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The Impact of "Parents Feeling Capable" Treatment on the Self-Efficacy of Low Socio-Economic Parents

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THE IMPACT OF "PARENTS FEELING CAPABLE"

TREATMENT ON THE SELF-EFFICACY OF

LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC PARENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

Parental involvement in a student's life has been a topic that has inspired much research in the past and continues to be a major research focus in the field of both psychology and education. Many studies exist confirming the lack of parental involvement of low socio-economic persons due to their low self-efficacy as it relates to their ability to help their children with schoolwork. The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of parent workshops (Parents Feeling Capable) specifically designed to enhance the self-efficacy of parents of preadolescent children identified as being of low socio-economic status. To perform the study, two groups were formed. One group of 33 parents identified as low socio-economic was solicited to participate in the Parents Feeling Capable Workshops. The second group of parents of similar socio-economic status was identified as a control group. Pre- and post-surveys were administered to both groups using the survey instrumentation designed and proven accurate through a four-year study at Vanderbilt University. A *t* test showed a significant increase in all areas studied: self-efficacy related to helping with schoolwork, parental perception of knowledge and skill acquirement, and students' perceptions of parental use of instruction. No significance was noted for the control group, eliminating the possibility that another intervention may have occurred contributing to the significant gain made by the study group. This study concluded that designing parent-training workshops that combine both theoretical and practical research resulted in increasing parental self-efficacy as it related to parents helping their children with schoolwork. The implications of this study are vast. The duplication of the Parents Feeling Capable Workshops would allow school districts receiving Title I resources to comply with the provisions of the No Child Left Behind

Law (NCLB, 2002) by providing parents of students in economically disadvantaged

schools with opportunities to learn new skills and techniques to increase their capacity in

working with their child at home on schoolwork. Participating parents report a

considerable change in their confidence level when working with their children, a

willingness to get involved in other parent workshops, and a desire to continue to help

their children and get more involved in the school.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my grandfather, Louis Furman, who planted the seed of education and leadership so many years ago in my father. I can only hope and pray that I may be a continuation of the legacy of leadership in these two great men.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Need for Study

"Self-belief does not necessarily ensure success,

but self-disbelief assuredly spawns failure." (Bandura, 1997, p. 77)

Parents are a child's first teachers. They teach their children to walk, talk, ride their bikes and a myriad of other skills, yet many parents do not believe they are capable of helping their children when it comes to academics. They struggle with how to best get involved with their child's learning both at home and at school.

Parental involvement in a student's life has been a topic that has inspired much research in the past and continues to be a major research focus in the field of both psychology and education. Empirical evidence during the past three decades has repeatedly suggested that increasing family involvement with the academic work of children produces measurable gains in student achievement. After reviewing 66 studies in *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement*, a report that describes the effects of parental involvement on student achievement, Henderson and Berla (1994) concluded that the specific form of parent involvement does not seem to be as important as the amount and variety of involvement with the child.

> Looking more closely at the research, there are strong indications that the most effective forms of parent involvement are those that engage parents in working directly with their children on learning activities in the home. Programs which involve parents in reading with their children, supporting their work on homework assignments, or tutoring them using materials and instructions provided by teachers, show particularly impressive results (Cotton & Wikelund, 2001, p. 3).

A number of researchers have written extensive literature reviews about the effects of parental involvement on student achievement (Henderson, 1987, Henderson & Berla, 1994; Cotton & Wikelund, 2001). These researchers agree that parental involvement improves learning at all grade levels regardless of parental income.

Although our founding fathers did not provide for the Federal Governments' oversight of public education, over the years public school initiatives have been included on the national agenda. In 2002, the signing of the No Child Left Behind Act by President Bush is one example of a national public education initiative. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation has as one of its cornerstones parent engagement in the education of their child (The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 2002).

What NCLB means to parents is that the schoolhouse door is open for meaningful engagement and accountability that is public and measurable, especially for parents of students in economically disadvantaged schools receiving Title I to support struggling students. What this means to school administrators is that schools are mandated to provide opportunities for parents of low-performing children to learn new skills and techniques, and to increase parental capacity to work with their child at home on school work (NCLB, 2002). Parental involvement has emerged as a centerpiece for dialogue among both educators and political leaders. Although both parties agree to the extent to which parental involvement positively influences achievement levels, there has been little action taken to develop programs (Jeynes, 2003).

Unfortunately, the research confirms that the group of parents targeted to receive training is the same group of parents least likely to get involved in the academic

endeavors of their children (Bandura, 1986; Coleman & Karraker, 1997; Henderson, 1994; Pellino, 2004; Shumow & Lomax, 2001). Why are parents uninvolved in their child's education? Parental self-efficacy, as it relates to their abilities to work with their children educationally, has surfaced as playing an enormous role in the willingness of parents to get involved in their child's educational endeavors (Bandura, 1986).

Many parents of students living in disadvantaged, low-income homes feel that they are incapable of helping their children educationally (Cotton & Wikelund, 2001). To encourage these parents, special programs need to be developed to enhance the self-efficacy of these parents to change their beliefs. Since parental involvement does significantly raise positive attitudes towards schooling and improved grades, then programs to help parents get involved with their children need to be developed (Chaika, 2000; Cotton & Wikelund, 2001; MacGregor, 2003, Shumow & Lomax, 2001).

There are many programs and practices being instituted to encourage parental involvement. PESA (Parent Effectiveness Support Achievement) (Hoffman & Miller, 1996), PIE (Parents in Education) (McReynolds, 2004), FAST (Families and Schools Together) (Chaika, 2000), and FINE (Family Involvement Network of Educators, 2006), are examples of programs driven by the need to enhance parent involvement. Although these programs are different in nature, they share the compelling desire to effect changes in parental involvement resulting in higher student achievement. None of these programs, however, addresses the need to raise parent self-efficacy. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's research, "even well-designed school programs inviting involvement will

meet with only limited success if they do not address issues of parental sense of efficacy for helping children in school" (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Social learning theorists define perceived self-efficacy as a sense of confidence regarding the performance of specific tasks. Bandura (1986, p. 391), the most frequently cited self-efficacy theorist, defines the construct as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances. It is concerned not with the skills one has but with the judgments of what one can do with whatever skills one possesses." Therefore, parents who lack confidence in their ability to help their children learn have low self-efficacy in this ability, a cause for alarm for these parents and youngsters alike.

Bandura also purports that individuals develop "general anticipation" regarding cause and effect based upon their past experience. Furthermore, he suggests that individuals develop particular beliefs about their ability to cope with situation-specific tasks. If such theories are applied to the study of parents' beliefs regarding their ability to help their children learn, it would be logical to predict that parents with low self-efficacy would be likely to put forth little effort to work with their children, and parents with high self-efficacy would be likely to put forth great effort to work with their children (Bandura, 1982; Bandura, 1997).

Not all parents feel a low degree of self-efficacy towards their ability to work successfully with their children. Bandura discovered that "the higher the family's socio-economic status, the stronger the parents' beliefs in their efficacy to promote their children's academic development and the higher the educational aspirations they have for

them" (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 2001, p. 197). Furthermore, in his study on *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, Coleman (1966) showed that socio-economic status is a strong predictor of student achievement. This study, often referred to as the Coleman Report, documented that schools have ignored differences in the rate at which children from different social classes progress. Children from upper socio-economic levels often come to school more prepared to learn (Coleman, 1966). Such findings are solemn discoveries for children of low socio-economic households who already make up a disproportionate number of those at risk for school failure (Knapp & Shields, 1990).

Overall, it would seem to be clear that parent self-efficacy levels could be positively impacted through positive intervention. Although there is a tremendous amount of research documenting the value of parental involvement, there is a dearth of research available on just what kind of parent involvement is most important (Jeynes, 2003).

Jeynes (2003) shares that there is still a great deal of research needed in the area of what aspects of parent involvement are most valuable. Hoge, Smit and Crist (1997) attempted to categorize valuable parent involvement into four classifications: parent expectations, parent interest, parent involvement at school, and family community. Mau's (1997) research, although confirming the importance of parent expectations as one of the most important aspects of parent involvement, also adds that parents helping their children with homework is extremely important.

By combining these researchers' outcomes, this writer developed an original intervention (Parents Feeling Capable, See Appendix A) made up of workshops for parents specifically designed to raise parent efficacy. These workshops included:

1. Creating a climate of mutual respect and trust (Chaika, 2000; FINE, 2005).

2. Setting goals for both parent expectations and student achievement (Hoffman & Miller, 1996; Hoge, Smit & Crist, 1997; Mau, 1997).

3. Building parent confidence by sharing simple teaching tools: graphic organizers, mnemonic devices, and memory tools. (McReynolds, 2004).

4. Developing homework organization skills (Canter, 1987; Mau, 1997).

5. Using positive communication strategies (Hoffman & Miller, 1996).

By effectively utilizing the skills and suggestions that will be provided in this study's treatment, labeled Parents Feeling Capable (Pfc), the study population of low income, low self-efficacious parents should be able to increase their sense of self-efficacy with regards to assisting their child with school work, and should be confident that they have the skills and knowledge necessary to make a positive difference in the academic life of their child, thus resulting in more parent/child quality time (McReynolds, 2004).

With greater help and support from parents, one can then expect that the students will begin to achieve at a higher level, thereby feeling more positive about their own performance. A cycle of parent support and student success was the long-term expectation and outcome.

Statement of the Problem

It is well documented in the professional literature that:

- Students of low income achieve at a lower rate (Barton, 2004; Coleman, 1966; Rothstein, 2004).

- The level of parental involvement in their child's school affects student achievement (Cawelti, 1995; Child Trends Data Bank, 2003; Cotton & Wikelund, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2001-2004; Wherry, 2003).

- Low-income parents are reluctant to get involved in their child's academics because of low self-efficacy when it comes to helping their child with schoolwork (Bandura, 1986; Coleman & Karraker, 1997; Henderson, 1994; Pellino, 2004).

- Schools should provide programs for parents of low-performing children to learn new skills and techniques, leading to an increased capacity when working with their child at home (NCLB, 2002).

This study had a target population of low socio-economic parents of preadolescent students. It was the contention of this researcher that, through exposure to a series of planned learning experiences (a training program specifically designed for the parents of low-performing preadolescent children), self-efficacy as it relates to parental involvement of parents of low socio-economic status would be significantly raised, resulting in increased parental involvement with their children in academic pursuits.

The purpose of this study was to determine if parental self-efficacy, as it relates to the ability to help their child with schoolwork, would be raised as a result of interventions designed according to research-based principles.

It was the intent of this study to create a new sense of confidence in these parents (parental self-efficacy) when helping their child with academic work. This renewed confidence would result in an increase in the time and quality of help parents extend to their child. A related outcome, which this researcher will suggest for possible further study, would be improved student achievement.

Hypotheses

In order to consider the significance of the Parents Feeling Capable (Pfc) treatment and its possible impact on parental self-efficacy as it applies to helping their child with schoolwork, the following hypotheses guided the study:

1. Parental self-efficacy regarding their ability to help their child with schoolwork will be significantly improved as a result of their involvement in the Parents Feeling Capable workshops.

2. Parents' perceptions of their personal knowledge and skill when it comes to helping their child with schoolwork will be significantly improved as a result of their involvement in the Parents Feeling Capable workshops.

3. Students' perceptions of their parent's ability to help with homework will be raised as a result of the parents' involvement in the Parents Feeling Capable Workshops.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Understanding Poverty

Poverty is not only an important issue in America, but it is also an emotional one. "For most Americans, the word poverty connotes destitution: an inability to provide a family with nutritious food, clothing, and reasonable shelter" (Rector & Johnson, 2004, p.1). The Census Bureau statistics for 2002 conclude that there are nearly 35 million persons living in this country characterized as poor. Rector and Johnson (2004) share in their Executive Summary, *Understanding Poverty in America*, that to understand the concept of poor in America, one must look "behind these numbers."

The Census Bureau presents the following facts as indicative of persons defined as poor:

- Forty-six percent of all poor households actually own their own homes. The average home owed by persons classified as poor by the Census Bureau is a three-bedroom house with one and a half baths, a garage, and a porch or patio.
- Seventy-six percent of poor households have air conditioning. By contrast, 30 years ago, only 36% of the entire U.S. population enjoyed air conditioning.
- Only six percent of poor households are overcrowded. More than two-thirds have more than two rooms per person.
- The average poor American has more living space than then average individual living in Paris, London, Vienna, Athens, and other cities throughout Europe.
- Nearly three-quarters of poor households own a car; 30% own two or more cars.
- Ninety-seven percent of poor households have a color television; more than half own two or more color televisions.
- Seventy-eight percent have a VCR or DVD player; 62% have cable or satellite TV reception.
- Seventy-three percent own microwave ovens, more than half have a stereo, and a third have an automatic dishwasher (Rector & Johnson, 2004).

