that day. A third step is to offer student-parent
tutorials that are designed to educate families on topics targeted by the parents. An example might be a class that instructs families about college applications. The fourth part of this parent involvement model is the use of enrichment programs. These are offerings by the school and are designed to involve a great number of students in extra activities such as computer expertise demonstrations on PowerPoint®, school news casts, or poetry and prose journal publications and readings. Other studies support the idea that parents at the high school level are more likely to be actively involved if their own child is involved with the activity (Leon 2003). These enrichment programs are designed to involve students and therefore increase parental involvement. Another part of the PTA model is to specifically invite parents and families to programs that target them and their individual circumstances (Jacobi, 2003).

Another respected model of parental involvement process comes from Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005). This model views parental involvement behaviors as occurring under two broad categories. The first, home-based involvement are parental involvement activities that take place at home. These include helping with homework, discussing school events, and providing enrichment activities that are related to current school topics. The second, school-based involvement includes those activities that bring the parent to the school or to school activities. These include activities such as attending conferences, driving for fieldtrips, and volunteering at school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005).

This model identifies three factors that contribute to a parent’s decision to be involved in their child’s education. The first of these factors is parents’ motivational beliefs. This factor speaks to parent’s perceptions of what is necessary, important, and permissible for them to do with and for their children. It means that if parents feel that it
is appropriate and expected for them to be involved, there is likelihood that they will do so (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005).

The first factor of the Hoover-Dempsey model contributes to the second level of the model. This second factor, parental involvement barriers describes the perceptions of self-efficacy of the parents. If parents believe that they can have positive effect on their child’s education, there is a greater probability of that involvement.

The third factor that influences parental involvement, according to this model, is the parent’s perception that their children and the school desire and welcome their involvement. Parents decide to get involved in their child’s education if they view their involvement as part of their parental role and if they receive invitations from their children’s school. (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005).

A third model parental involvement program in Florida was studied by Smalley and Reyes-Blanes (2001). The model took the form of an innovative parental training program in a very economically challenged housing development and school district. The program greatly intrigued this researcher and evidence suggested that it was a very successful endeavor. This program strongly addressed how an economically disadvantaged and predominately African American school district could break down barriers to school involvement and train parents to increase the probability of their children's success in school. They contend that difficulties often keep African American families from becoming involved in their children’s education. These difficulties include school personnel who intimidate some parents, prior school experiences that were negative in nature, meeting times that are inconvenient, lack of experience with this type of interaction, and oftentimes, the very real perception that the school does not welcome their involvement.
The authors developed and implemented a parent leadership-training program (PLT). This training program was implemented in an urban community called Tangelo Park, near Orlando, Florida that was about 75% African American and was plagued with drugs, high crime rate, poor school attendance, and an unacceptable dropout rate.

The objectives were to provide parents with the skills to positively interact with the schools and to enable them to rediscover their leadership skills to assist their children in school. The immediate objective was to enable parents to assist their children in school. The authors helped parents gain a better understanding of the school system operation.

The topics taught included “what is leadership,” “cultural patterns of families,” “understanding how school works,” “why parent involvement is important,” “ways to become a great leader at home and at school,” “ways to communicate with administrators and teachers to support your child,” and “how to help your child with homework.”

Weekly courses were taught on the topics mentioned above. A program evaluation survey instrument determined that almost all input was positive and parents reported that their interactions with the school had improved. The study demonstrated that a parent leadership program could have a positive effect on children's success in school.

Tangelo Park tends to mirror McKeesport Area School District in certain aspects. It has high poverty, high incidences of single parent family units, high minority and special education populations, and parents who probably see the school in an adversarial light.

Conclusion

Through the use of models like the ones cited here, schools have a greater chance of improving the elusive element of parental involvement. It seems obvious and it is well
supported by study, that increasing parent involvement in the education of their high school aged children is a valuable thing. A wealth of evidence supports the value of increased parental involvement on student achievement. It is also obvious that new accountability standards in education bring with it the requirements of including families and community in efforts to improve student achievement. There are many roadblocks to this effort, especially at the high school level. There are also many proven procedures and models that increase the probability of success in this effort. Included in these best practice procedures are several models that will be closely examined in my effort to find what best fits high schools that have the same basic characteristics as my own. It is of great importance to me to find best practices for improving the academic achievement of the students in my district. I am convinced that a high school can develop practices and policies that can encourage parents to overcome the barriers that limit parent involvement in schools and thereby positively impact the academic success of the school’s students. I have come to believe that I can have a positive effect on this variable in my own school district and implement a model that can be used by high schools.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This dissertation research examined parental involvement and its relationship between students’ academic performance and socioeconomic levels. One of the primary purposes of this study was to determine if stronger parental involvement efforts by high schools were correlated with improvement in students’ academic performance. To accomplish this, survey responses were analyzed with consideration of the academic achievement of the respondent’s high school. Another purpose of this study was to determine if stronger parental involvement efforts by high schools were related to the economic situation of the school. To address this, correlation analysis was performed between the schools’ survey responses and the schools’ economic status as measured by published data on the percentage of free and reduced lunch eligibility.

This chapter describes the methodology and the statistical analysis used to answer the research questions posed in this study. The first question was: “What is the relationship between parental involvement scores and academic achievement?” To determine the relationships that existed between parental involvement scores (PIscore) and academic achievement, the school’s academic achievement score was calculated by the averaging of a district’s reading and math PSSA scores from 2005 thru 2010 in the “All Student” category and parental involvement scores were obtained from the survey.

The second question was: “What is the relationship between parental involvement and the poverty level of the school?” Each high school’s level of poverty was determined by reviewing Pennsylvania Department of Education’s published data on district’s percentage of families’ eligibility for free and reduced lunch. In this study, this
score was labeled (Schpoverty). The relationship between a school’s Parental Involvement Score (Plscore) and the School Poverty Score (Schpoverty) was analyzed, reported, and discussed.

To answer these questions, correlation analysis was performed using SPSS Version 18, the results of which are reported in Chapter 4.

Another objective of this study was to investigate the best practices of parental involvement strategies at the high school level. To accomplish this, the researcher examined survey responses that were submitted by high school principals. These responses addressed the questions regarding what these school leaders perceived as strategies, initiatives, and issues that are common at their high school.

Analysis of these survey responses helped determine what best practices in parental involvement are being employed by high schools that have demonstrated strong growth in student achievement as well as those high schools that have failed to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Legislation.

Participants

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

All research conducted at, or sponsored by, Duquesne University that involves human subjects must be approved by the IRB before research begins. That permission was granted for the execution of this study on May 31, 2010. The approval document is found in Appendix Q.

Selection of Participating Schools

Several criteria were used in this study to determine the high schools selected to participate. The first criterion was that the high schools were in close proximity to the
researcher’s focus high school. This improved the likelihood of commonality in shared school culture and demographics. It also simplified the communication and the sharing of information, both during the research phase of the study and following the study, as suggestions about ideas for parental involvement strategies are offered to participating high schools. Proximity also increased the probability of personal relationships that may exist between the educational leaders of the districts. These relationships further facilitated the positive and beneficial sharing of the study’s findings.

The second criterion for participation was that the high schools be of the same size as the focus high school, approximately 3,800 students. Schools with at least 2,500 students were considered for this study, excluding those that were much smaller and those that were much larger than the focus high school. This ensured that size was not a factor in influencing the results of this study.

The third criterion was that the high schools selected for participation should have established affiliations with local entities such as an intermediate unit or an educational training agency. These entities provide constant trainings on best practices in all aspects of education. Involvement with either of these two, or any similar, agency increases the probability of effective communication and common educational expectations and goals among participating schools and districts. High schools and districts involved with either of these agencies are provided frequent trainings and workshops on a variety of educational topics.

School districts and high schools were considered and invited to participate in this study if they satisfied at least two of the three criteria established above. Twenty-three districts were selected for this study based upon considerations of location, population size, and their affiliation with the above mentioned educational agencies. Of these 23
school districts, 15 superintendents granted permission to allow their high schools to participate in this study.

Procedure for Collecting Data and the Survey’s Rate of Return

A survey research design was used to gather data used for this study. Surveys were administered to principals, three involved parents (as indicated by the principal) and five randomly selected teachers at each high school. A total of 135 surveys were mailed to participants in 15 high schools. In each of these schools, nine participants were asked to complete a survey that contained fifty-two questions. These nine participants included the high school principal, five randomly selected high school teachers, and three parents of students who presently attend the high school. The principals, teachers, and the involved parents were asked to complete the same questionnaire. Of these 135 surveys, 111 surveys were completed and returned. This is an 82.2% return rate.

School Achievement Considerations for Participation

The schools that were chosen for this study included both those that were failing to meet the No Child Left Behind requirements and those that were successfully meeting those standards. Of the 15 high schools that participated, 11 had met the State’s Adequate Yearly Progress Targets for each of the last eight years. The other four high schools had, at some point in the last eight years, failed to meet the State’s Adequate Yearly Progress Targets and therefore had been classified as a school on Pennsylvania’s School Improvement List.
Summary of the Study’s Instruments

In this section, the instruments that were used to collect data for the four research questions are listed and discussed. The following measurement instruments were used in this study:

1. Measure of School, Family and Community Partnerships Survey (Used with permission from the authors).

This survey instrument provided data for each of the four research questions of this study. Specifically, the instrument yielded the parental involvement scores. Respondents rated fifty-two parental involvement activities on a scale of “Not Occurring,” “Rarely Occurring,” “Occasionally Occurring,” “Frequently Occurring,” or “Extensively Occurring” in their high school. On the survey, a response of (1) indicated “Not Occurring” and a response of (5) indicated “Extensively Occurring”. The survey instrument was designed to measure how a school reaches out to involve parents, community members, and students in the educational process of those students (Epstein, 1995).

The survey instrument categorized the fifty-two questions according to how they would fall under the six sections of Epstein’s Parent Involvement Model (Epstein 1995). This survey stems from a model, developed by Epstein (1995) that has been adopted by the National PTA as its benchmark parental involvement model. It creates an umbrella of six forms of parental involvement under which all specific parental involvement activities can be classified. The six types of involvement are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. This parent involvement model recognizes that a parent’s involvement with a child’s
schooling is not limited to activities that bring the parent physically through the school’s front doors.

Of the fifty-two questions of the survey, seven are categorized as those involved in the category “Parenting”. This questioning category inquired about the school’s strategies to help all families establish home environments to support children as students.

The next section contained 14 questions in the category labeled “Communications”. These questions inquired about the school’s strategies to design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children’s progress.

The third section contained eight questions in the category labeled “Volunteering”. These questions inquired about the school’s strategies to recruit and organize parents’ help and support.

The next section contained five questions in the category labeled “Learning at Home”. These questions inquired about the school’s strategies to provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.

The fifth section contained ten questions in the category labeled “Decision Making”. These questions inquired about the school’s strategies to include parents in school decisions or to develop parent leaders and representatives.

The final section of the survey contained eight questions in the category labeled “Collaborating with Community”. These questions inquired about the school’s strategies to identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs.
The “Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships Survey” (Epstein, 1997) allowed the concept of parental involvement to be viewed in these six distinct subsections. The division of parental involvement activities and strategies into six distinct types allowed this research topic to be analyzed deeply and thoroughly. A copy of this survey instrument and the permission to use it are included in Appendix A and Appendix B respectively.

2. School PSSA Data (Years: 2002-2009) Published by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s website was used to determine levels of student achievement from the 2002-03 through 2009-10 school years. This data informed both Research Question 1 and Research Question 4. Pennsylvania System of School Assessments (PSSA) data on math and reading results, specific to the All-Student Category, were analyzed.

3. Poverty Levels by School District Data Published by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s website was used to determine levels of free and reduced lunch eligibility rates of each of the 15 school districts that participated in the study. This information informed Research Question 2. This information was used in this study to determine the School Poverty Score (Schpoverty) of each high school. The data was further examined to determine three subgroups of high schools that were divided according to “Low,” “Medium,” and “High” levels of poverty.

4. Pennsylvania Department of Education Publication Regarding a School’s Adequate Yearly Progress Status.

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Data from these Pennsylvania Department of Education websites were used to determine if and when each of the 15 high schools had been designated as a school on the State’s School Improvement Lists. This information was used to inform Research Question 3. The criterion for inclusion into the list of targeted schools for Research Question 3 was achieved if a school had appeared on the School Improvement List in any year from 2002-03 through 2009-10.

Research Design

Summary of the Study’s Variables

This section covers the research design of the study, including the variables that were used in the study.

Independent Variable for Research Question 1: Parental Involvement measured by the “Measure of School, Family and Community Partnerships Survey” (Epstein, 1995). This was the overall self-rating score of the school’s selected respondents (principal, one to three PTA officers or parents, and five randomly selected teachers). This score was derived by taking the average score of the total number of respondents. Respondents’ self-rating score was determined by averaging the score on the 52 item Likert scaled instrument. The overall parental involvement score has been designated throughout this report as (PIscore).

The Parental Involvement Score (PIscore) was further broken into six subsections as determined by the type of parental involvement question (Epstein, 1997). These subcategories included the parenting question score (PQscore), the communication question score (CQscore), the volunteering question score (VQscore), the learning at home question score (LHQscore), the decision making question score (DMQscore) and the collaborating with community question score (CCQscore).
Dependent variable for Research Question 1: PSSA overall high school math and reading scores, averaged over the 2005-06 through 2009-10 years in the “All-Student” category. Data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s website were used to determine levels of student achievement from the 2005-06 through the 2009-2010 school years. The variable that was derived from this data for each school was the School Achievement Score and is referred to throughout this report as (Schachieve).

The School Achievement Score (Schachieve) was broken into three subcategories to yield the three levels; High Achieving Schools (HighAch), Medium Achieving Schools (MedAch), and Low Achieving Schools (LowAch). These three subcategories allowed for the differentiation between the highest achieving five high schools, the middle five high schools in terms of achievement and the lowest achieving five high schools.

Independent variable for Research Question 2: Pennsylvania Department of Education published data on “Poverty Level by School District”.

This variable was determined by calculating the free and reduced lunch eligibility rates published by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Throughout this report this variable is referred to as School Poverty Score (Schpoverty).

The School Poverty Score (Schpoverty) was broken into three subcategories to give three levels of this variable, High Poverty Schools (HighPov), Medium Poverty Schools (MidPov) and Low Poverty Schools (LowPov).

Dependent variable for Research Question 2: Overall self-rating score of the school.

This score was derived by taking the average score of the total number of respondents. Respondent’s self-rating score was determined by averaging the score on the fifty-two item Likert-scaled instrument to give the parental involvement score.
As indicated earlier, the Parental Involvement Score (PIscore) had six sub-scales, as determined by the type of parental involvement question (Epstein, 1997). These subcategories include the parenting question score (PQscore), the communication question score (CQscore), the volunteering question score (VQscore), the learning at home question score (LHQscore), the decision making question score (DMQscore) and the collaborating with community question score (CCQscore).

*Independent variable for Research Question 3:* This variable was generated by the “Yes” only if the high school been assigned the label of ‘School Improvement I or II, or Corrective Action I or II as determined and published by the Pennsylvania Department of Education regarding a school’s Adequate Yearly Progress.

This item determined if at any time from the 2002-03 through 2009-10 school years, a high school had been designated as a school on the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s School Improvement Lists

*Dependent variable for Research Question 3:* Survey responses by high school principals. The responses that were given Likert values of 4 or 5 by the high school principals were also categorized into parental involvement types.

*Independent variable for Research Question 4:* Pennsylvania Department of Education PSSA reading and math data. Schools were selected as meeting the criteria if the published Pennsylvania Department of Education PSSA reading and math data demonstrates an incline over the years 2001-02 through 2008-09 school years.

A high school qualified for this criterion if the average Pennsylvania System of School Assessments (PSSA) scores increase at least 10% in the combined math and reading scores in the All-Student Category over this time span.
Dependent variable for Research Question 4: Survey responses by high school principals. The responses that were given Likert values of 4 or 5 by the high school principals were categorized into parental involvement types.

Procedures
How the Survey Study was Designed and Executed

To begin the study, a letter requesting the school’s participation was mailed to each district’s school board and superintendent of schools (see Appendix C). The letter explained the nature of the study and advocated for its significance and importance in understanding the relationships among parental involvement practices and student achievement and poverty. The district administration was assured that the findings would be reported in an anonymous format and that no district would be identified by name. They were further assured that the findings would be shared with their district and that they would be welcomed to use any of the information that they found useful.

Following the approval by the superintendent of schools, a letter was sent to the high school principal of those selected schools (see Appendix D). The letter explained the nature of the study and informed the principals of the superintendent’s support of the study. The principal was also assured that the findings would be reported in an anonymous format and that no district or individual would be identified by name. It was further reinforced that the findings would be shared with their district and that they would be welcomed to use any of the information that they found useful.

Principals were asked to solicit the participation of three involved parents in the completion of the survey. Each principal provided names of parents who were strongly involved in the district. In many of these cases, these parents were PTA/PTO parents. It
may have been the case that the parent organization was known by several different titles, such as Parent Teacher Association (PTA), Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) or Parent Teacher/Student Association (PTSA). For the purposes of this study, the term Parent Teacher Association (PTA) has been used exclusively.

Since some of the principals reported that the high school’s PTA/PTO were weak or non-existent, it was acceptable to this study for the principal to select parents who they felt were involved in the school community. This assured that, even in the absence of a functioning PTA, parent respondents for each school would be included.

In addition to the principal and the three involved parents, five randomly selected high school teachers were chosen to complete survey forms in each high school. Random selection of these teachers was ensured by working with an all-inclusive list of teachers’ names in each high school. The total number of teachers was divided by a number that would provide five teacher names that were alphabetically, equally spaced. By dividing the total number of teachers by five, a random number used in the selection of the five teachers at that school was determined. Example: If the total number of teachers was 72, the random number was 14 (72 divided by 5 = 14 with a remainder of 2). From the all-inclusive list of teachers’ names in the building, every fourteenth teacher was selected. An alternate teacher was determined in advance. That alternate teacher was the immediate next teacher on the faculty list, if the original teacher declined to participate. The principals were asked to allow the researcher to email the selected parents and teachers asking if they would agree to complete the survey (see Appendix F and Appendix G). After acquiring the permission of the high school principal, each of these teachers and parents were contacted by an email. In this email, the study was explained,
they were assured that the administration approved of the study, and of the confidentiality of their school and individual responses.

If these parents and teachers answered in the affirmative, the survey, consent to participate form and a postage-paid, return envelope were mailed to the school or home of these participants. If the principal was hesitant to allow a direct contact by the researcher, it was acceptable to this study for the principal to distribute the survey instrument and consent forms to the involved parents and randomly selected teachers. Respondents were asked to complete the surveys and sign the consent forms at their leisure and in the locations of their choosing. Responses and consent forms were returned to this researcher in the postage-paid return envelope that had been provided. Each respondent was asked to complete the fifty-two item questionnaire that asked if various forms of parental involvement strategies were employed in the high school.

Participation Rate

A total of 135 surveys were mailed to participants in 15 high schools. In each of these schools, nine participants were asked to complete a survey. These nine participants included the high school principal, five randomly selected high school teachers, and three parents of students who presently attend the high school.

Each survey was coded using a system that would allow the researcher to identify the respondents, the high schools that the respondents represented, and the role of the respondent in each district. The system used a letter, or a letter and number, to identify the high school in which the respondent was affiliated. Following this was a hyphen and a number from one through nine. The number one represented the survey response of the principal of the high school. Numbers two through six represented returned surveys from
teachers in the high school. Numbers seven through nine represented returned surveys from involved parents who had children in the high school.

Each survey was likewise coded using a system that would allow the researcher to identify each question as it related to Epstein’s six types of parental involvement. This was used to explore the relationships between specific types of parental involvement and high school achievement and poverty level.

One hundred thirty-five surveys were mailed to the high schools as described above. The principals, teachers, and the involved parents were asked to complete the same questionnaire. To encourage return of the surveys and consent forms, reminder emails were sent to the respondents after a two week period. Of these 135 surveys, 111 surveys were completed and returned. This is an 82.2% return rate.

Data Analysis

In this section, data analysis procedures are discussed for each of the four research questions.

Research Question 1 investigated the relationship between academic achievement (as measured by math and reading PSSA scores) and the school’s parental involvement strategies. A survey instrument was used to get feedback from each district’s stakeholders. Following the return of the questionnaires, the data was analyzed to determine the comparative strengths of each high school’s parental involvement practices. This was done by computing the parental involvement scores from the survey responses.

To provide a detailed picture of parental involvement, means and standard deviations for each school’s responses to the six sub-scales were provided. Responses to the survey were also broken down specific to the role of the respondent in the district.
This allowed the responses of the principals to be compared with the responses of the teachers and also compared with the parent responses. This also allowed the researcher to look deeper at the data and determine if the roles of the stakeholders in districts impact parental involvement perceptions. To answer research question 1, correlation analysis was utilized to determine the relationship between academic achievement and parental involvement. Items from the parental involvement survey instrument were analyzed in detail after they were grouped into the six parental involvement types described by Epstein (1995).

With the survey responses divided into the six parental involvement question categories, a correlation analysis was then performed between each sub-scale score and the school’s student achievement. To look further into the relationship between Parental Involvement Scores (PIscore) and School Achievement (Schachieve), additional statistical analysis was conducted. Mean parental involvement scores for each of the three categories of achievement (low, medium and high) were obtained.

Research Question 2 sought to determine if the reporting of parental involvement, through self-rating, was related to the economic status of the school district as measured by the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch. To answer this question, correlation analysis was performed to determine the relationship between school poverty and parental involvement. To gain an in-depth insight into the relationship between parental involvement and poverty levels, mean parental involvement scores for each of the three poverty categories (low, moderate and high) were obtained. Districts in which less than 19% of the families had students that were eligible to receive free or reduced lunch were classified as low poverty districts (LowPov). Districts in which greater than 37% of the families had students that were eligible to receive a free or reduced lunch
were classified as high poverty districts (HighPov). Districts in which the percentage of families eligible for free or reduced lunch was between 19% and 37%, were classified as medium poverty districts (MedPov) for statistical analysis purposes. Further, mean scores on the six sub-scales for parental involvement were also obtained for each poverty category.