Although the Census Bureau paints a generally optimistic picture, one must keep in mind that real material hardships do occur for those categorized as "poor." Many poor families have difficulty paying their regular bills. Also, the living condition of the average poor household should not be taken to represent all poor households. There is a wide range of living conditions among the poor; while more than a quarter of the poor have cell phones, a tenth of the poor have no telephones at all. Twenty percent of poor households reported an inability to pay fuel, gas, or electric bills and had their utilities cut off at some point. One-tenth of poor families had their phones disconnected due to nonpayment. More than 14% of poor households could not afford medical insurance, 11% experienced hunger, and 4% were unable to maintain their homes.

Perhaps it is these kinds of statistics that lead people to think of poverty as having to do mostly with the lack of financial resources, but according to Ruby Payne (1998) in her book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty,* poverty is much more complex. Although the ability to purchase goods and services plays an important role in the poverty cycle, it does not account for the reasons individuals find it impossible to leave poverty behind. Other resources play a vital role in the success of an individual:

- Emotional resources provide the stamina for individuals to persist in their quest for success, which lie outside the poverty arena. Role models play a significant role in developing positive emotional resources.

- Mental resources provide one with the ability to read and write and compute. Persons cannot become self-sufficient without this educational resource.

- Spiritual resources enable individuals to see themselves as capable and having value. A belief in a higher power can be a source of love.

- Physical resources provide one with a body that works. Disabilities handicap even the strongest individual.

- A support system involves individuals upon which one can depend for help.

Poverty can be thought of in two different ways. First, there is situational poverty. This is a situation in which an individual or family finds themselves after losing a job, experiencing a death in the family, or divorce. Situational poverty deals primarily with the lack of financial resources. Individuals experiencing situational poverty usually have an attitude of pride and a drive characteristic of middle class society (Payne, 1998).

The second description of poverty is labeled generational poverty. Generational poverty is defined as having been in poverty for at least two generations. These individuals have a very different attitude from those in situational poverty—one embracing the notion that society owes them a living (Payne, 1998).

> The economic traits which are most characteristic of the culture of poverty include the constant struggle for survival, unemployment and underemployment, low wages, a miscellany of unskilled occupations, child labor, the absence of savings, a chronic shortage of cash, the absence of food reserves in the home, the pattern of frequent buying of small quantities of food many times a day as the need arises, the pawning of personal goods, borrowing from local money lenders at usurious rates of interest and the use of second-hand clothing and furniture (Lewis, 1971, p.137).

Payne states that education is the key to escaping generational poverty. Being in poverty is rarely about the lack of intelligence. Most individuals in generational poverty don't even realize they have a choice (Payne, 1998). Educators must understand the social context that traps so many bright and capable students in a self-fulfilling dead-end.

The school is the only institution capable of arming these individuals with choices, the hidden rules of the middle class society, and the support system and resources necessary to ensure their success (Payne, 1998).

Unfortunately, many of our educators are ill prepared to teach "culturally different" children. Teachers have been taught for years that student achievement is positively correlated to socio-economic status, and that children of poverty are developmentally slower than their middle-class counterparts and therefore unable to achieve. The trend becomes a watered-down curriculum. Educational research does not, however, inform us of the kind of "power pedagogy" often experienced by diverse students in successful schools (Delpit, 1995).

Outstanding educators realize that their first task is to communicate meaning to students and parents of culturally diverse backgrounds (Delpit, 1995). This means that educators must be aware of the differences in dialect and language among diverse students. Michael Stubbs contends, "if the school considers someone's language inadequate, they will probably fail" (2002, p. xvii). For many years scholars have pointed out, but with little public attention, that it may not be the children's language that causes educational problems, but rather the bureaucracy of education's response to the language (Delpit, 2002).

Payne (1998) refers to three aspects of language: registers of language, discourse patterns, and story structure. All languages have five registers: Frozen, Formal, Consultative, Casual and Intimate. The frozen register is that language that remains the same (The Lord's Prayer, wedding vows, etc.). The formal register is the preferred word

choice for work and school. It is characterized by standard syntax, complete sentences and specific word choice. The consultative register applies to the formal register used in conversation. The casual register is the language between friends and characterized by a 400- to 800-word vocabulary. Conversation is often dependent upon non-verbal assists. Sentence syntax is often incomplete and word choice is general. The intimate register is that language used between those individuals in love. As language resister applies to educators there are two—formal and casual (Payne, 1998).

Dr. Maria Montano-Harmon (1991) concludes from her research that minority students and poor students do not have access to formal register language at home and are unable to use formal register. She further concludes that patterns of discourse are very different in casual and formal language registers. In formal register, discourse has a main idea, but in casual discourse, individuals tend to meander through a topic.

Story structure is also very different. In formal register the story has a logical sequence, but in casual register the story begins with the end or the part with greatest intensity (Payne, 1998). One can see how a child's language may be a disadvantage in his educational progress not because his language is deficient but because it is different (Stubbs, 2002).

For years it has been reported that individuals in poverty have, on average, an IQ that is nine points lower than their middle class counterparts. What the reporters of this information fail to understand is that children of poverty are not motivated toward testing. These children do not understand that the expectation from adults is that they will try to do their very best when confronted with a testing situation (Anastasiow & Hanes, 1976).

Asa Hilliard, psychologist and historian, urges us to produce educators who will assess a child's aptitude for learning regardless of his or her socio-economic level or inability to speak Standard English:

> Teaching and learning are rooted in and are dependent upon a common language between teacher and student. Language is rooted in and is an aspect of culture. Culture is nothing, more or less, than the shared ways that groups of people have created to use and define their environment. All people on the face of the Earth have created culture. Therefore, they have also created language, which is included in culture. The teaching and learning functions have occurred in every culture on Earth. It is natural and not the exclusive property of any group or groups (Hilliard, 2002, p. 98).

In the types of testing situations that determine grades or measure achievement and I.Q., children of poverty are at a disadvantage. Children of poverty have not received the constant drill and practice characteristic of the middle class family, and they do not have access to the bank of language expectations used on the tests. It would probably not be difficult to predict the scores of these children on intelligence examinations (Ward, 1986). The results of standardized testing favor children who speak common American English simply because the questions are couched in a familiar language with familiar experiences. Because the right children (those of upper middle class) get the best scores, the test makers assume the tests are valid. Test makers have no way of eliminating the portion of the test score which is not due to learning but rather due to culture and environment (Hilliard, 2002). "The notion that low scores on tests or bad grades in school indicate "cultural deprivation" is false. Individuals being made to take an examination in a culture and a dialect different from their own cannot be expected to succeed. The tests to measure competency in the culture of the rural, black and poor have not yet been invented" (Ward, 1986 p. 93).

When the Oakland School Board Policy of 1996 gave birth to the "Ebonics debate," language became an even greater disgrace to the African American population trying to escape the poverty trap. Although the purpose of the now infamous policy was to allow teachers to develop an understanding of the home language of their students, respect its use, and use Ebonics as a springboard to teaching Standard English, African Americans were disgraced and appalled. The overriding sentiment was that the language termed "Black English" represented ignorance and stupidity (Delpit, 2002).

Contrary to this sentiment, the Oakland School Board sought to instill an understanding in their teachers that no language was better than another. The board recognized that as long as teachers viewed languages as inferior to others, no amount of change instructionally would make a difference. Rather, the policy set out to expose the Ebonics language as a rule-based language just like Standard English. Ebonics was also showcased as having its historical basis in West African languages. The intent was that when teachers fully understood and internalized the distinctions of Ebonics, they would then be able to use it in the fulfillment of teaching Standard English (Delpit, 2002).

To communicate meaning to minority children and children of poverty, instruction for formal register language must be directly taught. Teachers must be creative in their pedagogical styles to allow children to develop relationships worthy of wanting to translate their language from casual to formal register (Montano-Harmon, 1991). Delpit shares the lesson of Amanda Branscombe, a teacher who would allow her children to listen to rap music and have them teach her the rules for writing rap songs. She would then in turn teach them rules for writing sonnets. This teacher was able, through her

understanding of the individual and her willingness to teach in a creative environment, to celebrate diversity rather than to "autopsy" it (Delpit, 1995).

Another example of creative teaching was the revelation that many African American young girls aspire to be hairstylists. In investigating this notion, it is found that one needs to have a working knowledge of bookkeeping, marketing, entrepreneurship, chemistry, anatomy, interpersonal skills, public speaking, and computer operations. With some preparation, a creative teacher should be able to create a curriculum from that spectrum of school-based topics (Delpit, 2002).

There is little need to teach teachers specific techniques for teaching the African American poverty child. It is not about teachers filling their bag of tricks, but rather about the total disposition of the teacher towards students who are culturally different or "out of the norm." It is a re-orientation. "Teachers must be taught so that their total orientation toward language and cultural linguistic principles represents the best that we now know about the subject" (Hilliard, 2002, p.101).

Victoria Purcell-Gates (2002) shares three beliefs that schools and teachers must have to make a difference in the widespread class differences that have been allowed to develop in our society:

1. Teachers and schools must accept, believe, and act upon the belief that children of poverty are learners, have been learning since birth, are ready to learn at any time, and will learn.

2. Teachers and schools must conceptually separate the process of learning from the socio-political issues surrounding language use. They must be accepting of the language as that with which they learn and use that language to connect learning.

3. Teachers and schools must educate children of poverty to recognize oral and written language register. Students will use the appropriate oral and written language registers if they are taught it.

The best approach to achievement is to examine teaching and learning. Since 1980 educators have emphasized the teaching process. Teachers focus on what it is they are suppose to do to bring about learning. The reality is that no matter how much or how well we teach, children of poverty are coming to school without the necessary foundational concepts. It is now time to focus on the learning. Educators must thoroughly understand the process of learning when working with children of poverty and thoroughly understand their deficiencies (Payne, 1998).

The fundamental means of processing information to acquire new learning is known as cognitive strategies. These strategies are divided into three categories: Input strategies (the quantity and quality of data gathered by student); Elaboration strategies (using the data); and Output strategies (communicating the data) (Payne, 1998). It is in these areas that the impoverished students have missing links or deficiencies:

- This student is unable to focus attention and see objects in detail. This area is related to the use of the casual register story structure, which is episodic and random. They simply do not have a systematic means for doing or finishing tasks. They have no data-gathering tools.

- This student has a limited vocabulary. Words are the building blocks of learning and because students rely on the casual register, they do not have prepositions or adverbs in their speech.

- This student has a disoriented spatial environment. Directions, locations, object sizes, and shapes. are not available to them.

- This student is unable to organize and/or measure in time. Being somewhere on time is seldom valued, and time itself is not seen as valuable.

- This student has difficulty retaining an object or observation in memory. Images do not remain constant. Learning alphabet letters or shapes is problematic.

- This student has difficulty with problem-solving activities. Students from poverty seldom have strategies to gather accurate data in order to reveal solutions.

- This student is unable to compare and contrast objects in the mind. He/she is unable to categorize or retrieve information except in a random manner. Using or manipulating data becomes impossible (Payne, 1998).

Payne perceives the lack of cognitive strategies to be the true discrimination that comes out of poverty. Individuals lacking these unseen attributes for learning are handicapped throughout their lives (Payne, 1998). Instructional interventions to build conceptual frameworks and cognitive strategies include:

- Using graphic organizers, which allow the student to identify main ideas and concepts and sort relevant and non-relevant information (Idol & Jones, 1991).

- Developing systematic approaches for the student to read and comprehend information (previewing chapters, highlighting headings, underlining specific information, etc.) (Payne, 1998).

- Establishing goal-setting opportunities to address that special need for students to be able to plan and schedule (Marzano &Arredondo, 1986).

- Using a kinesthetic approach, which allows for application of skills. Instead of teaching a math problem using paper and pencil, teachers allow students to create or draw an object, which will require the use of the math problem (Payne, 1998).

- Providing opportunities for procedural self-talk, which allows the student to approach the development of new self-esteem and confidence. The self-talk should begin as journal writing, and will eventually develop into internal self-talk (Bloch, 1993).