Research Question 3 sought to determine in high schools that have been determined, at any point between 2002-2010 to be on a “School Improvement Classification” as a result of failure to meet Adequate Yearly Progress, what are the common parental involvement strategies indicated by the principal? To answer this question, principals’ responses pertaining to frequently and extensively occurring parental involvement, were documented and reviewed for common trends and grouped into like-response categories. The responses from the survey that were awarded a 4 or a 5 on the Likert scale by the high school principals were also categorized into parental involvement types. A rating of 4 indicated that the principal perceived that the parental involvement strategy was happening frequently at their high school. A rating of 5 indicated that the principal perceived that the parental involvement strategy was happening extensively at their high school.

Research Question 4 investigated the parental involvement strategies that have been identified by the principal as occurring frequently or extensively, in high schools that have demonstrated over-all improvement. To gain an understanding of the parental involvement strategies that were being employed at these high achieving schools, the researcher reviewed the survey responses from the survey instrument that were submitted by the principals. Commonalities in parental involvement strategies employed by these
high achieving schools were reported and classified according to the six types of parental involvement (Epstein, 1997).

Parental involvement strategies viewed as occurring frequently or extensively by principals of high achieving schools were indicated by a mean score of 4.00 and above on the survey’s five point Likert scale. In the results section of this study, parental involvement strategies perceived by principals in high achieving schools as happening most frequently are listed. This system allowed the researcher to determine frequency, and therefore, commonality of strategies that were perceived by the principals of these schools as happening frequently or extensively in their high school.

Conclusion

This study explored the relationship between the parental involvement strategies and the academic achievement of a school. The relationship between the parental involvement strategies and the poverty level of a school has also been explored. The implications of these relationships are examined in the following chapter of this report. The understanding of these associations have resulted in valuable suggestions that may benefit any high school. The discovery regarding which types of parental involvement strategies were enlisted more frequently by high achieving schools than by lower achieving schools may provide an important prescription to lower achieving schools.

Likewise, the results of the analysis regarding how specific types of parental involvement strategies differ between affluent schools and high poverty schools may inform higher poverty schools as to the types of parental involvement activities that may result in improved student achievement in their schools.
This study examined the views of principals whose schools exhibited a great discrepancy in academic achievement levels. The survey responses of principals in both the most academically successful schools and the most academically challenged schools were analyzed regarding the strategies that occur frequently or extensively. Principals’ survey responses, from both of these high school types, provided potential direction to schools that hope to improve parental involvement and academic achievement.

With these strategies compiled and grouped into useable and workable records, this researcher has developed a list of effective parental involvement strategies used by high schools in southwestern Pennsylvania. The compilation of those strategies, advocated by the results of this study, will be shared with the participating districts. The goal was to develop a successful, workable catalogue of effective strategies and to share information about the ever challenging, but reward laden task, of effectively involving the parents in the educational lives of their high school aged children.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore and discover the relationships between a high school’s parental involvement strategies and the school’s academic performance and socioeconomic levels.

This study also investigated, and determined, the best practices of parental involvement strategies at the high school level. To accomplish this, the researcher examined survey responses that were submitted by high school principals. These responses addressed the questions that asked what these school leaders perceived as parental involvement strategies and initiatives that were occurring with high frequency at their high school.

Analysis of these survey responses provided evidence of the best practices in parental involvement that were being employed by high schools that have demonstrated strong growth in student achievement as well as those high schools that have failed to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Legislation.

Finally, this chapter contains a discussion of the findings from this research as related to the four research questions.

The Relationship between Parental Involvement and School Achievement

To investigate this relationship, which is the basis of Research Question 1, correlation analysis was initially performed comparing the mean parental involvement scores (Plscores) with the school achievement scores (Schachieve). In this initial and
broad analysis of achievement and parental involvement scores, the results indicated that there was not a significant positive relationship between school achievement scores (Schachieve) and parental involvement scores (PIscores). As indicated in table 5 below, the relationship between the school’s achievement score (Schachieve) and the school’s parental involvement score (PIscore) was not significant, \( r = .176, p > 0.05 \).

As a follow up to the correlation analysis, the 15 high schools were divided into three distinct groups according to achievement (high, medium and low), and box plots were obtained for each group to visually compare mean PIscore by achievement category. These results are displayed in the figure below. Figure 1 demonstrated, in box plot format, the statistical findings of this investigation. Table 4 reports the numeric statistical findings of this query.

![Box plot of PIscore by achievement level](image)

**Figure 1.** Distribution of parental involvement scores (PIscores) by each school achievement (Schachieve) grouping.
This graphic demonstrated differences between the groups for parental involvement scores (PIscores). The median parental involvement score (PIscore) for the top one third of the high schools (HighAch) was higher than the other two groups (median is the center line of each box). The middle one third of high schools (MidAch) and the lowest one third of high schools (LowAch) were similar in parental involvement scores (PIscore).

To gain a more deeper understanding of the relationships between school achievement scores (Schachieve) and parental involvement scores (PIscores), the relationship between achievement scores and each of the subscales of the parental involvement scale was obtained. This allowed an investigation into the variations that may have impacted the research questions due to various types of parental involvement strategies.

The first sub-section included responses to questions that related to the parental involvement type called “Parenting.” This question sub-section was listed on the table above as parenting questions score (PQscore). All questions from the survey were broken into the other sub-scales on the parental involvement survey. They were listed on the table as communications questions score (CQscore), volunteering questions score (VQscore), learning at home questions score (LHQscore), decision making questions score (DMQscore), and the collaborating with community questions score (CCQscore).

With the survey responses divided into the six parental involvement question categories, the researcher then compared each sub-scale score to the school’s student achievement. These responses highlighted statistically significant correlations using the Spearman’s rho analysis.
The table below displays the correlation coefficients between each of the subscales and school achievement. Later in this chapter, this same table is referenced as it addressed the correlations between a school’s poverty level and the six types of parental involvement.
Table 1.

Correlation Coefficients and Levels of Significance to Correlations between Multiple Variables (Spearman’s rho Correlations)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schachiev</th>
<th>Plscore</th>
<th>Schpoverty</th>
<th>PQscore</th>
<th>CQscore</th>
<th>VQscore</th>
<th>LHQscore</th>
<th>DMQscore</th>
<th>CCQscore</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schachiev</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>0.176</td>
<td>-0.938**</td>
<td>-0.045</td>
<td>0.171</td>
<td>0.084</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>.199*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.642</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>0.382</td>
<td>0.615</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plscore</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>-0.197*</td>
<td>0.699**</td>
<td>-0.847**</td>
<td>0.843**</td>
<td>0.753**</td>
<td>0.755**</td>
<td>0.773**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schpoverty</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>-0.221*</td>
<td>-0.107</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.262</td>
<td>0.349</td>
<td>0.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.785</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PQscore</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.563</td>
<td>.515</td>
<td>.569</td>
<td>.348</td>
<td>.476</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CQscore</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.673**</td>
<td>.633**</td>
<td>.511**</td>
<td>.563**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VQscore</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.605**</td>
<td>.624**</td>
<td>.569**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LHQscore</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.456**</td>
<td>.490**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMQscore</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.538**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCQscore</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Sample Size (N) = 111

Schachiev = school achievement score; Plscore = parental involvement score; Schpoverty = school poverty score; PQscore = score on parenting type questions; CQscore = score on communicating type questions; VQscore = score on volunteering type questions; LHQscore = score on learning at home type questions; DMQscore = score on decision making type questions; CCQscore = score on collaborating with community type questions
In the table above, the relationship between the school’s achievement score (Schachieve) and the school’s parental involvement score (Plscore) was not significant, $r = .176$, $p > 0.05$. However, when the parental involvement scores (Plscore) were further analyzed according to the six types of parental involvement, several correlations were significant.

The parental involvement types of parenting (PQscore), communicating (CQscore), volunteering (VQscore), and learning at home (LHQscore) did not display a statistically significant relationship with academic achievement. However, the other two subscales showed statistically significant correlation with school achievement. The relationship between the school’s achievement score (Schachieve) and the parental involvement scores specific to the decision making questions score (DMQscore) was significant, $r = .199$, $p< 0.05$. The correlation coefficient between the school achievement score (Schachieve) and the parental involvement scores specific to the collaborating with community questions score (CCQscore) was significant, $r = .250$, $p < 0.05$.

Findings involving several other types of parental involvement types failed to provide evidence to indicate that the parental involvement strategies classified as parenting questions (PQscore), communicating questions (CQscore), volunteering questions (VQscore), and learning at home questions (LHQscore) were related to school’s achievement scores (Schachieve). Regardless of the high school’s academic achievement level, parental involvement strategies and activities classified as parenting, communicating, volunteering, and learning at home did not vary in the perception of the stakeholders of those schools.
However, two types of parental involvement strategies (decision making and collaborating with community) were correlated with a school’s academic achievement as determined by the Spearman’s rho analysis. Analysis and interpretation of these statistical findings indicated that, with the parental involvement strategies of decision making questions (DMQscore) and collaborating with community questions (CCQscore) questions, a higher parental involvement score (PIscore) indicated a higher school achievement score (Schachieve).

The Relationship between Parental Involvement and School Poverty

This issue, which was the basis for Research Question 2, was designed to determine if parental involvement efforts in high schools were correlated with the economic situation of the school. To investigate the relationship between parental involvement scores (PIscore) and school poverty score (Schpoverty), correlation analysis was conducted.

Table 1 provided statistical data that addressed several of the issues involved with Research Question 2. Research Question 2 investigated the relationship between a school’s parental involvement score (PIscore) and a school’s poverty level (Schpoverty). As noted in the correlation table, using the Spearman’s rho analysis, the relationship between the school’s poverty level (Schpoverty) and the school’s parental involvement score (PIscore) was significant $r = -.197$, $p < 0.05$. The level of poverty experienced by a high school was negatively correlated to the school parental involvement score (PIscore). Higher rates of poverty indicated lower parental involvement scores (PIscores).
Statistical Examinations for Research Question 2, After Dividing the School Poverty Score into Three Groupings

The initial statistical investigation indicated a significant, negative correlation between parental involvement scores (Plscore) and school poverty score (Schpoverty), $r = -0.197$, $p < 0.05$. A more in-depth examination of the relationship was conducted after grouping the 15 high schools into thirds. The five high schools with the least poverty (the most affluent), or the five lowest poverty schools (LowPov), made up the first category. The middle five schools, in relation to poverty level (MidPov), made up the second category. The five high schools, with the highest school poverty score (HighPov), made up the third category.

![Figure 2](image_url)

*Figure 2.* Distribution of parental involvement scores (Plscores) for each level of school achievement score (Schacheive) grouping.
This boxplot graphic demonstrated some differences among the groups for parental involvement scores (PI scores). The median parental involvement scores (PI scores) for the low poverty (LowPov) Group was definitely higher than the other two groups (the median is the center line of each box). The medium poverty (MedPov) and high poverty (HighPov) groups looked very much the same.

Additional statistical analysis was run to see if the groupings had significant differences with respect to parental involvement scores (PI score). These were consistent with what was seen in the boxplot. The major difference seemed to be that the low poverty group of high schools (LowPov) differed from the other two groups. The middle poverty group (MidPov) and high poverty group (HighPov) did not vary significantly from each other.

These findings demonstrated differences between the groups for parental involvement scores (PI scores). The low poverty (LowPov) group was significantly higher in the reported parental involvement score (PI score) than the medium poverty (MedPov) or the high poverty (High Pov) groups. The medium poverty (MedPov) and high poverty (HighPov) groups reported very similar parental involvement scores (PI score).

Statistical Examinations for Research Question 2 after Dividing the Parental Involvement Score into the Six Grouping Types

A second method for analyzing the relationship between high school parental involvement scores (PI scores) and the school poverty score (Schpoverty), was utilized in this study. For the purposes of this analysis, items from the parental involvement survey
instrument were analyzed in detail after they were grouped into the six parental involvement types described by Epstein (1995). These survey questions were subdivided into questions that addressed the six parental involvement type categories.

The six parental involvement activities were divided into the following six types: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with community.

With the survey responses divided into the six parental involvement question categories, a sub-scale score was compared to the school’s poverty score (Schpoverty). Table 1 appeared earlier in this chapter as it related to the statistical correlations examined in Research Question 1. A portion of that table is reproduced below in Table 2 and is referenced as it related to the statistical correlations examined in Research Question 2. It was here that statistically significant correlations using the Spearman’s rho analysis were observed.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schachiv</th>
<th>Plscr</th>
<th>PQscr</th>
<th>CQscr</th>
<th>VQscr</th>
<th>LHQscr</th>
<th>MQscr</th>
<th>CCQscr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S.pov</td>
<td>Coef</td>
<td>-.938</td>
<td>-.197</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>-.221</td>
<td>-0.107</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>0.785</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.262</td>
<td>0.349</td>
<td>0.058</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Sample Size (N) = 111

Schachiev = school achievement score; Plscore = parental involvement score; Schpoverty = school poverty score; PQscore = score on parenting type questions; CQscore = score on communicating type questions; VQscore = score on volunteering type questions; LHQscore = score on learning at home type questions; DMQscore = score on decision making type questions; CCQscore = score on collaborating with community questions
As evidenced in Table 2 above, the relationship between the school’s poverty score (Schpoverty) and the school’s parental involvement scores specific to the parenting questions (PQscore) was not significant, \( r = .026, p > 0.05 \). Likewise, the relationship between the school’s poverty score (Schpoverty) and the parental involvement scores specific to the volunteering questions (VQscore) was not significant, \( r = -0.107, p > 0.05 \).

When the relationship was explored between the school’s poverty score (Schpoverty) and the parental involvement scores specific to the learning at home questions (LHQscore) it was determined that the relationship was not significant, \( r = -0.090, p > 0.05 \). These three comparisons demonstrated that stakeholders in low or high poverty schools rated parental involvement activities classified as parenting, volunteering, and learning at home, statistically the same. In other words, strategies of these types were reported equally by a school’s principal, teachers, and parents, regardless of the economic situation of a school.

However, this was not the case with the three other types of parental involvement activities. It was in the analysis of the relationship between parental involvement scores (PIscores) of the types communication (CQscore), decision making (DMQscore), and communicating with community (CCQscore) that statistical significant correlations appeared using the Spearman’s rho analysis. There was a significant, negative, linear association between the school poverty score (Schpoverty) and these three parental involvement activity types. The examination of Table 2 does point to several relationships that reflect a statistical difference in the response rate of respondents according to affluence. The relationship between the school’s poverty score (Schpoverty) and the parental involvement scores specific to the communication questions (CQscore) was significant, \( -0.221, p < 0.05 \). The relationship between the
school’s poverty score (Schpoverty) and the parental involvement scores specific to the decision making questions (DMQscore) was also significant, $r = -.181$, $p< 0.05$.

Likewise, the relationship between the school’s poverty score (Schpoverty) and the parental involvement scores specific to the collaborating with community questions (CCQscore) was significant, $r = -.227$, $p< 0.05$. There was a significant linear association between school poverty and the communication questions score (CQscore), decision making questions score (DMQscore), and the collaborating with community questions score (CCQscore). Each of these three relationships indicated that a statistically significant difference existed between the parental involvement activities described by these categories and the poverty level of the school being examined. This suggested that the higher the poverty level of a school, the less likely that the stakeholders of the school would report positively about parental involvement activities that fell under the headings communicating, decision making and collaborating with community. A possible explanation for this statistical finding was that parental involvement strategies that fell under these three headings played an important role in the achievement of the students in the high school.

**Parental Involvement Strategies Identified as Occurring Frequently by Principals in Schools on School Improvement Lists**

Research Question 3 was designed to determine the parental involvement strategies that occurred most frequently in high schools that have been determined, at any point in the period from 2003-2010 to be on a school improvement classification as the result of failure to meet adequate yearly progress according to the No Child Left Behind
legislation. To answer this question, a frequency table was obtained. An analysis of these responses indicated the parental involvement strategies that happened most frequently in the schools on school improvement lists.

Table 3.

*Number of Times Activities and Strategies Indicated as Happening Frequently or Extensively in High Schools on School Improvement Lists*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number of Times Indicated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating</td>
<td>24*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning at home</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with community</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This parental involvement strategy type was the one most commonly pointed out by the principals of these high schools as happening frequently or extensively.

An analysis of the parental involvement strategies, reported by the four principals of high schools that have been on school improvement lists, indicated that activities that were happening most frequently fell into the following four parental types, in order of descending frequency: Communicating, with strategies being rated as happening frequently or happening extensively 24 times was the parental involvement strategy type listed most often. Decision making, with strategies being rated by these principals as happening frequently or happening extensively 12 times was the second most common. Finally, collaborating with community, with strategies being rated by principals as happening frequently or happening extensively 11 times, was the third most popular
strategy type occurring in these academically challenged high schools. These findings indicated that parental involvement strategies of the types communicating, decision making, collaborating with community, and parenting were happening most frequently in the high schools that have found themselves at some point to be on the school improvement lists.

Parental Involvement Strategies Identified as Occurring Frequently by Principals in High Schools that Have Experienced Strong Academic Growth

Research Question 4 was designed to determine the parental involvement strategies that occurred most frequently in high schools that have demonstrated over-all improvement in student achievement. To answer this question, a frequency table (Table 4, below) was obtained. An analysis of the responses indicated the parental involvement strategies that happened most frequently in high schools that had experienced strong growth in student achievement.
Table 4.

Number of Times that Strategies were Indicated as Happening Frequently or Extensively in High Schools Achieving Strong PSSA Growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number of Times Indicated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating</td>
<td>13*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning at home</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with community</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This parental involvement strategy type was the one most commonly pointed out by the principals of these high schools as happening frequently or extensively.

The trends in the frequency of these responses indicated a pattern between the principals’ survey responses from Research Questions 3 and 4. Both principals of academically challenged schools (those that qualified for Research Question 3) and principals of schools demonstrating strong academic growth (those that qualified for Research Question 4) listed the communicating type of strategy as happening with the highest frequency in their schools. Both groups listed the decision making type of strategy as happening with the second highest frequency. Both groups listed the collaborating with community type of strategies as happening with the third highest frequency.

An analysis of the parental involvement strategies indicated that activities that were happening most frequently in these schools fell into the following parental types, in order of descending frequency: Communicating, with strategies having been rated by principals in these high performing schools as happening frequently or extensively 13.
times was the highest. Decision making, with strategies being rated as happening frequently or extensively six times was the second most frequently reported category, while the parental involvement categories of collaborating with community and parenting were equally represented with strategies being rated as happening frequently or extensively five times.

These results indicated that the principals in these academically successful schools reported that parental involvement strategies that fell into the categories of communicating, decision making, collaborating with community, and parenting were happening most frequently. The interpretation of why these three parental involvement types were rated with this frequency was not clear. What was clear was that, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, these high schools were effective in increasing student achievement.
CHAPTER V
INTERPRETATION AND SUMMARY

Introduction

Schools are challenged with the responsibility of educating students from all walks of life. The home situation, environment, and the economic situation of the students that walk into our schools are beyond the control of the school officials. Although many studies have documented the positive correlation between academic success and economic situation (Morrow & Youssef, 2003; Ramirez, 2001; Smalley, 2003) it is still a requirement of all schools to see that all students achieve to a standard prescribed by local, state, and federal educational agencies. The No Child Left Behind Legislation (NCLB, 2002) insists that schools be resolute in their efforts to find ways to attain this high level of student achievement.

This study explored strategies and activities that might assist high poverty school districts in the struggle to increase student academic achievement. Districts and schools who find themselves on the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s School Improvement Lists are desperate to find actions that might give them an advantage in the very challenging endeavor of improving academic achievement. This study’s focus district is in desperate need of any advantage that might be had in its pursuit to escape the State’s School Improvement Lists. The parental involvement activities that correlate to high academic achievement hold the promise of improving academic performance for academically and economically challenged schools.

This study has added to the understanding of the relationships that existed between various forms of parental involvement strategies and student academic performance. The understanding of the relationship between various forms of parental
involvement strategies and a school’s socioeconomic situation has been deepened through the findings of this research.

Just as this study’s focus district suffers under the duel challenge of high poverty and low student achievement, many other high schools throughout Pennsylvania are in the same challenging situations. Each of these schools can benefit from emphasizing best practices in the adoption and implementation of their parental involvement activities. Results of the analysis of the study’s research questions advised these challenged schools regarding the specific strategies that are in use in high achieving and affluent high schools. Any school, regardless of economic or academic standing is encouraged to take note of the parental involvement activities whose frequency was positively correlated with increased academic achievement.

The documented positive correlation between parental involvement and student achievement was supported by the literature as cited earlier in this report. Studies have, likewise, documented the likelihood that lower parental involvement levels are positively correlated with socio-economic situations of the families in the district (Justice et al., 1999; Leto, 1995; Smalley, 2001; Yan, 1999). The literature also documented that parental involvement tended to drop off as students progressed through school and was at its lowest at the high school level (Epstein, 1995; Gonzalez, 2002; Heystek, 2003; Leon, 2003; McNeil, 1999; Ramirez, 2001). This means that there tended to be lower parental involvement in lower socioeconomic schools at the high school level.

If high schools hope to meet the challenges of attaining high levels of academic achievement, an important factor is the involvement of parents in the school community. It is important for school officials to understand the relationships between the stakeholders’ perceptions of their school’s parental involvement activities as they
interrelate with the level of academic achievement in a high school. It is also important to understand the relationships between the stakeholders’ perceptions of their school’s parental involvement activities as they interrelate with the economic circumstances of their school district. Armed with a deeper understanding of these issues, school officials can take concrete steps and develop policies and procedures that might increase the probability of improved levels and quality of parental involvement with goal of increasing student achievement in their high schools.