- Using rubrics, which allows students to compare levels of performance. They can evaluate their own performance, leading to an ability to plan for self-improvement (Payne, 1998).

- Teaching the structure of language, which allows students to see patterns and begin to transpose casual register into formal register (Payne, 1998).

- Teaching students questioning techniques, which positively correlates to the comprehension of information. Give students question prompts or stems to ensure success (Palincsar & Brown, 1984).

- Using conceptual frameworks to teach content, which allows learning to grow

  from the known to the unknown. Teach new learning in a relationship to what the

  students have experienced (Marzano & Arredondo, 1986).

As educators begin to adapt instruction to better meet the needs of the impoverished

child, moving from a programmatic philosophy to a diagnostic one, educators must keep

in mind that the greatest motivator for these students is relationships. Individuals who

have successfully escaped poverty often attribute their success to a positive relationship

with a teacher, counselor, or coach. "Honoring students as human beings worthy of

respect and care is to establish a relationship that will provide for enhanced learning.

Support systems are simply networks of relationships" (Payne, 1998).

Socio-economic Differences in Education

There is a phenomenon in America known as the achievement gap. This gap is the

perceived difference, based on the National Assessment of Education Progress (National

Center for Education Statistics, 2003) in educational ability of students of minority race,

ethnicity and income when compared with those students of white middle class America.

Paul Barton (2004), writer and consultant for Educational Testing Service states, "The

achievement gap mirrors inequalities in those aspects of schooling, early life, and home

circumstances that research has linked to school achievement."

This achievement gap is not a new phenomenon. For decades, philosophers and

scholars such as Ivan Illich (1970) and Paulo Freire (1970) have discussed and written

about the plight of the poor with regards to education. *Deschooling Society* is a dialogue

between Ivan Illich and others at the Center for Intercultural Documentation at

Cuernavaca, Mexico. In this work, Illich presents the existing system of "school" as a

failure and seeks to establish alternatives in education. The philosophy of deschooling

can be found in the author's statement: "The pupil is schooled to confuse teaching with

learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence, and fluency

with the ability to say something new" (Illich, 1970). He reiterates that very young

children born into socio-economically disadvantaged families do not gain the background

experiences and language opportunities that their rich counterparts gain with little effort.

The author states that the anger, frustration and dependency brought about by poverty

are most intensely felt in the United States. Illich states that schools as we know them

actually create social classes, perpetuating the myth that ever-increasing quantities of

schooling at ever-increasing costs improves one's value although not necessarily one's

"learning." Money in education is not a factor. Many programs financed with billions of

dollars continue to fail. Individuals in this society need to participate in learning webs in

which each is both a teacher and a learner (Illich, 1970).

> In a deschooled society, learning occurs in and of the world and individuals define
> themselves by their own learning. The current search for new educational funnels
> must be reversed into the search for their institutional inverse: educational webs
> which heighten the opportunity for each one to transform each moment of his living
> into one of learning, sharing, and caring. We hope to contribute concepts needed by
> those who conduct such counterfoil research on education—and also to those who
> seek alternatives to other established service industries (Illich, 1970 p.52).

Illich (1970) realizes one factor that can make a difference is skilled teachers

understanding their students' true needs and attempting to meet those needs on a student-

by-student basis. According to Illich, education must begin within the student, starting

with the parent. Ivan Illich's charge will serve as a philosophical foundation for this

study, specifically the plight of the children from lower socio-economic society.

In 1970, the Brazilian Paulo Freire authored the book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.*

Once again we read the frustration in the author's words concerning what he terms a

"narrative" education. Freire describes teacher talking—leading the students to memorize

mechanically the narrated account. The student represents a receptacle to be filled. "The

more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are.

Education thusly becomes an act of depositing" (1970). Freire refers to this act as the

"banking concept of education." Banking education maintains the following attitudes and

practices, which mirror oppressive society:

1. The teacher teaches and the students are taught;
2. The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing;
3. The teacher thinks and the students are thought about;
4. The teacher talks and the students listen meekly;
5. The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;
6. The teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply;
7. The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;
8. The teacher chooses the program content, and the students adapt to it;
9. The teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the students are mere objects (Freire, 1970 p.20).

Freire's research informs us of what he terms "learned helplessness" by educational

level and socio-economic status. This research is based on a survey of 10,624 persons

between the ages of 12 to 64 years of age in the major metropolitan areas of Brazil. The

respondents were presented with the statement: "There is little that I can do to change

my life." The results indicated that 20% of lowest socio-economic status with correlating

educational status (secondary incomplete) believed themselves incapable of changing

their lives. Approximately 15% of the average socio-economic levels with correlating

educational status (secondary complete) felt themselves incapable of changing their lives,

while 7.1% of the highest socio-economic levels with correlating education (some college

to post graduate) felt incapable of changing their lives (Freire, 1970).

It is not surprising that the banking concept of education has helped to keep the

oppressed oppressed. Education must involve all parties. "It is not our role to speak to the

people about our own view of the world, nor to attempt to impose that view on them, but

rather to dialogue with the people about their view and ours. We must realize that their

view of the world reflects their situation in the world" (Freire, 1970, p.5).

The literature supports that it is time to reexamine what we in education are doing and

teaching. According to such historians as Illych and Freire, our schools today are only

successful in preparing students to fit into the role of student. Those students willing to

"play the game" are able to survive our educational system. However, this does not in

any way suggest that these students have been educated or that these students' learning in

any way "closes the achievement gap."

More recently, Richard Rothstein (2004) again refers to the failure of the United

States educational system to close the achievement gap between the "haves" and the

"have nots." In his article, Rothstein (2004) identifies four manifestations of the social

and economic class as contributing to the achievement gap that exists between white and

minority children: child-rearing practices, health needs, mobility rates, and financial

assets. Although income and skin color do not directly cause a failure to succeed in

school, "those characteristics that define social-class differences inevitably influence learning" (p. 43).

Rothstein (2004) goes on to suggest that to make progress in narrowing the achievement gap, our educational system must pursue three tracks simultaneously:

1. improve the quality of instruction for minority students,

2. invest to expand the definition of schooling to include out-of-school hours in which families are the primary influence, and

3. develop policies that enable minority children to be healthy, secure, stable and ready to learn when they enter school (Rothstein, 2004).

According to Rothstein, our educational system to date has not pursued any of these strategies but rather has relied on "school reform" as the best way to address this achievement gap. Rothstein is strongly advocating that we do some experimenting with these and other strategies that are designed to reduce the achievement gap. First, he contends that school integration alone has not succeeded. "If students come to school in unequal circumstances, they will largely, though not entirely, leave school with unequal skills and abilities, in both cognitive and non-cognitive domains" (Rothstein, 2004, p. 129). To truly address the achievement gap, income inequality must be addressed as well as medical care and stable housing. In addition, narrowing the achievement gap must include early childhood programs providing intellectual stimulation comparable to middle-class environments with the addition of after-school and out-of-school programs (Rothstein, 2004).

An example of such a program is the Community House located on the North side of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. At this facility, numerous after-school and evening programs are offered for young people and caring adults. Project STRUGGLE is one program offered. Supported by Carnegie Mellon University, this program brings parents and children together to work collaboratively through a process that requires discussion, a written response and a presenting component. Over the past eight years, this project has been highly successful in building literacy capacity and connecting children with adults (Long, Peck & Baskins, 2002).

The statistics revealed in a study by Hart and Risley (1995) dealing with the variations in home environments between professional, working class, and welfare families were alarming:

- Professional parents spoke on an average of more than 2,000 words per hour to their child.
- Working class parents spoke an average of 1,300 words per hour.
- Welfare parents spoke an average of 600 words per hour.
- In professional families, children received six encouraging comments to every reprimand.
- Working parents gave two encouraging comments to every reprimand.
- Welfare parents gave six reprimands for every encouraging comment.
- Preschool youngsters of professional families had vocabularies approximately 50% larger than children from working class families and twice as large as those of welfare families.

A report of the National Study Group for the Affirmative Development of Academic Ability reveals that students of low socio-economic families, as well as many minorities, are characterized as less intelligent based on standardized tests due to their often underdeveloped vocabulary. Decades of data in reading, mathematics, and science

confirm the existence of achievement gaps for both minority students and students living in poverty (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL), 2004).

Chairman of the NCREL Committee Edmund Gordon and his associates have compiled the results of this study to help craft a "vision for affirming academic ability, nurturing intellective competence, and moving all students—particularly minority and low-income students—to higher levels of academic achievement" (NCREL, 2004, p.v.). The committee chose the term "intellective competence" instead of the traditional intelligence as an attempt to change the mindset of the less intelligent minority/low-income student. This term instead implies a sense of confidence as well as character contributing to one's ability to learn. Intellective competence embodies more than the traditional measurement of intelligence and can be both nurtured and developed (NCREL, 2004). This committee's vision goes beyond deciding what students need to know and be able to do. It extends to what students should be and become (NCREL, 2004). This philosophy is more in keeping with the ideals of both Illich and Freire.

The report calls for simultaneous interventions both in the school and in the home and community. At the school level, we need primary, proven pedagogical practices. This involves teacher education programs for preservice teachers as well as professional development programs for existing teachers. At the school/community level, programs must exist to support parents in positive modeling, helping with homework, and providing an adequate place to study. Also, programs should combine school/community by promoting community service programs. Often our low-income and minority students feel isolated from the community. A sense of community membership can be

operationalized by requiring students to participate in community service (NCREL, 2004).

Researchers continue to contemplate why there is an achievement gap between the white middle class population and the minority/ethnic, low-income population. Coleman argues, "Differences in family backgrounds of students as opposed to school characteristics, accounted for the greatest amount of variance in student's academic achievement" (1966, p.24). Brown vs. Brown guarantees equal school access, but it certainly has not guaranteed equal achievement. Paul Barton (2004) has attempted to first identify the life experiences and conditions that research showed are associated with school achievement and then find statistics that indicate whether children's experience with each factor differ on the basis of race/ethnicity and income.

Barton (2004), after synthesizing literally thousands of studies, determined 14 factors that correlate with student achievement:

Home	School
Birth weight	Rigor of curriculum
Lead poisoning	Teacher experience and attendance
Hunger and nutrition	Teacher preparation
Reading to young children	Class size
Television watching	Technology-assisted instruction
Parent availability	School safety
Student mobility	
Parent participation	

The researcher's conclusion was that in every case, statistical data were available for each of the 14 factors (related to minority/ethnicity and low income) and in every instance a gap existed. When analyzed according to relative importance, it was found that these factors were equally important (Barton, 2004).

Karen Pellino (2004) asserts that poverty claims more and more of our students' lives

due to the challenge not met by educators. This author suggests that we must change our

focus from teaching to learning and meet the many challenges of the typical "at-risk"

student. Several educational challenges are:

- Schools have become more diverse. Teachers need to tune-in to the culture of poverty.
- High mobility is a symptom of poverty. Many families cannot afford the rent or must move from family member to family member.
- School attendance is often irregular.
- Social and economic status differences are perceived early on by children.
- Students of poverty lack motivation to learn. They are often emotionally traumatized (Pellino, 2004).

Pellino discusses curricular changes necessary to meet the needs of all children

including those living in poverty. Curriculum needs to address the emotional, social,

cognitive and physical learning of students. Knowing how the brain functions and

following many of the suggestions in the new brain-based learning research may be the

answer to accommodating the academic and emotional needs of these children.

One of the greatest challenges affecting educators is building relationships with the

parents and families of low socio-economic status. Pellino stresses this challenge as one

that cannot be emphasized enough. Pellino (2004) shares that "most parents, regardless of

their socio-economic status, love their children and want them to succeed" (p.6). Pellino

outlines some simple strategies to develop positive parental relationships, including

teaching parents how to become involved with their children and possibly help their

children to break the cycle of poverty that often occurs. The author suggests that parents

be taught coping strategies as well as some simple teaching tools to use with their

children. Pellino supports that human relationships must take precedence over academics.

Parents must first come to trust the educators before they are willing to sincerely get involved. The author states that every attempt must be made to foster a positive relationship with the parents (Pellino, 2004).