Summary of Findings: Research Question 1

The first research question examined the relationship between parental involvement perceptions of the stakeholders of a school and the level of academic achievement experienced by a school. Research Question 1 asked, “Is there a significant difference in academic achievement (as measured by math and reading PSSA scores) among students at schools that rated the school’s parental involvement strategies as high and those that rated their parental involvement strategies as lower in southwestern Pennsylvania high schools?”

As indicated in the results section of this study, statistical analysis of the data showed that parental involvement scores (PIscores) differed when correlated with school achievement score (Schachieve). The relationship between a high school’s student academic achievement level and its parental involvement perceptions was defined more thoroughly by grouping the school achievement (Schachieve) of the 15 high schools into thirds. In high schools whose students were achieving at a high level, a significant difference became clear. In these high achieving high schools, respondents rated the parental involvement strategies higher. These findings documented that there was a
relationship between school achievement scores (Schachieve) and parental involvement scores (PIscores) and that it was a positive one. Higher scores in parental involvement implied higher student achievement scores.

Grouping items from the parental involvement survey instrument into the six parental involvement types led to a deeper understanding of the relationship between specific parental involvement practices and school achievement. When comparing school achievement (Schachieve) with the parental involvement scores specific to the decision making questions score (DMQscore) a significant correlation was discovered. Likewise, when comparing the relationship between school achievement (Schachieve) with the parental involvement scores (PIscore) specific to the collaborating with community questions score (CCQscore), a significant correlation was discovered.

Analysis and interpretation of these statistical findings indicated that, with the parental involvement strategies of decision making questions (DMQscore) and collaborating with community questions (CCQscore), a higher parental involvement score indicated a higher school achievement score. This would suggest that high schools, hoping to emulate the success experienced by more high achieving schools, might benefit by paying special attention to activities that are classified as decision making and collaborating with community.

The results of the investigation into Research Question 1 informed lower and medium achieving schools that improving the quantity and quality of parental involvement at the high school level may result in improved academic performance. Further, the findings indicated that special attention to the strategies that were included in the decisions making and collaborating with community types of parental involvement, might have the strongest impact in improving student achievement at the high school.
level. Overall, decreasing the gap in frequency or effectiveness of decision making parental involvement and collaborating with community strategies between what is offered by their high school and those offered by higher achieving high schools might reap academic achievement rewards for lower achieving high schools.

Summary of Findings: Research Question 2

The second research question examined the relationship between parental involvement perceptions of the stakeholders of a school and the socio-economic level of a school. Research Question 2 asked, “Is the reporting of parental involvement, through self-rating, related to the economic status of the school district as measured by the percentage of students receiving free/reduced lunch?”

There was a statistically significant relationship between school poverty scores (Schpoverty) and parental involvement scores (PIscores) and this relationship was a negative one. In low poverty (LowPov) schools, respondents rated the parental involvement strategies higher. In other words, affluence implied higher parental involvement scores.

Statistical analysis of this relationship, specific to parental involvement types, demonstrated that when comparing school poverty score (Schpoverty) with the parental involvement scores specific to the communication questions score (CQscore), the decision making questions score (DMQscore), and the collaborating with community questions score (CCQscore) the relationship is statistically significant. In other words, poorer high schools rated the parental involvement strategies of these three categorical types as lower that more affluent schools.

The results of the investigation into Research Question 2 indicated to higher poverty schools, that improving the quantity and quality of parental involvement at the
high school level may well result in improved academic performance. Further, the findings indicated that special attention, by high poverty schools, to the strategies that are included in the communicating, decisions making and collaborating with community types of parental involvement, might have the strongest impact in improving student achievement through parental involvement strategies at the high school level.

Summary of Findings: Research Question 3

The third research question examined the frequency of specific types of parental involvement strategies reported by the principals in academically struggling schools. These schools have been required to prepare and submit improvement plans to the Pennsylvania Department of Education. These plans are required to contain detailed strategies to improve parental involvement. Research Question 3 asked, “In schools that have been required to submit school improvement plans to the Department of Education, as a result of a negative school improvement classification, what parental involvement strategies were seen by the principal as occurring frequently or extensively in their schools?”

A review of the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s School Accountability and School Improvement Lists determined that four of the 15 participating high schools in this study had been labeled at some point from 2003 to 2010 as schools in need of improvement. The survey responses of the principals of these high schools were analyzed to determine which of the 52 parental involvement strategies on the Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships survey were rated by the principal as having occurred frequently or extensively (this was indicated by a Likert score of a 4 or 5). These items were further classified according to the parental involvement type classification of the item.
Principals in schools that have struggled with academic achievement rated parental involvement strategies, categorized as decision making and collaborating with community, as having occurred most frequently in their schools. The parental involvement practices that made up each of these types, according to Epstein’s (1997) model, have been listed in this chapter in the section titled “Parental Involvement Activities that Hold the Strongest Promise of Improved Achievement”. This listing can serve to inform academically challenged high schools and school leaders about strategies that may garner academic achievement benefits.

Summary of Findings: Research Question 4

The final research question examined the frequency of specific types of parental involvement strategies reported by the principals in schools experiencing high academic achievement. Research Question 4 asked, “In high schools that have demonstrated overall improvement in student achievement, as demonstrated by rising reading and math proficiency rates in the “all student” category throughout the course of eight years of published PSSA and AYP data, what parental involvement strategies were seen by the principal as having occurred frequently or extensively?”

The Pennsylvania Department of Education’s School Accountability and School Improvement Lists were examined and it was determined that three of the 15 participating high schools had experienced a greater than ten percentage point gain from 2003 to 2010 in math and reading achievement. These high schools qualified for Research Question 4.

Results indicated that principals in schools that had experienced strong academic achievement growth rated parental involvement strategies categorized as communicating, decision making and collaborating with community as occurring most frequently in their
schools. The parental involvement practices that made up each of these types, according to Epstein’s (1997) model, have been listed in the following section of this chapter. This listing provides information to high school leaders about strategies that may garner academic achievement benefits.

Parental Involvement Activities that Hold the Strongest Promise of Improved Academic Achievement

Each of the four research questions of this study led to findings that supported specific parental involvement strategies that have potential to increase the academic achievement of a high school. The findings of Research Questions 1 indicated that the reporting of parental involvement strategies identified as decision making and collaboration with community were significantly positively correlated with academic achievement. The findings of Research Questions 2 endorsed the idea that the reporting of parental involvement strategies that fell into the types identified as communicating, decision making and collaboration with community were significantly negatively correlated with affluence. The findings of Research Question 3 determined that in schools that have been required to prepare school improvement plans containing strategies to strengthen parental involvement, the most frequently sited parental involvement strategies reported by the principals were those identified as decision making and collaborating with community. Finally, the findings of Research Question 4 indicate that the principals of academically high achieving schools rate the parental involvement strategies identified as communicating, decision making, and collaborating with community as occurring most frequently.
The common types of parental involvement strategies indicated by all four of these research questions were those identified as communicating, decision making and collaborating with community. Since these three parental involvement strategy types were supported by this study’s findings, specific activities that were represented in these groupings have been listed here.

To increase the frequency of communicating type parental involvement activities, high schools should bolster the following actions:

- Review the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and non-print communications.
- Develop communication for parents who do not speak English well, do not read well, or need large type.
- Establish clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and from school to home.
- Conduct formal conferences with every parent at least once a year.
- Conduct an annual survey to determine concerns, reactions to programs, and satisfaction with their involvement.
- Conduct an orientation for new parents.
- Send home folders of student work weekly or monthly for parent review and comment.
- Provide clear information about the curriculum, assessments, and achievement levels and report cards.
- Contact families of students having academic or behavior problems.
• Develop the school’s plan of family and community involvement with input from educators, parents, and others.

• Train teachers, staff, and principals on the value and utility of contributions of parents and ways to build ties between school and home.

• Build policies that encourage all teachers to communicate frequently with parents about their curriculum plans, expectations for homework, and how parents can help.

• Produce a regular school newsletter with up-to-date information about the school, special events, organizations, meetings, and parenting tips.

• Provide written communication in the language of the parents.

To increase the frequency of decision making type parental involvement activities a high school should bolster the following actions:

• Have an active PTA, PTO, or other parent organizations.

• Include parent representatives on the school’s advisory council, improvement team, or other committees.

• Have parents represented on district level advisory council and committees.

• Involve parents in an organized, ongoing, and timely way in the planning, review, and improvement of programs.

• Involve parents in revising the school/district curricula.

• Include parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups in the school.

• Develop networks to link all families with their parent representatives.
• Include students (along with parents) in decision-making groups.
• Deal with conflict openly and respectfully.
• Ask involved parents to make contact with parents who are less involved to solicit their ideas, and report back to them.

To increase the frequency of collaborating with community type parental involvement activities a high school should bolster the following actions:

• Provide a community resource directory for parents and students with information on community services, programs, and agencies.
• Involve families in locating and utilizing community resources. High Schools should work with local businesses, industries, and community organizations on programs to enhance student skills and learning.
• Provide one-stop shopping for family services through partnership of school, counseling, health, recreation, job training, and other agencies.
• Open the building for use by the community after school hours.
• Offer after-school programs for students with support from community businesses, agencies, and volunteers.
• Solve turf problems of responsibilities, funds, staff, and locations for collaborative activities to occur.
• Utilize community resources, such as businesses, libraries, parks, and museums to enhance the learning environment.

With these activities strengthened in high schools that struggle with high levels of poverty or low levels of academic achievement there is a potential for academic growth. Schools similar to the study’s focus high school, whose academic achievement is low and
whose poverty level is high, would be well advised to adopt these practices. Most of these parental involvement activities can be added or strengthened with little cost to a school district. Each of these targeted strategies can be addressed with planning, organization, and policy adoption. Schools struggling with academic and economic challenges may reap the benefits realized by more affluent and higher achieving high schools.

Limitations of Study

This study of the relationships between parental involvement practices and the academic achievement of high school aged students and between parental involvement practices and the socio-economic situation of the high school population was limited by several issues. The study was limited by the relatively small number of high schools and respondents that participated. Fifteen high schools are included in the data collection and there were 111 respondents from those schools. This provided a restricted sample of the subject.

There were three high schools that met the qualifications to be involved in the responses to Research Question 4. That research question’s design was to include the survey responses of principals in high schools that had demonstrated academic growth in PSSA scores in math and reading of greater than 10% over the eight year period. A limitation of the study was that of these three high schools, only two of the principals completed the survey. This limited the information about parental involvement activities that were seen as effective by principals in highly achieving high schools. However, an analysis of the responses by all the principals who qualified for Research Questions 3 and 4 suggested that most of these principals tended to list most of the same parental involvement practices as occurring frequently in their high schools. The lack of one non-
respondent principal’s input had less impact since many of the other respondents tended to report the same themes.

Another limitation of this study was that two schools included in this study were not located in Allegheny County or were smaller than the population size targeted by the study. Since it was this researcher’s intention that the results of this study help to inform Allegheny County high schools, the involvement of these two schools must be acknowledged as a limitation. Two schools were included in this research study that did not fit the school population size prescribed by this researcher. One of these smaller population schools was a school that was outside of Allegheny County. Since these three schools fell short of achieving all three criteria for participation, this researcher felt that the reasons for their participation in the study should be addressed. Each of these three schools met the other two established criteria for participation eligibility. Each was within close proximity to the researcher’s focus high school. Each had affiliation with either the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU) or the Pennsylvania Training and Technology Assistance Network (PaTTAN). The researcher determined that the addition of these three schools would add to the statistical significance without harming the study’s reliance on schools of like size. These districts shared many of the same types of demographic attributes with the Allegheny County high schools of greater population. None of these three schools had school poverty scores (Schpoverty), school achievement scores (Schachieve) or parental involvement scores (PIscores) that differed greatly when compared with the 12 high schools with targeted-size populations that participated in the study.
Recommendations for Educators: Implications for Policy and Practice

This study was significant to the field of education in that it added to a very limited body of research regarding the relationships between academic achievement and parental involvement at the high school level. Many studies have documented the decline of the involvement of parents in the educational lives of their students as they reached high school (Epstein, 1995; Gonzalez, 2002; Heystek, 2003; Leon, 2003; McNeil, 1999; Ramirez, 2001). Little has been investigated about the specific types of parental involvement practices that had the highest correlation with high school academic achievement. Educators should seek to understand the dynamics of parental involvement activities that are most strongly tied to high levels of academic performance and make strong efforts to infuse those activities and practices in their schools.

The findings of this study documented that there were statistically significant differences in the parental involvement practices that occurred in high schools that were academically higher achieving as compared to those that were academically lower achieving. Likewise, the findings of this study documented that there were statistically significant differences in the parental involvement practices that occurred in high schools that were affluent as compared to those that were economically challenged. The study has also shed light on the type of parental involvement strategies, in relation to Epstein’s parental involvement model (Epstein, 1995), that were most highly correlated with these differences.

There are practices listed here that can be implemented or strengthened in any district without excessive hardship and without exceptionally large commitments in time, resources, or money. This researcher advocates that his own district (the study’s focus district), adopt these activities in its dealings with parents, families, and community.
These efforts will be documented and tracked against future academic achievement. The researcher has confidence that achievement will be positively impacted by these changes in policy and practice. This study encourages high schools to examine their stakeholders’ perceptions of parental involvement practices and specifically advocates that these activities, especially of the types: communicating, decision making, and collaborating with community be examined and strengthened. This process holds the promise of improved academic achievement in high schools.

Summary and Conclusion

Accountability ratings and adequate yearly progress monitoring has become an increasingly important issue in education over the last 10 years. The American public education system’s adoption of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 was a massive and sweeping undertaking throughout the country. Schools and districts are constantly looking for practices that will give them the advantage in the accountability system. This study provided some insight into the advantages that could be gained by addressing what has historically been a scarce piece of the high school puzzle: the involvement of the parents in the educational world of their high school aged children.

This study provided information about stakeholders’ perceptions of the current state of parental involvement strategies the 15 high schools in western Pennsylvania that participated in the study. Through analysis of these responses, suggestions of best practice have been put forth, specific to the economic and academic status of a high school. Since time and resource scarcity is a constant reality in public education, knowledge of these high impact practices can inform parental involvement decisions by high schools that may reap the coveted reward of increased academic achievement.
Information provided by this study has added to the understanding of the relationship between various forms of parental involvement strategies and student academic achievement. The understanding of the relationship between various forms of parental involvement strategies and a school’s socioeconomic situation has also been deepened through the findings of this research. The findings add to the limited literature on parental involvement at the high school level.

Statistical relationships examined in this study determined that a positive correlation existed between parental involvement strategies categorized as decision making and collaborating with community and a school’s academic achievement level. Schools that struggle to raise PSSA scores can take note and direction.

It was determined that a negative correlation existed between parental involvement strategies categorized as communicating, decision making and collaborating with community and a school’s poverty level. Schools with limited monetary resources can take note and direction.

Just as this study’s focus district suffers under the dual challenge of high poverty and low student achievement, many other high schools throughout Pennsylvania are in the same challenging circumstances. Each of these schools can benefit from emphasizing these strategies in the adoption and implementation of their parental involvement plans. This study advises these challenged schools regarding the specific strategies that are in frequent use in high achieving and affluent high schools. This further suggested to the leaders of the focus high school, that academic benefit can be gained by the adoption and strengthening of specific parental involvement strategies and activities. It is the expectation that the focus high school will reap academic benefit from this information. Any school, regardless of economic or academic standing, should take note of the
parental involvement activities whose frequency is positively correlated with increased academic achievement. In doing so, they may strengthen student academic achievement.

Suggestions for Additional Research

Based on the results of this study and the review of the related literature, the following are recommendations for further study concerning the impact of parental involvement strategies on the high school academic achievement:

1. As the results indicated that two specific forms of Epstein’s (1997) parental involvement types were more highly correlated with academic achievement, it would be advantageous to study these two sets of parental involvement practices individually. The targeting of these types of activities and their effect on student scores might be of value.

2. As the results indicated that three specific forms of Epstein’s (1997) parental involvement types are more highly correlated with a school’s economic situation, it would be advantageous to study these three sets of parental involvement practices individually. The further study of these types of activities and their relationship with the poverty levels of a school district would be valuable.

3. This study could be replicated in its current form in an effort to gain a larger sampling, thus increasing the number and diversity of the independent variables in the study. Having a broader sampling would help to solidify the understanding of the impact of parental involvement practices on high school academic achievement. This broader sample might help to determine if the size of the high school impacted the
parental involvement perceptions of the stakeholders. This, in turn, might shed light on the frequency of the occurrence of specific parental involvement practices in relation to a high school’s size.

4. A study to determine if these interactions held true at the state and national level would be valuable to the understanding of parental involvement’s impact on education.
REFERENCES


Administration for Children, Youth, and Families (HHS), Washington, DC. Head Start Bureau, Federal Register: November 5, 1996 (Volume 61, Number 215)

Rules and Regulation, 45 CFR Part 1304.40, 1304.41


(ED394735)


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APPENDIX A:

THE MEASURE OF SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS SURVEY
Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships

Karen Clark Salmas, Joyce L. Epstein, & Mavis G. Sanders, Johns Hopkins University, Deborah Davis & Inge Douglas, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

This instrument is designed to measure how your school is reaching out to involve parents, community members, and students in a meaningful manner. The measure is based on the framework of six types of involvement developed by Epstein (1995). At this time, your school may conduct all, some, or none of the activities or approaches listed. Not every activity is appropriate at every grade level. The selected items show that your school is meeting challenges to involve all families in many different ways that will improve the school climate, strengthen families, and increase student success in school. Your school may be conducting other activities for each type of involvement. These may be added and rated to account for all major partnership practices that your school presently conducts.

Directions: Carefully examine the scoring rubric below before rating your school on the six types of involvement. As you review each item, please circle the response that comes closest to describing your school. A score of 4 or 5 indicates that the activity or approach is strong and prominent. A score of 1,2, or 3 indicates that the activity is not yet part of the school’s program, or needs improvement. The results provide information on the strength of current practices of partnership, and insights about possible future directions or needed improvements in your school’s partnership program.

Scoring Rubric

1 – Not Occurring: Strategy does not happen at our school.

2 – Rarely: Occurs in only one or two classes. Receives isolated use or little time. Clearly not emphasized in this school’s parental involvement plan.

3 – Occasionally: Occurs in some classes. Receives minimal or modest time or emphasis across grades. Not a prevalent component of this school’s parental involvement plan.

4 – Frequently: Occurs in many but not all classes/grade levels. Receives substantive time and emphasis. A prevalent component of this school’s parental involvement plan.

5 – Extensively: Occurs in most or all classes/grade levels. Receives substantive time and emphasis. A highly prevalent component of this school’s parental involvement plan.
I. PARENTING: Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our School:</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Conducts workshops or provides information for parents on child</td>
<td>Not Occurring Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development</td>
<td>Occasionally Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extensively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Provides information, training, and assistance to all families who</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>want it or who need it, not just to the few who can attend workshops or</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meetings at the school building</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Produces information for families that is clear, usable, and linked to</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children’s success in school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Asks families for information about children’s goals, strengths &amp;</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sponsors home visiting programs or neighborhood meetings to help</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>families understand schools &amp; to help schools to understand families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Provides families with information/training on developing home</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conditions or environments that support learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Respects the different cultures represented in our student population.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other types of activities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

NATIONAL NETWORK OF PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS
Johns Hopkins University
II. COMMUNICATIONS: Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children’s progress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our School:</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reviews the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos,</td>
<td>Not:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>notices, and other print and non-print communications.</td>
<td>Occurring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Develops communication for parents who do not speak English well, do</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not read well, or need large type.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Establishes clear two-way channels for communications from home to</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school and from school to home.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Conducts a formal conference with every parent at least once a year</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Conducts an annual survey for families to share information and</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concerns about student needs &amp; reactions to school programs, and their</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>satisfaction with their involvement in school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Conducts an orientation for new parents.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Sends home folders of student work weekly or monthly for parent review</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and comment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Provides clear information about the curriculum, assessments, and</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achievement levels and report cards.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Contacts families of students having academic or behavior problems.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Develops school’s plan and program of family and community</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>involvement with input from educators, parents, and others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Trains teachers, staff and principals on the value and utility of</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contributions of parents and ways to build ties between school and home.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our School:</td>
<td>Rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Builds policies that encourage all teachers to communicate frequently with parents about their curriculum plans, expectations for homework, and how parents can help.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Produces a regular school newsletter with up-to-date information about the school, special events, organizations, meetings, and parenting tips.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Provides written communication in the language of the parents.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other types of activities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**III. VOLUNTEERING:** Recruit and organize parent help and support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our School:</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Conducts an annual survey to identify interests, talents, and availability of parent volunteers, in order to match their skills/talents with school and classroom needs.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Provides a parent/family room for volunteers and family members to work, meet, and access resources about parenting, childcare, tutoring, and other things that effect their children.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Creates flexible volunteering and school events schedules, enabling parents who work to participate.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Trains volunteers so they use their time productively.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Recognizes volunteers for their time and efforts.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Schedules school events at different times during the day and evening so that all families can attend some throughout the year.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Our School:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Not Occurring</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Extensively</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Reduces barriers to parent participation by providing transportation, childcare, flexible schedules, and addresses the needs of English language learners.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Encourages families and the community to be involved with the school in a variety of ways (assisting in classroom, giving talks, monitoring halls, leading activities, etc.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other types of activities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### IV. LEARNING AT HOME:

Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Not Occurring</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Extensively</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Provides information to families on how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Provides ongoing and specific information to parents on how to assist students with skills that they need to improve.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Makes parents aware of the importance of reading at home, and asks parents to listen to their child read or read aloud with their child.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Assists families in helping students set academic goals, select courses, and programs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Schedules regular interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning with a family member.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### V. DECISIONMAKING:

Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our School:</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Occurring Rarely Occasionally Frequently Extensively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other types of activities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our School:</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Occurring Rarely Occasionally Frequently Extensively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Has active PTA, PTO, or other parent organization.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Includes parent representatives on the school's advisory council, improvement team, or other committees.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Has parents represented on district-level advisory council and committees.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Involves parents in an organized, ongoing, and timely way in the planning, review, and improvement of programs.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Involves parents in revising the school/district curricula.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Includes parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other group in the school.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Develops formal networks to link all families with their parent representatives.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Includes students (along with parents) in decision-making groups.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Deals with conflict openly and respectfully.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Asks involved parents to make contact with parents who are less involved to solicit their ideas, and report back to them.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VI. COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY: Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our School:</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other types of activities</td>
<td>Not Occurring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extensively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Provides a community resource directory for parents and students with information on community services, programs, and agencies.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Involves families in locating and utilizing community resources.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Works with local businesses, industries, and community organizations on programs to enhance student skills and learning.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Provides “one-stop” shopping for family services through partnership of school, counseling, health, recreation, job training, and other agencies.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Opens its building for use by the community after school hours</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Offers after-school programs for students with support from community businesses, agencies, and volunteers</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Solves turf problems of responsibilities, funds, staff, and locations for collaborative activities to occur</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Utilizes community resources, such as businesses, libraries, parks, and museums to enhance the learning environment.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other types of activities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A. What major factors have contributed to the success of your school’s family and community involvement efforts?