Parent Involvement in Education

The importance of parent involvement in a child's education is not a new concept. As far back as pre-historic times, there is evidence that parents acted as caregivers and counselors as they modeled the skills, values and the mores of their culture (Berger, 1991). Formal education, outside the home, emerged in Egypt (3787 – 1580 B. C.). In both the Greek and Roman societies, children had no rights, but were cared for and educated (Berger, 1991). By the seventeenth century in Western societies, childhood began to be looked upon as a meaningful time in the life of the child. Through the work of John Locke (1632-1704), the interaction between parent and child began to take on new importance. The concept of children as tabulae rasae, originally suggested by Aristotle, became the philosophical foundation of John Locke. *Tabulae rasae* literally means "blank slate" on which the caregivers create the concept of "child" through their teaching and modeling (Berger, 1991). Thus the importance of environmental factors was once again borne in Locke's research.

The roots of parent involvement as it is perceived today are an outgrowth of the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778) and Johann Pestalozzi (1746 – 1827). Pestalozzi writes in his book, *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children* (Pestalozzi, 1915),

that a mother is the first teacher of her children. Pestalozzi shares that the mother both

nourishes the mind of her child and the body of her child (Pestalozzi, 1915).

Amongst Rousseau's educational principles, as shared in an article by Gordon

Ziniewicz, lies the notion that children must be permitted to grow at their own pace and

not be rushed. Rousseau's most famous work, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*

Among Men, introduced us to the concept of inequality as it relates to a whole range of

social ills (Ziniewicz, 1997), once again underlining the importance of environmental

factors.

Friedrich Frobel (1782 – 1852) embraced the teachings of Pestalozzi and claimed

"that education is a natural process and children learn through creative self-activity"

(p. 1) as shared by M.K. Smith in the article, *Friedrich Frobel and Informal Education*

(1997). Frobel is credited with the founding of kindergarten. Frobel's vision was to create

a stimulating "small world" for children to learn and play (Smith, 1997).

With the new emphasis on the child's early education in the early 1900s, many parent

education groups began to emerge, such as The University of Chicago Parent

Cooperative and the Child Study Association of America. Although the PTA was

formally established in 1897, its membership grew from 190,000 in 1920 to 1,500,000 in

1930. Many programs sustained families during the depression and the war by offering

help in child rearing (Berger, 1991).

Maria Montessori (1870 – 1952) embraced the education of young children by

establishing the first Casa Di Bambini (Children's House) in 1907. She devised a

pedagogical program including a "delineation of a scale of sensitive periods of

development," which provides a focus for class work that is appropriate and uniquely stimulating and motivating to the child. Parent participation included basic and proper attention to healthcare. Despite criticism to the Montessori Method, during the 1930s and 1940s, her programs have been applied successfully and continue to be popular in early childhood today (Maria Montessori, 2006).

During the first half of the twentieth century, John Dewey (1859 – 1952) criticized the educational philosophies of Rousseau as over-emphasizing the individual. It was vitally important to Dewey that learning not be characterized as the accumulation of facts, but rather that learning be integrated into the lives of children. In his book, *The School and Society,* Dewey recognizes the value of incidental learning and the power of parents as models (Dewey, 1907).

The mindset of the 1950s was characterized as children needing a nurturing early life in order to achieve the necessary mental health discussed by Erik Erikson in his book *Childhood and Society*. He claimed children needed to develop trust, autonomy, initiative and industry to be productive individuals later in life (Erikson, 1950).

In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, parent programs continued to flourish and grow. The Office of Education and the public school system positively responded to the need for parent involvement. Many schools took a leadership role in developing models for parent collaboration and involvement (Berger, 1991).

In the 1990s and the new millennium, a call for increased parent involvement and statements about its importance were found in major legislation. For example, in the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, parent involvement in their children's education is a

national priority (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). President George Bush has enacted the law, No Child Left Behind, mandating parent involvement for disadvantaged students (NCLB, 2002).

Although there is a tremendous amount of research documenting the value of parental involvement, there is a dearth of research available on just what kind of parent involvement is most important (Jeynes, 2003). A review of the professional literature and research on parent involvement reveals considerable variation even in the definition of parent involvement. In some studies parental involvement is defined as the parent getting involved in school related organizations, i.e. the P.T.A. In other studies it was defined as the parents' willingness to meet with their child's teacher to discuss their child's progress. (Cotton & Wikelund, 2001).

We do know that asking parents to be aware of what is going on in their child's school and attending events and conferences yield some but little benefit. "Research indicates that parents who are given strategies and home-learning activities for use with their children make the greatest contributions to their children's education" (Barclay & Boone, 1997, p.18).

According to Dr. John H. Wherry (2003), parental involvement research can now document these benefits for students: higher grades, standardized test scores, better attendance and more homework done, fewer placements in special education, more positive attitudes and behavior, higher graduation rates, and greater enrollment in postsecondary education. Wherry (2003) goes on to state that parental involvement benefits parents as well by resulting in their having more confidence in the school,

teachers having higher opinions of parents, parents having greater confidence in themselves as parents and in their ability to help their children learn at home, and parents being more likely to enroll in continuing education courses for themselves.

Compounding these findings, A. Henderson (1994) reviewed 66 studies involving parental involvement and augments its importance by identifying a link between student achievement and family involvement in a child's education. Similarly, Snow et al. (1991) conducted a two-year study on literacy achievement in children from low-income families and found that parental involvement in schools was positively connected to literacy skills. The results of numerous studies reveal that parent involvement has a potential to improve student achievement and behavior (Henderson, 1994).

A search of the Child Trends Data Bank (2003) on parental involvement in schools revealed some trends that support several of the assumptions that serve as the underpinning of this study. The data from this search were organized around five themes: importance of parental involvement, trends, differences by grade level, differences by race and ethnicity, and differences by parental education and income.

There is compelling evidence that students with parents who are involved in their school tend to have fewer behavioral problems and better academic performance. Participation rates have held relatively steady as 78% of parents k-12 have attended a general school meeting, 73% have attended a scheduled meeting with a teacher, 65% have attended a school event, but only 37% have volunteered or served on a school committee. The data reveal that as students move higher up the grade level, the involvement of parents in school decreases from 88% at elementary to 70% at middle and

down to 51% at high school. Differences by race and origin were small or non-existent

for parental attendance at school meetings. However, Hispanic, and African American

parents were less likely to attend school events, volunteer at the school, or serve on a

committee (Child Trends Data Bank, 2003).

When looking at educational background and income, the data show that the higher

the levels of parental education and income, the more likely the parents are to be involved

in the school: 97% of parents who had a Bachelor's degree were involved in school

compared with 76% of parents who had less than a high school education. Likewise, 96%

of parents making over $50,000 were involved in school compared to 27% of those

parents living at or below the poverty level (Child Trends Data Bank, 2003).

Kathleen Cotton and Karen Reed Wikelund (2001) present a review of literature on

parent involvement. They found that parent involvement in children's learning is

positively related to achievement for all types of involvement and for all types and ages

of students. They discovered that the more active forms of parent involvement produced

greater achievement benefits than the more passive ones and that the earlier the

involvement begins the more powerful the effects will be. They also found that parent

involvement programs that included training components enhanced the effectiveness of

parent involvement. However, they also discovered that a little training is better than a lot

because extensive programs experienced considerable attrition, perhaps due to the time

and effort requirements. The research was found to show that improved parent attitudes

toward the school and improved parent self-efficacy often result when parents become

involved in their children's learning. This has been found to be true regardless of the

parent's educational level or socio-economic status. Cotton and Wikelund discovered that parent involvement remained beneficial in promoting positive achievement in older students and that parents can make a difference regardless of their levels of education. Finally, the research established that the most successful parent involvement programs were well organized and provided parents a range of activities and roles in the schools (Cotton & Wikelund, 2001).

Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey and Howard Sandler present psychological theory and research, as a part of a four-year study, that is critical to understanding why parents become involved in their children's education. The Social Context of Parental Involvement: A Path to Enhanced Achievement is a report of an Institute of Educational Sciences (IES)-funded research project designed at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University to examine the following questions: (a) Why do parents choose to become involved in their children's education? (b) How does their involvement influence children's educational achievement and attitudinal variables that influence achievement? Three major constructs are central to parents' decision making regarding involvement in their child's education. First, a parent's role construction defines his/her beliefs about what they are supposed to do as a parent. Second, parents' sense of self-efficacy for helping their children succeed determines the extent to which parents believe their involvement will have any positive influence on their child's education. Third, invitations and opportunities for involvement refer to parents' perceptions that the child and school want them to be involved (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2001 – 2004).

The general findings suggest that parents' report of modeling had the highest influence on students' report of academic self-efficacy. Parents' report of instruction had the highest influence on students' report of learning strategy use. Although small, there was some evidence that parents' use of modeling, reinforcement, encouragement and instruction all had an influence on students' report of intrinsic motivation to learn (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2001-2004).

The findings for all schools show that, in general, all participants in the study had higher achievement scores and higher levels of parental involvement than did those students not participating in the study (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2001-2004). This suggests that there is a strong link between achievement and parental involvement.

Cawelti (1995), in a compilation of research titled *Handbook of Research on Improving Student Achievement,* cites many findings involving parent involvement in their child's education. Findings state "learning is enhanced when schools encourage parents to stimulate their children's intellectual development". Numerous studies substantiate that a home/school connection develops a strong academic environment for the child that eventually results in higher student achievement and self-esteem (Cawelti, 1995; Child Trends Data Bank, 2003; Cotton & Wikelund, 2001); Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2001 – 2004; Wherry, 2003).

According to Cawelti, schools simply must have parents positively involved in the instruction of their children (1995). However necessary, there is research to support that parents, specifically those of low-income status, are reluctant to get involved with their children's educational needs. In the study *Barriers to Parent Involvement in Middle*

School Health Education (Winnail, Geiger, Macrina, Snyder, Petri & Nagy, 2000),

parents shared that when they are not able to answer their children's questions concerning

curriculum, they become reluctant to get involved. The results of the study highlighted

the need to inform parents about curriculum and current classroom activities. Results also

show that parents need to be solicited for their involvement in schools. When parents lack

adequate information to answer their children's questions, this leads to their reduced self-

efficacy and eagerness to get involved (Winnail, et.al, 2000).

Shumow and Lomax (2001) confirm in their study that family background and socio-

economic status will affect feelings of efficacy. The level of efficacy will influence the

parents' willingness to get involved in their children's education and in turn affect

student achievement.

Self-efficacy in Parents

Albert Bandura, again the most frequently cited self-efficacy theorist, popularized the

term self-efficacy as an outgrowth of his studies concerning social cognitive theories. In

1963, he published his research titled *Social Learning and Personality Development*.

This psychologist was not satisfied with the belief that one's environment causes one's

behavior (a behaviorist philosophy). His beliefs extended to the interaction of behavior

and environment. In other words, our behavior (our psychological processes) can also

cause our environment. Bandura also claimed that modeling was a powerful process

resulting in diverse forms of learning. Therefore he combines both behavioral and

cognitive philosophies to form his theory of modeling or as he states, "observational learning" (Bandura, 1963).

 In 1977, Bandura published the ambitious *Social Learning Theory*, a book that according to Pajares (2004) dramatically altered the direction psychology was to take in the 1980s. Bandura's analysis of social learning and modeling spurred tremendous interest in this phenomenon in the psychological world. A major finding that resulted from these studies was how people's perceptions of their ability to control what they perceive as threats actually resulted in the release of neurotransmitters and stress-related hormones into the bloodstream. Further, these studies revealed that people could regulate their level of physiological activation through their belief in self-efficacy (Pajares, 2004).

Bandura theorized that humans are able to control their behavior through a process known as self-regulation. This process, outlined by Moore, involves three steps:

1. Self-observation—Humans look at themselves and their behavior and keep track of their actions.

2. Judgment—Humans compare these observations with standards. These standards can be rules set by society, or standards that the individual sets.

3. Self-response—After judgment, the person decides if he or she deserves a rewarding self-response or a punishing one (Moore, 1999).

This analysis of self-regulatory mechanisms relates to how people make contributions to their own motivation.

By the mid-1980s, Bandura had developed a social cognitive theory of human functioning. A central theme of this theory is rooted in humans being "self-organizing,

proactive, self-reflecting and self-regulating, not just reactive organisms shaped and

shepherded by environmental forces" (Pajares, 2004). His decision to re-label his work

from social learning theory to social cognitive theory was due to his belief that his

research had expanded beyond that of simple social learning. Self-reflection provides a

large foundation in social cognitive theory. Bandura's social cognitive theories continue

to thrive in the twenty-first century.

In 1995, Bandura published *Self-Efficacy in Changing Societies*. In his writing, Frank

Pajares shares that because of a growing interest in the construct of self-efficacy, Bandura

is today most active in the research of the self-efficacy belief system, which he views as

the foundation of human motivation and personal accomplishments (Pajares, 2004).

Bandura purports that individuals develop general anticipation regarding cause and

effect based upon experience. Bandura defines the construct of self-efficacy as "people's

judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain

designated types of performances. It is concerned not with the skills one has but with the

judgments of what one can do with whatever skills one possesses" (Bandura, 1977).

Several studies have been completed evidencing the fact that parents who believe that

they can affect their children's development are more proactive and successful in

cultivating their children's competencies than parents who doubt that they can do much

to influence their children's developmental course (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara &

Pastorelli, 2001; Coleman & Karraker, 1997; & Elder, 1995). Building on this concept,

parents who provide a warm, responsive and supportive home environment, who

encourage exploration and stimulate curiosity, and who provide play and learning

materials accelerate their children's intellectual development (Collins, 1982). Bandura (1997) takes it one step further by stating that parents who arrange for varied mastery experiences develop more efficacious youngsters than do parents who arrange fewer opportunities. In summary, when parents feel a high sense of self-efficacy towards their ability to help their children learn, they supply more opportunities for their children, which in turn lead to children with higher senses of self-efficacy themselves.

Therefore parents who lack confidence in their ability to help their children learn have low self-efficacy in this ability, a cause for alarm for these parents and youngsters alike. Parental aspirations are positively linked to all forms of children's perceived self-efficacy—academic, social, and self-regulatory. "The aspirations parents hold for their children also have a strong impact on their children's academic aspirations and level of academic achievement" (Bandura, et. al., 2001).

Self-efficacy influences several aspects of behavior that are important to learning and teaching. Among these is the choice of activities that a person makes, the effort put forth, and persistence in accomplishing a task (Bandura, 1977). Furthermore, Bandura and other theorists suggest that individuals develop particular beliefs about their ability to cope with situation-specific tasks. These beliefs are, as they are perceived to be by the individual, not necessarily as they are in reality (Bandura, et. al., 2001). Bandura's emphasis is on the mastery experiences of an individual. Success breeds success has always held validity in the world of educational psychology (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1981).

In his article, Frank Pajares (2002) defines self-efficacy and presents a framework to help one understand the implications of the social cognitive theory guiding the beliefs and research of Albert Bandura. Standing at the core of social cognitive theory is self-efficacy beliefs. Self-efficacy beliefs provide the foundation for human motivation, well being, and personal accomplishment. This is because unless people believe that their actions can produce the outcomes they desire, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties.

> Environments and social systems influence human behavior through psychological mechanisms of the self system. Hence, social cognitive theory posits that factors such as economic conditions, socio-economic status, and educational and familial structures do not affect human behavior directly. Instead, they affect it to the degree that they influence people's aspirations, self-efficacy beliefs, personal standards, emotional states, and other self-regulatory influences (Pajares, 2002).

Bandura argues in his research study, *Self-Efficacy Beliefs as Shapers of Children's Aspirations and Career Trajectories*, that self-efficacy occupies a central role in the social cognitive theory because such beliefs influence the quality of our thinking, the level of our motivation and our perseverance in the face of stress and/or failure (Bandura et. al., 2001).

In Bandura's study, 272 children were involved in a structural model to test a network of socio-cognitive influences that shape career aspirations. The results of the study provided substantial empirical support for the thinking that socio-economics, families, academics, and self-referents operate in concert to shape children's career paths (Bandura et. al., 2001). The socio-economic status of the parents was found to influence the child only indirectly as it effects the parent's self-efficacy and academic aspirations.

Bandura also discovered that, "aspiring parents act in ways that build their children's academic, social, and self-regulatory efficacy, raise their aspirations, and promote their scholastic achievements" (Bandura et.al., 2001).

If Bandura's theories (1977) are applied to the study of parent's perceived beliefs regarding ability to help their children learn, it would be logical to predict that parents with low self-efficacy would be likely to put forth little effort to work with their children and parents who have high self-efficacy would be likely to put forth great effort to work with their children. It is not the level of economics that affects the child's self-efficacy, but how those realities influence the parents and in turn the aspirations of the child.

Dale Schunk (1981) in his article, "Modeling and Attributional Effects on Children's Achievement: A Self-Efficacy Analysis," echoes Albert Bandura's theories on efficacy. Schunk shares that self-efficacy influences several aspects of behavior that are important to learning and teaching. Several studies have been completed evidencing the fact that parents who believe that they can affect their children's development are more proactive and successful in cultivating their children's competencies than parents who doubt that they can do much to influence their children's developmental course. Building on this concept, parents who provide a warm, responsive and supportive home environment, who encourage exploration and stimulate curiosity, and who provide play and learning materials accelerate their children's intellectual development.

> We find that people's beliefs about their efficacy affect the sorts of choices they make in very significant ways. In particular, it affects their levels of motivation and perseverance in the face of obstacles. Most success requires persistent effort, so low self-efficacy becomes a self-limiting process. In order to succeed, people need a sense of self-efficacy, strung together with resilience to meet the inevitable obstacles and inequities of life (Pajares, 2004).

Although the importance of self-efficacy is quite evident in the literature, there are very few studies dealing with the possibility of altering self-efficacy. In a study done by researchers MacPhee and Miller-Heyl (2003), it was substantiated that self-efficacy could be improved with intervention. At the core of this study was the authors' interest in determining whether parental self-efficacy is causally related to effective child rearing. The initial demonstration project included 363 at-risk families randomly assigned to intervention and control groups. A replication trial involving 258 families was also conducted. The two trials were implemented at sites differing in population density and ethnicity, and with different staffs. The same curriculum was followed, which involved 24 hours of workshops that included many experiential and discussion-based exercises related to self-appraisal, communication, discipline, and decision making (MacPhee & Miller-Heyl, 2003).

Across both trials and all outcome measures, changes in self-efficacy accounted for significant variance in improved child rearing. Thus, the intervention resulted in improved self-efficacy, and such changes explained improved parenting skills (MacPhee & Miller-Heyl). Although MacPhee and Miller-Heyl's study dealt with child-rearing effectiveness, it is reasonable to believe that given a treatment plan that encourages parent involvement and builds a sense of academic confidence, a positive impact can be realized in the area of parent self-efficacy.

Programs to Enhance Parental Involvement

There are many programs and practices being instituted to encourage parental

involvement. PESA (Parent Effectiveness Support Achievement) (1996), PIE (Parents in

Education) (2004), FAST (Families and Schools Together) (2000), and FINE (Family

Involvement Network of Educators, 2006) are examples of programs driven by the need

to enhance parent involvement. These programs, although all different in nature, share

one compelling desire to effect changes in parental involvement resulting in higher

student achievement. None of these programs, however, address the need to raise parent

self-efficacy or targeted the population most in need of support—the socio-economic

disadvantaged.

The Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE) (2006) is an organization

devoted to developing partnerships between educators, parents and communities. FINE

was developed by the Harvard Family Research Project to serve as the hub for research

and resources for those interested parties to connect and communicate. This Network

envisions creative approaches to family involvement based on mutual respect and trusting

relationships. One of the studies involving parent and community involvement shared

four outcomes:

1. School and parent/family/community partnerships are associated with positive effect on student achievement as measured by standardized test scores.
2. Acquisition of new skills, increased involvement, interaction with their children, and positive self-concept are examples of parent outcomes associated with school/family partnerships.
3. Teacher outcomes included positive attitudes, the use of varied strategies, and an increased sense of self-efficacy.

4.   Positive effects for schools and school districts were found to be an increase in student attendance, reduction in dropout, delinquency, and pregnancy rates; and improved discipline practices (The Impact of Parent and Community Involvement in Education, 1995).

In an administrative article, Chaika shares the success of a program titled FAST (Families and Schools Together). This program was the outgrowth of a study by Lynn McDonald. McDonald combined information from social work, family therapy, child psychiatry, and family psychology. The result was a two-year intervention program targeting 4- to 8-year old students with unbalanced school progress and low self-esteem. The FAST approach includes a two and half-hour curriculum including a homemade flag and homemade meals prepared by the families. This guarantees a family enjoying a meal together. Following the meal, games are played with no criticism allowed. Charades follow to enhance a feeling-centered environment. Parent discussion is held next, followed by Special Play (15 minutes of undivided parent/child time). There is no formal presentation. The content of the program is determined by the parents. McDonald's program has enjoyed great success. Results are as follows: 80% percent of parents completed the program, 91% percent continued involvement in school related ventures, and 86% percent reported an increase in friendships with other parents (Chaika, 2000).

The aforementioned study dealt specifically with pre-school and primary age children. Although there is an abundant of literature supporting the need for parent involvement in the early years, there is also literature to support the need of similar involvement in the middle-level years. Parent involvement becomes more difficult when

dealing with the adolescent child already in a state of identify confusion (Stevenson, 1998).

Miller's (1999) research determined that children's academic abilities are definitely affected by the expectations set forth by their parents. The author commented that involved parents set high expectations for their children (Miller, 1999).

Parent Expectations Support Achievement, or PESA, is a parent education program based on the belief that parents' expectations are the greatest predictor of their children's achievement, relationships, and ultimate success (Hoffman & Miller, 1996). The PESA training occurs in five sessions during which parents engage in activities that give them an opportunity to focus on their abilities to meet their child's intellectual needs, give their child proper feedback, and enhance their child's emotional development. Expectations for achievement and high standards support a child's success at home and at school. PESA builds on the strengths parents already have and provides additional skills from which to embrace parenting with confidence and enthusiasm.

After researching the positive outcomes of parent involvement in education, Bonnie McReynolds developed the program called Parents in Education (PIE). McReynolds outlines eight factors (assumptions) involving parental and school expectations comprising the core of the program:

1. Family involvement is a critical part of high quality education, a safe and disciplined learning environment, and student achievement.
2. What the family does is more important than the family income or education level.
3. All parents want the best education for their children.
4. Most parents want to be more involved in their child's education, but many do not know how to become involved.
5. Most teachers feel that parent involvement is a vital part of student achievement, but many of them do not know how to get the parents involved.

6. Schools need to encourage and promote parent involvement.
7. School practices that encourage parents to participate are the most important factor in whether or not parents will participate.
8. Schools need to encourage parents to become partners and thus be able to make decisions about their children's education (McReynolds, 2004).

McReynolds, in her study, listed five ways for parents to get involved:

1. Decision making: The parent and teacher set yearly goals together that reflect the need of the individual student.

2. Supporting: Research that supports the need for parental involvement in their children's education both at home and at school is shared with parents.

3. Teaching: Children need to see their parents as teachers also. Parents are expected to get actively involved with their children by providing a homework place, reading to their children, and discussing school.

4. Learning: The more parents learn, the more they are able to help a child learn. That means getting actively involved in finding out what is being taught, how it is taught, and how children learn and develop. Monthly inservice sessions are held for the parents.

5. Communicating: An open-door policy allows parents to come into the classroom at any time. The parents must be made to feel welcome at all times (McReynolds, 2004).

Having been a part of McReynolds' study, parents reported feeling they were spending more quality time with their children and had a better and more realistic understanding of their child's strengths and weaknesses. They felt they were making a real contribution to their child's education (McReynolds, 2004).

Although all of the aforementioned programs and practices dealt with the concept of

parental involvement and its importance, none of these programs were designed to test

the impact of any program on parent self-efficacy, nor were any of these programs

targeted at any specific parent population. This researcher intends to adapt and

incorporate strategies from each of these existing studies and apply them to the original

treatment planned for this study with the added component of self-efficacy. The

population targeted for this study will be parents of low socio-economic status having

preadolescent children.

Parents Feeling Capable (Pfc) Treatment Plan

This researcher has constructed a series of parent workshops (See Appendix A) based

on the available data describing successful parent involvement programs, as well as the

data derived from research on adult learning theory. An overwhelming thesis in all of

these data is the need for parents to feel capable whether they are at home or in the school

environment. This researcher's treatment will be titled *Parents Feeling Capable (Pfc)* and

will be delivered as a workshop-type experience with attention given to creating a non-

threatening, welcoming, respectful climate. According to Malcolm Knowles, adult

learning theorist, one must be highly sensitive and respectful to the needs of the adult

learner. Knowles strongly suggests that adult learners need to feel self-directed, need to

understand the purpose of new learning, and need to have their life experiences validated

(Knowles, 1950).