B. What major factors have limited the success of your school’s family and community involvement efforts?

C. What is one of your school’s major goals for improving it’s program of school, family, and community partnerships over the next three years?

References:


*Note:* For information on the National Network of Partnership Schools at John Hopkins University, visit the Network’s Website: [www.cjos.jhu.edu](http://www.cjos.jhu.edu). For information about NWREL’s services, call 1-800-547-6339 ext. 568, or access the Website at [www.nwrel.org](http://www.nwrel.org).
APPENDIX B:

PERMISSION TO USE THE SURVEY:

MEASURE OF SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
To: Harry Bauman  
From: Joyce Epstein  
Re: Permission to use survey

This is to grant you permission to use our survey, *Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships Survey*, in the study that you plan to conduct for your doctoral degree at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. I understand that you will focus on parental involvement in economically disadvantaged high schools in Western Pennsylvania and the connections of the quality of involvement (or extent of involvement) with the probability of those high schools improving their AYP status.

All that we require is that you include a reference on the survey and in your dissertation and resulting publications to show where the survey originated. The correct reference for the *Measure* is:


Please note the following: The *Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships* in our *Handbook for Action* was designed as a “team activity” and annual assessment for school’s Action Team for Partnerships that are developing and improving their programs of family and community involvement using our framework of six types of involvement. It was not designed for individual reports in large samples. Thus, we do not have reliability statistics on this measure.

However, some others have used the *Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships* with individuals in their dissertations (I do not have information on these studies yet.) Based on our other surveys, I am sure that the six scales in the *Measure* would have high internal reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha). The items are on the *Measure* because of the consistent patterns found in other surveys and in field studies on the six types of involvement. If you use the *Measure* in a study, you would have to use a statistical program (such as SPSS- Scale) to check the reliability statistics for your study sample.

Best of luck with your project.

Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D.  
Director, Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships  
and the National Network of Partnership Schools  
Research Professor of Sociology  
Johns Hopkins University  
3003 North Charles Street, Suite 200  
Baltimore, MD 21218
APPENDIX C:

CONSENT FORM FOR SUPERINTENDENTS
CONSENT BY THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, ALLOWING THE RESEARCHER TO CONTACT THE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, FIVE HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS, AND THREE HIGH SCHOOL PTA/PTO MEMBERS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY.

INVESTIGATOR: Harry A Bauman, 4 Roxbury Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15221, (412) 334-6927 (412) 241-6014 (412) 664-3692

ADVISOR: Dr. Jean R. Higgins, Dissertation Chair IDPEL Program Coordinator, ret., Duquesne University (412) 974-0771

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There are no risks to you as a participant. All surveys will be kept confidential and anonymous. The participants, the high school and the district will not be identified in any way in the study or in the research findings report.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Harry A Bauman, researcher 412-334-6927, Dr. Jean Higgins, IDPEL Program Coordinator, ret., Duquesne University and Advisor to this Researcher, 412-974-0771, and Dr. Paul Richer, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board 412-396-6326). This is written to provide consent to Harry Bauman to contact the high school principal, five teachers and three members of the high school PTA/PTO.

_________________________________________  __________________________
Superintendent's Printed Name  District

_________________________________________  __________________________
Superintendent's Signature  Date

_________________________________________  __________________________
Researcher's Signature  Date
APPENDIX D:

CONSENT FORM FOR HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY
(High School Principals)

TITLE: The Relationship Between Academic Achievement and Economic Level at Selected High Schools in Western Pennsylvania and Their Impact on the Degree and Success of Parental Involvement Strategies

INVESTIGATOR: Harry A Bauman, 4 Roxbury Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15221, (412) 334-6927 (412) 241-6014 (412) 664-3692

ADVISOR: Dr. Jean R. Higgins, Dissertation Chair
IDPEL Program Coordinator, ret., Duquesne University
(412) 974-0771

SOURCE OF SUPPORT: This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the (doctoral or masters) degree in Educational Leadership at Duquesne University

PURPOSE: You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate the relationship between academic achievement and economic level and their impact on the degree and success of parental involvement strategies.
As a participant, you will be asked to complete a 52 question survey (time for completion is estimated at 10-12 minutes) This survey asks about the parental involvement strategies being used in your high school. You will be asked to mail the completed survey in a postage paid envelope that will be provided.

You will also be asked to participate in a ten minute interview, in person or by phone, about the parental involvement strategies in your school. The interview will be recorded and transcribed later. The transcription of the recording will delete all identifying material of speakers and anyone they speak about.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There are no risks to you as a participant. All surveys will be kept confidential and anonymous. The participant and the high school will not be identified in any way in the study or in the research findings report

COMPENSATION: Participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you. An envelope is provided for return of your response to the investigator.
CONFIDENTIALITY: Your name will never appear on any survey or research instruments. No identity will be made in the data analysis. All written materials and consent forms will be stored in a locked file in the researcher’s home. Your response(s) will only appear in statistical data summaries. All materials will be destroyed at the completion of the research. The interview will be recorded and transcribed later. You will be informed at the exact time that the recording devise will be turned on. The transcription of the recording will delete all identifying material of speakers and anyone they speak about.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Harry A Bauman, researcher 412-334-6927, Dr. Jean Higgins, IDPEL Program Coordinator, ret., Duquesne University and Advisor to this Researcher, 412-974-0771, and Dr. Paul Richer, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board 412-396-6326).

Participant's Signature ___________________________ Date ___________

Researcher's Signature ___________________________ Date ___________
APPENDIX E:

CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS, PTA BOARD MEMBERS

OR PARENTS
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY
(Teachers and PTO/PTA Executive Board Members or Parent)

TITLE: The Relationship Between Academic Achievement and Economic Level at Selected High Schools in Western Pennsylvania and Their Impact on the Degree and Success of Parental Involvement Strategies

INVESTIGATOR: Harry A Bauman, 4 Roxbury Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15221, (412) 334-6927 (412) 241-6014 (412) 664-3692

ADVISOR: Dr. Jean R. Higgins, Dissertation Chair
IDPEL Program Coordinator, ret., Duquesne University
(412) 974-0771

SOURCE OF SUPPORT: This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the (doctoral or masters) degree in Educational Leadership at Duquesne University

PURPOSE: You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate the relationship between academic achievement and economic level and their impact on the degree and success of parental involvement strategies.
As a participant, you will be asked to complete a 52 question survey (time for completion is estimated at 10-12 minutes) This survey asks about the parental involvement strategies being used in your high school. You will be asked to mail the completed survey in a postage paid envelope that will be provided. These are the only requests that will be made of you.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There are no risks to you as a participant. All surveys will be kept confidential and anonymous. The participant and the high school will not be identified in any way in the study or in the research findings report

COMPENSATION: Participants will be compensated with a nominal stipend of $5.00 that will accompany the delivery of the survey. Participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you. An envelope is provided for return of your response to the investigator.
CONFIDENTIALITY: Your name will never appear on any survey or research instruments. No identity will be made in the data analysis. All written materials and consent forms will be stored in a locked file in the researcher's home. Your response(s) will only appear in statistical data summaries. All materials will be destroyed at the completion of the research.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Harry A Bauman, researcher 412-334-6927, Dr. Jean Higgins, IDPEL Program Coordinator, ret., Duquesne University and Advisor to this Researcher, 412-974-0771, and Dr. Paul Richer, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board 412-396-6326.

Participant's Signature __________________________ Date ____________

Researcher's Signature __________________________ Date ____________
APPENDIX F:

SAMPLE E-MAIL TO RANDOMLY SELECTED HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS
Dear XXXXXXX, XXXX High School Teacher,

I sincerely hope that you are enjoying your time with family and friends this summer.

I’ve been given permission by Dr. XXX (Your Superintendent) and Mr. XXXX (Your Principal) to e-mail you for a request for your help.

My name is Harry Bauman, and I am the Secondary Curriculum and Transformation Coordinator at McKeesport Area School District.
I am conducting a study relating parental involvement practices at the high school level, to student achievement and to a school district’s socio-economic status. The study is conducted with Duquesne University as partial fulfillment of my Doctorial Dissertation.

You have been randomly selected as one of five teachers in your high school to participate in this study. Fourteen other school districts in the area will also be represented.

Please, let me assure you that your participation in this study will take Very Little of Your Time, and as your superintendent and principal know, no participant or school district will be identified in the study’s findings. The results of the study may go a far way in shedding light on the issues of parental involvement at the high school level.

Your involvement will be limited to the completion of a 52 question, “fill-in-the-dot” paper survey form.
The will take about 8 minutes of your summer (I know how precious summer time is; I taught for 15 years in McKeesport Area School District and have been in administration for another 15 years here. Summers are necessary for our revitalization!!)

With your permission, I’ll mail the survey and a consent form to you with a stamped and addressed, return envelope.
Please respond to this e-mail with a message of ……….”Yes, send me the survey.”
With that, I’ll mail it the very next day.

This survey will take very little effort on your part, but will help a great deal,
Thank you in advance for your consideration in this.

Yours in Education,

Harry Bauman
McKeesport Area School District
APPENDIX G:

SAMPLE E-MAIL TO HIGH SCHOOL PARENTS
Dear Ms. XXXX, XXX High School Parent

I sincerely hope that you are enjoying your time with family and friends this summer.

I've been given permission by Dr. XXX Your Superintendent and Mr. XXX, Your Principal, to e-mail you for a request for your help.

My name is Harry Bauman, and I am the Secondary Curriculum and Transformation Coordinator at McKeesport Area School District. I am conducting a study relating parental involvement practices at the high school level, to student achievement and to a school district’s socio-economic status. The study is conducted with Duquesne University as partial fulfillment of my Doctorial Dissertation.

The study is designed to request that a brief survey (Takes about 8 minutes) be completed by three parents at the high school. Mr. XXX, Your Principal, suggested that you might be willing to respond to the survey as a parent of a XXX High School student.