This researcher's treatment will embrace the principles of andragogical learning by using the following seven guidelines as he designs and conducts the workshops:

1. Be respectful of the capabilities of all parents. Everything will be read aloud to avoid embarrassment for any parent that might not have reading capabilities (Robinson, 1994).

2. Engage parents in the learning by using manipulatives and active learning devices (Cotton & Wikelund, 2001).

3. Simplify the content by breaking it down into small, meaningful, basic chunks (Ruzic & O'Connell, 2001).

4. Be prepared to initiate rewards or incentives to parents that fulfill their obligation (Kelly, 1996).

5. Create an environment that is totally non-threatening and personalized (Knowles, 1950).

6. Allow for choices to maintain a feeling of flexibility and allow parents to determine the sequence of events to some degree (Robinson, 1994).

7. Keep the time short and productive (Cotton & Wikelund, 2001).

According to the researchers Cotton and Wikelund, while research indicates that orientation/training activities are beneficial, those researchers who have looked at the extent of training have found that a little is better than a lot. That is, programs with extensive parent training components do not produce higher student achievement than those with only basic training, and they sometimes experience considerable attrition—presumably because their time and effort requirements overtax the willingness of parents to stay involved (Cotton & Wikelund, 2001, p.3).

The first component of the Pfc treatment will be adapted from those concepts developed in the Parent Expectations for Student Achievement (PESA) Program. "PESA

is a parent education program based on the belief that parents' expectations are the greatest predictor of their children's achievement, relationships, and ultimate success" (Hoffman & Miller, 1998). The PESA program engages parents in interactions giving them an opportunity to focus on their abilities to meet their child's intellectual needs, give their child proper feedback, and enhance their child's emotional development. PESA builds on the strengths parents already have and provides additional skills from which to embrace parenting with confidence and enthusiasm (PESA, 1998). Mau's (1997) research confirms the importance of parent expectations as one of the most important aspects of parent involvement.

As per the research discussed in Turning Points, the Parents Feeling Capable workshops will describe the unique qualities of the preadolescent child (See Appendix B) and share knowledge, skills and organizational strategies necessary to support this child at home (Furman, R. L. & Luke, C. L., 1999; Turning Points, 1989). Homework organization will be emphasized to develop consistency and accommodate learning (Canter, 1987). *Homework tips for Parents* supported by the No Child Left Behind legislation (Cooper & Gersten, 2003) supports the need for parents to consider key elements when setting up their child's homework area. Mau's (1997) research also includes parents working on homework as one of the most important factors of parent involvement.

The Pfc Workshops will arm parents with simple teaching tools to enable them to better work with their children on homework activities (Pellino, 2004), while constantly stressing the importance of parent involvement and the relationship to their child's

achievement. These teaching tools will be in the form of simple mnemonic devices and graphic organizers.

Mnemonic devices, such as a formulas or rhymes, are used as an aid in storing information into one's memory. Mastropieri (1998) claims that they allow students to find a way to relate the information he or she is learning to information already in long-term memory information. Carney and Levin (2000) have found that the use of mnemonics can significantly increase the memory of content. Lombardi and Butera (1998) supported that same claim, but found it to be especially true for students with special needs. In her article, Connecting Brain Research with Dimensions of Learning (2001), Mariale M. Hardiman listed mnemonic devices as a best practice in extending and refining knowledge.

There is solid evidence for the effectiveness of graphic organizers in facilitating learning. Ruzic and O'Connell's research shares that emerging patterns and relationships create opportunities for decision making and the sharing of information (2001). Ten out of twelve studies investigating the effects of graphic organizers reported some positive learning outcome(s) (Ruzic and O'Connell, 2001).

The last component of the Pfc Workshops will be to help develop parent-student positive interactions. There will be time available for free discussion evolving around the needs of the participants. This component has been stressed in several of the existing programs including the Families and Schools Together (FAST) Program. Parents need to feel that the workshops have been shaped according to their needs (Chaika, 2000).

In conclusion, the plight of the child living in poverty has been discussed for over decades, but continues to be a significant problem educationally. Research clearly states that parent involvement at all levels of the socio-economic scale enhances student achievement. It is also well founded in the research literature that parental self-efficacy influences the parents' willingness to get involved in their child's educational careers. Although parent programs do exist, none has been developed targeting the low socio-economic status parent and designed specifically to positively effect parent self-efficacy. The intent of this researcher is to address the needs of this population (low socio-economic status) focusing on the parent. It is the belief of this researcher that if parents are made to feel capable of not only working with their child, but also interacting in a positive manner, then parental self-efficacy will be enhanced, leading to positive parental involvement and ultimately to improved student achievement.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

As stated in Chapter I of this proposal, three hypotheses have been tested in this research study:

1. Involvement in the Parents Feeling Capable Workshops will have a significant effect in raising the participants' self-efficacy regarding their ability to help their child with schoolwork.

2. Parents' perceptions of their personal knowledge and skill when helping their child with schoolwork will be significantly raised as a result of their involvement in the Parents Feeling Capable Workshops.

3. Students' perceptions of their parent's ability to help with homework will be raised as a result of the parents' involvement in the Parents Feeling Capable Workshops.

Data Collection

To test the three hypotheses, a summative evaluation research design was employed. The design was used to determine whether the Pfc treatment had the effect of raising the self-efficacy of the low socio-economic parents and making them feel more knowledgeable and skilled in helping their child with schoolwork. Pre- and post-treatment survey instruments, with Likert Scale response options, were administered to the parent study population to determine if the Pfc treatment caused a measurable and

replicable effect on the two dependent variables: 1) parent self-efficacy as it relates to their perceived ability to help their child with school work, and 2) perception that they have the skill and knowledge to help their child with school work. A pre- and post-treatment survey instrument, with Likert Scale response options, was also administered to the children of the parents participating in the workshops to determine if the Pfc treatment caused a measurable and replicable effect on a third dependent variable: 3) students' self-efficacy as it relates to their perceptions of their parents' ability to help them with school work. Pre- and post-survey instruments were also administered to a control group (N=31) of parents and children not attending the workshops. This was done to eliminate the possibility that another occurrence outside of the Pfc treatment could account for the measured change in the self-efficacy of both the parents and their children who were involved in the workshops.

Study Sample

The population for this study comprised parents of preadolescent children in the Duquesne City School District. The parents in the study were of low socio-economic status as determined by their children qualifying for the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program.

The Duquesne School District, located in Allegheny County in Western Pennsylvania, was chosen for the site of this study because of the unique demographic and student achievement profiles of this district. The level of student achievement has been consistently poor for the past five years even though the state has taken control of

the operation of the school district and has implemented many initiatives to improve

student achievement. Since the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)

testing has been reported through the No Child Left Behind Law, Duquesne City School

District has had a preponderance of students scoring below basic on the statewide given

standardized tests at all grade levels at which the test is administered. The following fifth

grade scores for 2004 are reflective of the scores being reported across the district:

>23% in math have met or exceeded standards,
>62% is the state average,
>
>9% in reading have met or exceeded standards,
>63% is the state average.

As reported in the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau Report, the demographics of the

Duquesne School District, which is a contributing factor to the low student achievement,

are that of an extremely poor community. For example, the median household income by

two age groups that could have children in the middle grades is as follows:

TABLE 1

Duquesne School District Demographics

Household age range	Duquesne median income	Pennsylvania median income	USA median income
25-34	$19,750	$41,075	$41,414
35-44	$27,069	$49,814	$50,654

In this same census report, it was revealed that 48.5% of the children enrolled in the

Duquesne School District are on public assistance while only 5.4% of school-age

children across Pennsylvania are on public assistance.

As the focus of this study was to increase the level of involvement of the low socio-economic, low self-efficacy parent with their child as they pursue academic work, the Duquesne School District was a more than suitable population. Furthermore, the district administration had identified parent involvement as a priority area during the 2005-2006 school year and had a parent population scheduled to meet every Wednesday evening from November through February.

The dire need of this district to make improvements in student achievement can be best understood by reading excerpts from a letter drafted jointly by Senator Logan and State Legislator Gergely and released to the media on May 5, 2005. The legislators wrote, "A state Board of Control has been operating the school district for the past five years and over that period, little improvement has been made and the district continually fails to reach state academic achievement benchmarks. For the sake of the children in the Duquesne City School District, we cannot afford to wait any longer" (Logan & Gergely, 2005).

In this researcher's discussions with the district administration, it was determined that no initiatives dealing directly with raising the self-efficacy of the parents so that they feel more confident in working with their preadolescent children on schoolwork had been tried. The administration made available to this researcher the list of Free and Reduced Lunch students, which were used to determine which parents were of low socio-economic status. Monetary incentives were offered to participating parents and a bicycle drawing incentive was offered to participating students. The administration looked forward to hosting the study in their school district and was very supportive.

Preadolescent students (10–14 years of age) were selected for this study because of the developmental characteristic of the preadolescent. It is well documented that as students develop into adolescence, they do not want their parents at school and view parental involvement as a threat to their new identity and level of independence. It appeared that fourth, fifth and sixth grade would be the best opportunity for the parents to have a positive impact on their child's schoolwork during the middle school years (Turning Points, 1989).

Thinking in terms of content, these years are the last years that the students will be working with content generalists. According to the No Child Left Behind Law, teachers must be highly qualified to teach at the middle school level in grades seven and eight. The content will continue to get more specialized and it is reasonable to anticipate that parents will continue to feel more and more incapable. For these reasons, this researcher focused his study on the parents of students 10–14 years of age.

Quantitative Instrumentation

The three scales used in this study were the *Parent Efficacy Scale for Helping Children Succeed in School, Parent's Perceptions of Personal Knowledge and Skills Scale*, and *Student Report of Parent's Use of Instruction* (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2001-2004) (See Appendix C).

The *Parent Efficacy Scale for Helping Children Succeed in School* was adapted from teacher self-efficacy scales. The original parental self-efficacy scale included 12 items. Administered to 390 parents of public elementary school students, the scale's alpha

reliability was .81 (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992). Subsequently, the research team at

Vanderbilt University, under the leadership of Dr. Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey, reviewed

the scale and modified it by dropping one item because it included multiple contingencies

(i.e., "Most of a student's success in school depends on the classroom teacher, so I have

only limited influence." This item would be reverse scored.). The team also changed the

response format from a 5-point to a 6-point Likert-type scale to eliminate a middle

neutral point on the response scale. Used with over 800 parents of public elementary and

middle school students, the modified 11-item scale achieved an alpha reliability of .80.

   Because the full parent questionnaire assessed multiple constructs in the model, the

team wanted to keep the length of each individual scale as short as possible. To further

shorten the 11-item self-efficacy scale, they looked for items with the lowest inter-item

correlation which, when removed, resulted in the least drop in alpha reliability. This

analysis yielded four potential items for elimination. The phrasing of three of these items

was quite similar to other items in the scale. These three were eliminated. A fourth item

was dropped because it contained multiple contingencies (i.e., If I try hard,

I can get through to my child, even when s/he has difficulty understanding something).

Administered to 495 parents, the alpha reliability for our final 7-item scale, which will be

used in this study, was .78 (Walker, J.M., Wilkins, A.S., Dallaire, J., Sandler, H.M., &

Hoover-Dempsey, K.V. 2005).

   Participants were asked to respond to the following prompt: "We would like you to

think about your child, ___, in Ms./Mr. ___'s class. Please circle the number that most

closely matches your response to each question. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers

here; we just want to know what you think:

1 = Disagree very strongly; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Disagree just a little; 4 = Agree just a little;

5 = Agree; 6 = Agree very strongly."

For this study, the *Parent's Perception of Self-Efficacy for Helping the Child*

Succeed in School scale (7 items) was used for both the pre- and post-assessment.

Possible scores on this scale range from 7 to 42. A high efficacy score indicates that a

parent feels capable to help his or her child succeed in school, while a low score indicates

the parent does not feel capable of helping his or her child succeed in school.

The *Parental Perception of Personal Knowledge and Skills* scale, developed during

the study of relationships among teacher efficacy, parent efficacy, and parent

involvement in elementary schools (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Brissie, 1992), focuses

on parents' perceptions of the knowledge and skills they possess relevant to involvement

in the child's education. Consistent with related empirical work (e.g., Dauber & Epstein,

1993; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Kay, Fitzergald,

Paradee, & Mellencamp, 1994), the construct assumes that parents will be motivated to

engage in involvement activities if they believe they have the skills and knowledge to be

helpful in specific activities. Participants were asked to respond to the nine statements by

circling the number that most closely matches their response to each, using a 6-point

Likert-type response scale: 1 = Disagree very strongly; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Disagree just a

little; 4 = Agree just a little; 5 = Agree; 6 = Agree very strongly. The possible score range

is 9 to 54. Alpha reliability for the 9-point scale to be used in this study is .83.

In addition to the two scales used to collect quantitative data, participating parents were invited to reflect anonymously on the value of each workshop each week.

The *Student Report of Parent's Use of Instruction* scale assesses the extent to which a student perceives that his or her parent (or other family member identified by the student) instructs or teaches the student during a representative parental involvement activity, monitoring or helping the student with homework. The scale was adapted from Martinez-Pons (1996) and reported in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005). It includes items in the *Parental Report of Instruction Scale*, altered as appropriate for student perspective and response. The scale employed a 4-point Likert-type scale: 1 = not true, 2 = a little true, 3 = pretty true, 4 = very true. The scale achieved an alpha reliability of .86 when administered to a sample of 358 public school students in grades 4 through 6 (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005).

Students were asked to respond to the following prompt:

"Dear Student,

Families do many different things when they help children with school. Please think about how your family helps you with school and fill in the circle that matches what is most true for them. Thank you!"

Pfc Treatment Plan

This researcher designed five workshops totaling approximately ten hours of instructional time. Each workshop included activities that relate directly to a specific goal. A workshop team was comprised of five educators, including the researcher, to

deliver instruction in his/her area of expertise, and aid in workshop organization. The

lesson plans, however, have been designed to enable a single presenter to successfully

conduct the workshops. Detailed lesson plans for the workshops can be found in

Appendix A.

TABLE 2

Workshop Activities and Goals

	Activities	*Goal(s)*
Workshop #1	*Getting to Know You—*	*To develop a comfort level*
	Overview of workshops	*To develop an understanding of the structure and content of the workshops*
	Identifying expectations for your child	*To identify realistic goals and expectations for their child*
Workshop #2	*Group Discussion—Child's Reaction to Expectation Activity*	*To report on the reactions of his/her child to the activity*
	Presentation on Developmental Characteristics of the 10- to 14-year old (Furman, R.L. & Luke,C.L.,1999)	*To understand the developmental characteristics to more appropriately react to their child's behaviors*
	Group discussion and presentation on homework (adapted from Lee Canter, Homework Without Tears,1987)	*To develop consistency in use of homework strategies that accommodate learning*
Workshop #3 and 4	*Group Discussion— stumbling blocks*	*To find solutions for stumbling blocks to homework strategies*
	Presentation on memory techniques to guide your child's learning: Piggy Back songs and mnemonics	*To develop memory techniques to use when working with their child to make content more understandable*
	Presentation on memory techniques to guide your child's learning: Graphic organizers, questioning techniques	*To develop memory techniques to make content more understandable*
Workshop #5	*Group discussion—Successes and problems with memory and learning techniques*	*To have the opportunity to discuss experiences with techniques*
	Playing games to enhance learning	*To use games to allow parents to work with their child in a structured academic format* *To use games as a means of reinforcing learning*
	Group presentation on student behavior	*To examine behavior issues related to accomplishing homework and provide parents with strategies that are nonjudgmental*

Data Analysis

The results of the pre- and post-surveys administered to the parents were entered into the computer program <u>Statistical Package for the Social Sciences</u> (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were calculated on all pre- and post-survey questions including the mean, standard deviation, and percent of distributions for the parents' perceptions toward their self-efficacy. In addition, the means were subjected to a t test to determine the level of statistical significance between the pre- and post-means of the dependent variable, thus determining if the Pfc treatment had the desired effect on the sample population.

Definition of Terms

1. **Parent involvement**: For the purpose of this study, parent involvement refers to the participant's active participation in the five workshops and a minimum of a total of five hours of work with their child over the course of the five weeks of the workshops.

2. **Parent**: For purposes of this study, the use of the term parent referred to mother, father and included the grandmother who had legal custody of her grandchildren and took on the role of parent.

3. **Low socio-economic status**: Refers to those parents who have children in the Duquesne City Schools who qualify for the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program.

4. **Parent's Perception of Self-Efficacy For Helping the Child Succeed in School**: For the purpose of this study it is the measured score that the participant rated on the 7-point self- efficacy scale that is used in this study.

5. **The Parental Perception of Personal Knowledge and Skills**: For the purposes of this study it is the measured score that the participant rated on the 9-point scale used in this study.

Limitations of the Study

1. There was no control over the parents' willingness to work with their child using the skills and ideas shared during the training.

2. There was no control over the quality of interaction between the parent and child during the use of the activities and strategies.

3. There was no way of verifying the honesty of the participants on the survey feedback.

Delimitations of the Study

1. This study was limited to a parent population of approximately 30.

2. This study was limited to one school building in one school district.

3. This study was limited to 10 total hours of treatment in a one-semester period of time.

Summary

In summary, the fundamental goal of the program was to offer groups of socio-economically disadvantaged parents a forum for building and sustaining personal, interpersonal, and academic skills essential to creating more effective parental involvement with their child around school-related work, thus positively effecting parental self-efficacy.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

It is well documented in the professional literature that parental involvement has many benefits for students, among these are higher achievement, better attendance, more homework completed, fewer special education placements, better behavior and a more positive attitude toward school, higher graduation rates, and greater enrollment in postsecondary education (Cotton & Wikelund, 2001; Henderson, 1994; Snow et. al., 1991; Wherry, 2003). Unfortunately, parents categorized as being a part of a low socio-economic class are often reluctant to get involved in their child's academic affairs because of low self-efficacy as it relates to their helping their child with schoolwork (Bandura, 1986; Bouchard, 1990; Coleman & Karraker, 1997; Henderson, 1994; Pellino, 2004). Little has been done at this point to create programs designed specifically for the disadvantaged to enhance their self-efficacy and change existing belief systems (Chaika, 2000; Cotton & Wikelund, 2001; Jeynes, 2003).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of 10 hours of parent training, referred to as Parents Feeling Capable (Pfc) Workshops, on raising the level of the economically disadvantaged parent's efficacy as it relates to supporting the child with his/her homework. The sample population was parents of low socio-economic status and their children who attended the Duquesne City Schools. Evaluation tools discussed in the previous chapter were used to test the following hypotheses:

- Parental self-efficacy regarding their ability to help their child with schoolwork will be significantly improved as a result of their involvement in the Pfc Workshops.

- Parents' perceptions of their personal knowledge and skill when it comes to helping their child with schoolwork will be significantly improved as a result of their involvement in the Pfc Workshops.

- Students' perceptions of their parents' ability to help with homework will be raised as a result of the parents' involvement in the Pfc Workshops.

Description of the Sample Population

Marketing the Pfc Workshops and securing a population to study became a very important task prior to the beginning of the workshops. The Duquesne City school administrators and staff, clergy and other community leaders all gave their support to this project.

On a Wednesday evening two weeks prior to the first Pfc Workshop, a meeting was held at the library of the Duquesne City School Elementary School for any parent interested in finding out more about the Pfc Workshops. Parents were informed about this meeting through a flyer sent home from school with their children. At this first meeting 22 mothers, 3 fathers, and 1 grandmother (who was the legal guardian of her grandchildren) assembled in the school's library while their children met in the school's art room. The students were supervised by three teachers from the school. This meeting arrangement was readily established since the school was routinely holding special

activities on Wednesday evenings for parents and their children (normal attendance for

Parent's Night was six to ten parents). After a comprehensive introduction and

explanation of the study, the consent forms (See Appendix D) were distributed to the

parents.

All 26 parents signed the consent form for their participation and for permission for

the researcher to ask their child to participate. Of the 26 parents and children at this

meeting, 21 parents signed the consent forms indicating they would participate in the

workshops and the other five parents gave signed consent to be included in the control

group. All 26 parents and their children completed the appropriate survey on this

evening.

This researcher was also invited by the school administration to discuss his study at a

community meeting and luncheon. Present at this meeting were community leaders

representing the Boys and Girls Club, Head Start, Duquesne City Housing Authority, the

school district, various churches and other interested individuals. The three ministers who

were in attendance at this meeting agreed to make an announcement about the workshops

during their Sunday services and to pass out a flyer announcing the workshops. Several

other community leaders also offered to share the flyer with parents. Duquesne City

School personnel offered to discuss the workshops at an upcoming PTA meeting.

At the first Pfc Workshop, 36 parents were in attendance (21 from the introductory

meeting and 15 first-time participants). The 15 new parents were asked to complete the

surveys and give permission for their children to also complete the survey. All 15 parents

agreed to participate in the workshops. On the day immediately following this meeting,

the researcher went to the school and met with the 15 children of the parents who attended the workshop the night before and asked them to sign the assent form and complete the survey.

To identify additional control group members, a list of parents was compiled by the Superintendent and given to the researcher. A teacher from the school who had volunteered to help supervise the children on the nights of the workshops was hired by the researcher to make contact with the parents to see if they were willing to be a member of the control group. The teacher was able to secure consent and surveys from an additional 28 participants to be included in the control group.

Because this researcher's study was focused on 10- to 14-year olds, 5 parents, 3 from the study group and 2 from the control group, were eliminated from the survey results because none of their children were in that age range. The three parents from the study group who did not qualify continued to participate in all of the workshop activities and they remained eligible for all incentives. Similarly, the two parents removed from the control group remained eligible for all incentives. The only effect was the removal of their surveys from the tabulated results. The study population and the control group were now complete. As revealed in Table 3, workshop participants numbered 33 and the control group numbered 31.

TABLE 3

Workshop Participants

	Participating in Workshops		Control Group	
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Male
Number consenting to participate	31	5	32	1
Number not qualifying for study	3	0	2	0
Total	28	5	30	1

Description of Survey Instruments

The *Parent's Perception of Self-Efficacy for Helping the Child Succeed in School* scale used in this study as a pre- and post-survey has seven items with six levels of possible response. The responses were assigned values ranging from one to six, which resulted in a total score range from 7 to 42. The second scale administered to parents as a pre- and post-survey was *Parental Perceptions of Personal Knowledge and Skills for Involvement Activities*. This scale also had six levels of possible response to nine items. Again the responses were assigned values ranging from one to six. The possible total score range for this scale was from 9 to 54. The *Student Report of Parent's Use of Instruction* scale also used as a pre- and post-survey had 15 items with four levels of possible response. These responses were assigned values ranging from one to four, which resulted in a total score range of 15 to 60.

The total scores from the pre- and post-surveys for the parents and children in both

the study group and control group were calculated and the mean scores were calculated

for both the pre-survey and the post-survey results for each of the three scales. To

determine if there were statistically significant differences between each set of means, a

paired sample *t* test was applied.

Results of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: Parental self-efficacy regarding their ability to help their child with

schoolwork will be significantly improved as a result of their involvement in the Pfc

Workshops.

The results from both the pre-survey given to the 33 participants and to the 31

members of the control group prior to the start of the workshops and the post-survey

administered at the conclusion of the last workshop are presented in Table 4. As revealed

in Table 4, there was a pre-survey mean score for the 33 workshop participants of 26.09

(SD = 8.013) out of a maximum possible score of 42. Also revealed in Table 4 are the

post-survey results of a mean score of 34.94 (SD = 6.031) for the 33 respondents

attending all five workshops.

The application of a paired sample *t* test to the pre- and post-survey means of the 33

participants revealed that as a result of their participation in the workshops, the

participants' self-efficacy when it comes to helping their child with homework was raised

significantly to 34.94 (SD = 6.031) (p<. 001).

 A look at the control group shows a pre-survey mean score of 33.23 (SD = 6.323) and a

post-survey score of 32.71 (SD = 6.644). Applying a paired sample *t* test to the mean for

the control group shows no significant change in the two mean scores (p =.265). This

lack of change in the self-efficacy of the parents in the control group substantiated that

the Pfc Workshops resulted in the improved level of self-efficacy of the parent

participants rather than another intervention that may have occurred at school over the

period in which the workshops were conducted.

TABLE 4

Parent's Perception of Self-Efficacy For Helping Their Child Succeed in School

	Workshop Participants			**Control Group**		
	Number of respondents	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Number of respondents**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
Pre-survey results on self-efficacy scale	36	26.09	8.013	31	33.23	6.323
Post-survey results on self-efficacy scale	33	34.94	6.031	31	32.71	6.644
P<. 001 **Alpha level = .05**				**P =. 265** **Alpha level = .05**		

Hypothesis 2:   Parents' perceptions of their personal knowledge and skill helping their

child with schoolwork will be significantly improved as a result of their involvement in

the Pfc training.