Please, let me assure you that your participation in this study will take Very Little of Your Time, and as you superintendent and principal know, no participant or school district will be identified in the study’s findings. The results of the study may go a far way in shedding light on the issues of parental involvement at the high school level.

Your involvement will be limited to the completion of a 52 question, “fill-in-the-dot” paper survey form. The will take about 8 minutes of your time. With your permission, I'll mail the survey and a consent form to you with a stamped and addressed, return envelope. Please respond to this e-mail with a message of "Yes, send me the survey." With that, I'll mail it the very next day.

This survey will take very little effort on your part, but will help a great deal, Thank you in advance for your consideration in this.

Yours in Education,

Harry Bauman
McKeesport Area School District
APPENDIX H:

SAMPLE E-MAIL TO HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS
Dear Mr. XXXX, Principal of XXX High School,

My name’s Harry Bauman. I’m the Secondary Curriculum Coordinator in McKeesport School District.
I’m requesting your help in the completion of a survey driven study of parental involvement and its relationship to student achievement and socio-economic status. This study is being done as partial fulfillment of requirements my doctoral dissertation through Duquesne University.
Dr. XXXXXX, Your Superintendent, granted permission for this study.

My study’s methodology is very simple and takes a participant only about 8 minutes to complete a 52 question Likert survey.
I’ll ask this of five high school teachers, three PTA Members (or involved parents if the PTA folks are not available) and you, the high school principal.

I’ll contact these teachers via e-mail and ask if they would be willing to allow me to mail them my survey. Once they have allowed this, I will mail them the survey, a consent form and a pre-paid return envelope. I will mail this either to the school or to their home mailing address, whichever they choose, and ask them to mail the completed survey, and the consent form back to me.

I’ll also ask your help and direction about contacting the three parents. The e-mail system has been working for them as well. Whatever you suggest.

I’ll also mail you one of these surveys to fill out in your role as building leader.

Thanks for Helping a Fellow Educator Out.
Harry Bauman
(412) 334-6927
APPENDIX I:

DISTRICTS’ POVERTY LEVELS (SCHPOVERTY) AS DETERMINED BY THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION’S FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH RATES
### School Districts’ Percentage of Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch (Lowest to Highest)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School District and High School #</th>
<th>Percentage of Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School District and High School # 9</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District and High School # 3</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District and High School # 10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District and High School # 13</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District and High School # 8</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District and High School # 12</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District and High School # 4</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District and High School # 2</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District and High School # 14</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District and High School # 1</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District and High School # 7</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District and High School # 5</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District and High School # 15</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District and High School # 6</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District and High School # 11</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX J:

SURVEY RATE OF RETURN
### Survey Total Return Rate by High School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School #</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># Surveys</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
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### Survey Percentage Return Rate by High School

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>Total- example</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>82.20%</td>
<td>24</td>
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* school
APPENDIX K:

SCHOOLS’ AGGREGATED PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT SCORES (PISCORE)
The Parental Involvement Score (Plscore) for each High School

<table>
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<tr>
<th>School #</th>
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<th>Std. Deviation</th>
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APPENDIX L:

CALCULATIONS FOR SCHOOLS’ ACHIEVEMENT SCORES (SCHACHIEVE)
Calculations for the School Achievement Scores (Schachieve) by High School

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<td>Math---Read 52.5----66.6</td>
<td>Math---Read 53----72.6</td>
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<td>Math---Read 40.6----54.7</td>
<td>Math---Read 45.5----54.6</td>
<td>60.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>School #2</td>
<td>Math---Read 71.9----76</td>
<td>Math---Read 73.3----75.5</td>
<td>Math---Read 69.6----81.5</td>
<td>Math---Read 67.9----77.7</td>
<td>Math---Read 66.4----76.6</td>
<td>73.6</td>
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<td>School #3</td>
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<td>Math---Read 79----86</td>
<td>Math---Read 74.4----80.5</td>
<td>Math---Read 71.7----83.1</td>
<td>Math---Read 66.8----78.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>School #4</td>
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<td>Math---Read 55.2----76.9</td>
<td>64.1</td>
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<td>Math---Read 63.1----64.8</td>
<td>Math---Read 55.1----67.9</td>
<td>Math---Read 54----65</td>
<td>59.5</td>
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<td>Math---Read 34.4----47</td>
<td>Math---Read 23.5----48.7</td>
<td>Math---Read 29.3----51.9</td>
<td>Math---Read 19.4----36.1</td>
<td>Math---Read 26.7----47.7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Math---Read 33.4----61.9</td>
<td>Math---Read 53.9----63.1</td>
<td>Math---Read 60.8----69.2</td>
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<td>Math---Read 52.6----60.5</td>
<td>57.2</td>
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<td>School #8</td>
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<td>Math---Read 70.7----80.7</td>
<td>Math---Read 76.9----83.2</td>
<td>Math---Read 69.5----76</td>
<td>Math---Read 71.3----77.8</td>
<td>76.1</td>
</tr>
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<td>School #9</td>
<td>Math---Read 77.7----78.5</td>
<td>Math---Read 77.4----79.5</td>
<td>Math---Read 77----77.3</td>
<td>Math---Read 83.5----82.3</td>
<td>Math---Read 74.4----81.6</td>
<td>78.9</td>
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<td>Math---Read 68.5----71.5</td>
<td>Math---Read 71.3----82.2</td>
<td>Math---Read 71.2----82.7</td>
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<td>74.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>School #11</td>
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<td>Math---Read 42.7----48.9</td>
<td>Math---Read 30.7----43.7</td>
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<td>Math---Read 21.6----34.3</td>
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<td>Math---Read 61.8----79</td>
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<td>Math---Read 57.3---95</td>
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<td>Math---</td>
<td>Read</td>
<td>Math---</td>
<td>Read</td>
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<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
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<td>------</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>59.9---</td>
<td>61.2--78</td>
<td>68--78.8</td>
<td>73.1--83.1</td>
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<td>68--78.8</td>
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<td>65.9--79.2</td>
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<td>Read</td>
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<td>46.7---</td>
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APPENDIX M:

SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT SCORES (SCHACHEIVE)
## School Achievement Scores (Schachieve) by High School

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<td>#2</td>
<td>B</td>
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</tr>
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<td>#3</td>
<td>B2</td>
<td>78.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>64.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>H</td>
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<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>#7</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>#9</td>
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APPENDIX N:

SCHOOL POVERTY SCORES (SCHPOVERTY)
### School Poverty Scores (Schpoverty) by High School

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<td>17%</td>
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<td>65%</td>
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<td>W</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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APPENDIX O:
Table 2

School Improvement Classifications for years 2003-2010

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<td>Made AYP</td>
<td>Warn Made</td>
<td>Made AYP</td>
<td>Warn Made</td>
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<td>Made AYP</td>
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<td>Warn Made</td>
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<td>Made AYP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Warn Made AYP</td>
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<td>Cor. A 2(3) **</td>
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<td>Sch. I 2 **</td>
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<td>Sch. I 2 **</td>
<td>Sch. I 1 **</td>
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<td>Made AYP</td>
<td>Made AYP</td>
<td>Warning</td>
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<td>Sch. I 1 **</td>
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<td>AYP Warn</td>
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<td>Cor. A 2(3) **</td>
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<td>Sch. I 2 **</td>
<td>Sch. I 1 **</td>
<td>Warn</td>
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** indicates a School Improvement Classification
APPENDIX P:

CALCULATIONS FOR DETERMINING HIGH SCHOOLS THAT QUALIFY FOR RESEARCH QUESTION FOUR DUE TO ACHIEVING A GREATER THAN A TEN PERCENT GROWTH IN PSSA SCORES FROM 2002-2009
Calculations for Determining which High Schools Qualified for Involvement in Research

**Question # 4**

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<th>School</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2002-03</th>
<th>2001-02</th>
<th>(Change from..to)</th>
<th>Growth or Loss</th>
<th>2007-09 Average Reading</th>
<th>Qualify for R.Q.4?</th>
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<td>53-72.6</td>
<td>79.5-81.8</td>
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<td>48.4-48.4</td>
<td>up 19.4</td>
<td>up 17.8</td>
<td>(+18.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Math---Reading</td>
<td>73.3-75.5</td>
<td>69.6-81.5</td>
<td>68.8-72.2</td>
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<td>up 4.6</td>
<td>up 9.4</td>
<td>(+7.0)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>74.1-77.8</td>
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<td>up 4.4</td>
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<td>55.0-64.5</td>
<td>54.8-70.3</td>
<td>44.2-60.9</td>
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<td>down 0.2</td>
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<td>63.1-64.8</td>
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<td>56.0-63.8</td>
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<td>up 5.0</td>
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<td>29.3-51.9</td>
<td>37.3-55.6</td>
<td>46.1-54.0</td>
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<td>down 4.5</td>
<td>(-9.9)</td>
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<td>60.8-69.2</td>
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<td>56.5-66.7</td>
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<td>up .5</td>
<td>(+2.8)</td>
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<td>76.9-83.2</td>
<td>65.6-72.4</td>
<td>80.4-71.9</td>
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<td>up 9.8</td>
<td>(+6.3)</td>
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<td>77.0-77.3</td>
<td>75.4-75.0</td>
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<td>up 5.8</td>
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<td>up 18.3</td>
<td>up 17.9</td>
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150
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<td>up 1.4</td>
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APPENDIX Q:

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL
May 31, 2010

Re: The relationship between academic achievement and economic level at selected high schools in Western Pennsylvania and their impact on the degree and success of parental involvement strategies (Protocol # 10-49)

Dear Dr. Higgins:

Thank you for submitting the research proposal of your student, Mr. Harry Bauman, to the IRB.

Based upon the recommendation of IRB member, Dr. Joseph Kush, along with my own review, I have determined that your research proposal is consistent with the requirements of the appropriate sections of the 45-Code of Federal Regulations-46, known as the federal Common Rule. The intended research poses no greater than minimal risk to human subjects. Consequently, the research is approved under 45CFR46.104 and 46.111 on an expedited basis under 45CFR46.110.

Consent forms are attached stamped with IRB approval and expiration date. Mr. Bauman should use the stamped forms as originals for copies that he distributes or displays.

The approval must be renewed in one year as part of the IRB’s continuing review. You and Mr. Bauman will need to submit a progress report to the IRB in response to a questionnaire that we will send. In addition, if the consent form is still in use in one year, it will need to be renewed by our office. In correspondence please refer to the protocol number shown after the title above.
If, prior to the annual review, you and Mr. Bauman propose any changes in procedure or consent process, you must inform the IRB of those changes and wait for approval before they are implemented. In addition, if any unanticipated problems or adverse effects on subjects are discovered before the annual review, they must be reported to the IRB Chair before proceeding with the study.

When the study is complete, please provide us with a summary, approximately one page. Often the completed study’s Abstract suffices. You or Mr. Bauman should retain a copy of research records, other than those that have been destroyed for confidentiality, over a period of five years after the study’s completion.

Thank you for contributing to Duquesne’s research endeavors.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely yours,

Paul Richer, Ph.D.
C: Dr. Joseph Kush
Mr. Harry Bauman
IRB Records