Positive results were gained on the *Parental Perceptions of Personal Knowledge and

Skills for Involvement Activities* surveys and are presented in Table 5. The pre-survey

mean for the 33 respondents was 40.39 (SD = 9.124) out of a possible score of 54, which

once again indicated that these respondents had a low sense of knowledge and skill when

it came to supporting their child with homework. A look at the post-survey mean of 47.85

(SD = 4.738) would indicate that the impact of the workshops on the participants' sense

of knowledge and skills when it came to supporting their child with schoolwork was

significantly improved (p<. 001). A look at the control group shows a pre-survey mean

score of 43.65 (SD = 5.975) and a post-survey score of 43.55 (SD = 5.819). Applying a

paired sample *t* test to the mean for the control group shows no significant change in the

two mean scores (p =. 775). This lack of change in the perceived level of knowledge and

skill of the parents in the control group substantiated that the Pfc Workshops resulted in

the improved level of perceived knowledge and skill of the parent participants rather than

another intervention that may have occurred at school over the period in which the

workshops were conducted.

TABLE 5

Parental Perceptions of Personal Knowledge and Skills for Involvement Activities

	Workshop Participants			**Control Group**		
	Number of respondents	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Number of respondents**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
Pre-survey results on self-efficacy scale	33	40.39	9.124	31	43.65	5.975
Post-survey results on self-efficacy scale	33	47.85	4.738	31	43.55	5.819
P<. 001 **Alpha level = .05**				**P =. 775** **Alpha level = .05**		

Hypothesis 3: Students' perceptions of their parents' ability to help with homework will

be raised as a result of the parents' involvement in the Pfc Workshops.

    As revealed in Table 6, the mean totals for both pre- and post-surveys administered to

the children of the parents participating in the workshops were 46.58 (SD = 8.842) and

55.09 (SD = 4.208) respectively, indicating a significant change (p<. 001). A look at the

control group shows a pre-survey mean score of 48.74 (SD = 8.012) and a post-survey

score of 48.34 (SD = 10.547). Applying a paired sample *t* test to the mean for the control

group shows no significant change in the two mean scores (p =.795). This lack of change

in the control group substantiated the positive effects of the Pfc Workshops on improving

the children's perceptions that their parents can instruct them effectively using the

content of their homework and eliminates the possibility that another intervention may

have occurred at school which contributed to the significant gain made by the study

group.

TABLE 6

Student Report of Parent's Use of Instruction

	Workshop Participants			Control Group		
	Number of respondents	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Number of respondents**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
Pre-survey results on self-efficacy scale	36	46.58	8.842	31	48.74	8.012
Post-survey results on self-efficacy scale	33	55.09	4.208	31	48.34	10.547
P<. 001 **Alpha level = .05**				**P = .795** **Alpha level = .05**		

Additional Findings

Of particular interest to this researcher were the parents' responses on six items from

the *Parental Perceptions of Personal Knowledge and Skills for Involvement Activities*

survey. Three items focused on parents' knowledge of involvement events or activities

(i.e., knowing about special events, knowing the best ways to contact the teacher) and six

items (4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9) focused on the parents' knowledge or skills for engaging in

specific activities with their child (i.e., know how to explain things to my child about his or her homework, supervise my child's homework).

A look at Table 7 reveals that the pre-survey mean score of 13.79 (SD = 4.076) and post-survey mean score of 14.67 (SD = 2.814) for questions 1, 2 and 3, does not show a significant change (p =.110) as a result of participation in the Pfc Workshops. However, the pre- and post-survey responses of both the workshop participants and the control group were high, which would indicate that the school district has done a good job communicating to all parents about activities that are occurring at the school in which they may get involved.

A look at the six questions that deal specifically with the parents' perception of their knowledge and skill for getting engaged with their child in matters dealing with schoolwork reveal that the post-survey mean score of 33.18 (SD = 2.942) shows a significant increase (p =<. 001) over the pre-survey mean score of 26.61 (SD =7.232). This is further evidence that the Pfc Workshops had the desired effect of improving the perception of the participants in terms of the skill and knowledge that they have for getting involved with their child with their schoolwork.

TABLE 7

Parental Perceptions of Personal Knowledge and Skills for Involvement Activities

	Workshop Participants			Control Group		
	Number of respondents	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Number of respondents**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
Pre-survey results on items 1, 2 and 3	36	13.79	4.076	31	13.71	2.506
Post-survey results on items 1, 2 and 3	33	14.67	2.814	31	13.81	2.414
P = .110 **Alpha level .05**				**P = .630** **Alpha level .05**		
Pre-survey results on items 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9	36	26.61	7.232	31	29.94	4.589
Post-survey results on items 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9	33	33.18	2.942	31	29.74	4.366
P<. 001 **Alpha level .05**				**P = .432** **Alpha level .05**		

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of parent workshops (Parents Feeling Capable) specifically designed to enhance the self-efficacy of parents identified as being of low socio-economic status. Combining the theoretical framework of Bandura (1986) and Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (2004) with the practical research of Chaika (2000), Hoffman & Miller (1999), and Cotton and Wikelund (2001), the researcher created 10 hours of parent training. The study served to determine the level of impact this training program had on the parents' self-efficacy as it related to their ability to help their children with schoolwork and to enhance the parents' knowledge and skill levels. Given the focus on the parents' self-efficacy, a secondary benefit was the effect on the child's perceptions of his/her parents' abilities as they relate to helping with schoolwork.

Although many studies exist confirming the need for parental involvement and validating the reluctance of low socio-economic parents to get involved in their child's academic affairs due to a lack of self-efficacy in this arena, no studies have been developed to determine if parental self-efficacy, as it relates to helping their children with schoolwork, could be changed as a result of a training intervention. Therefore, this study was designed to determine if the self-efficacy of low socio-economic parents could be raised as a result of the Parents Feeling Capable Workshops.

Summary of Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis considered the impact of the Parents Feeling Capable (Pfc) Workshops on the self-efficacy of parents as it relates to their confidence while working with their child on schoolwork. Hypothesis 1: Parental self-efficacy regarding their ability to help their child with schoolwork will be significantly improved as a result of their involvement in the Pfc workshops. Analysis of the pre- and post-survey data revealed a significant improvement in overall parental self-efficacy and therefore Hypothesis 1 was accepted.

Bandura, a leading social learning theorist defines self-efficacy as a sense of confidence or people's judgments and perceptions of their capabilities to perform specific tasks (Bandura, 1986). Workshops 1 and 2 were specifically designed to focus on parental confidence when interacting with their children. Positive communication structures were introduced and realistic goal-setting opportunities were created to give parents positive language to use with their children. Both homework organization strategies and behavior management strategies were developed. Developmental age characteristics were shared to allow the parent to better understand the physical, social and emotional characteristics inherent in the preadolescent.

The post-survey findings of this study support the research of Hoffman & Miller, which stated that expectations for achievement and high standards support student success (1996). During group discussions, parents shared the willingness of their children to discuss short- and long-term goals. Establishing goal-setting opportunities addressed that special need for students to be able to plan (Marzano & Arredondo, 1986).

Parents often shared amazement at the ease with which they were able to interact with their children when they used positive language and shared realistic expectations.

Further analysis of anecdotal data written by the parents in anonymous journal entries also give evidence of their positive perception and renewed confidence in their ability to work with their children. The following are examples of parent comments transcribed exactly as written:

- *"In the last five weeks I really got a-lot out of this study And it also made me a better And more productive parent when it comes to my children educations."*

- *"I work hard with my children to insure them that their education is very important to me and I wish that they could have more studies like this one."*

- *"This study has helped me communicate better with all my children."*

- *"Homework habits have improved as well as attentiveness."*

- *"I would like to thank you for helping me to understand my child better than I have. These pasted five weeks has helped me to help my children with their homework better, help our communication with each other better but for the most part my children appreciate my concern and interest in their present and future being."*

- *"I have learned many Great things. By coming to this program, like what to expect as my children grow older, like taking time out to find out what my children are learning I school. also learned How to deal with my children in schooling experience."*

- *"My son feels I am with him in his schooling and his future."*

- *"In the past five weeks my children have shown vast improvement. Attitude and behavior has been an A+."*

- *"Much blessings to you and yours for Helping Others."*

- *"My grandson enjoys spinning the wheel – in which he gets to choose his prizes. I learned from these classes not only how to make learning easily for my grandkids, but have more tolerant and patient working with them. With the calmness between us—the working aspect is well between us."*

- *"I like the way that this program is assisting the parents in understanding their child and attempting to find ways to building grow both intellectually and educationally. They are assisting in introducing tequiniques that may help in making the process easier for both the parents and the children. I think there needs to be more programs like this expecially for young parents like myself."*

Summary of Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis considered the impact of the Parents Feeling Capable Workshops on the knowledge and skill levels of parents as it relates to their ability to help their children with schoolwork. Hypothesis 2: Parents' perceptions of their personal knowledge and skill when it comes to helping their child with schoolwork will be significantly improved as a result of their involvement in the Pfc Workshops. Analysis of the pre- and post-survey data revealed a significant improvement in the overall knowledge and skill levels of the parents as a result of their participation in the Parents Feeling Capable Workshops and therefore Hypothesis 2 was accepted.

Workshops 3, 4 and 5 were designed to equip parents with simple teaching tools to support their child's learning. In her study, McReynolds found that parent confidence was raised by sharing simple teaching tools: graphic organizers, mnemonic devices and other memory tools (2004). Post-survey analysis in this study supports these findings. As per Cotton & Wikelund's research (2001), activities were developed to allow parents to participate in hands-on learning experiences in a non-threatening environment. Many homework strategies and teaching tools were presented as games.

Further analysis of anecdotal data written by the parents in journal entries also evidence their positive perception and renewed confidence in their knowledge and skill levels necessary to work with their child on schoolwork. The following are examples of parent comments transcribed exactly as written:

- *"I now feel I can help my children study when they have a test coming. I can explain to them anything they do not understand or I can call the teacher."*

- *"I was very impressed with this Duquesne University program. After these five weeks I can go and help my kids and know what I am doing now. Its a blessing now to look at the homework and know what to do and how to do it."*

- *"I can not wait to work more with my kids and the kids at the Boys and Girls Club. With my job I had more understanding of the homework after applying the techniques that I learned in the last five weeks."*

- *"My daughter had a book report to do a whole week in class so I help her with that. But I want to thank you for the different way you taught me to help me to teach my daughter. All of you our fabulous. Thank you."*

- *"These past five weeks have helped me find ways to make my daughters homework time fun."*

- *"Spent about an hour with my children doing homework such as math, reading, writing, spelling words. I try to make it like a game, then at the end of the week I put some thoughts in a bag and let them pic each week. I like to put their homework time into a game."*

- *"In the past five weeks my children have shown most improvement. I can participate in any other studies you might have."*

- *"I learned many Great things By coming to this program, Like what to expect as children grow older, like taking time out to find out what my children are learning in school. I also learned How to deal with my children in schooling experience with Homework by making fun, and establish good goals for my children. Thank you a lot for helping me understand a whole lot."*

- *"I am from the old country. Time has changed but with this class—I have found new ways of teaching my grandson the foundulmently of Learning in a fun and happy way. Making Learning a little more easier on him and me. Especially like the memory association and sing songs that goes along with certain areas of learning. Also, enjoy the spinning wheel in which he gets to choose his prizes. Thank you for the help for this fast-paced generation."*

- *This was a very good experience to participate in because the kids of today need some people who care. I feel that if enough parents put enough quality time with their kids the world would be a better place."*

Summary of Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis considered the impact of the Parents Feeling Capable Workshops on the students as it relates to their perceptions of their parents' abilities to help and support them with school activities. Hypothesis 3: Students' perceptions of their parent's ability to help with homework will be raised as a result of the parents' involvement in the Parents Feeling Capable Workshops. Analysis of the pre- and post-survey data revealed a significant improvement in the overall positive perceptions of students regarding their parents' ability when supporting them with homework and therefore Hypothesis 3 was accepted.

Workshop 5 was specifically designed to allow for positive communication between parent and child in the workshop environment. Parents and their children were taught to play games using educational content. A non-threatening, celebratory climate was established by modeling positive competitive play and positive language, while providing self-checking opportunities for academic content. The researcher witnessed parents and children interacting in a positive manner and literally having fun.

Pellino's research underscores an emphasis on the child's emotional nurturance. Children of low socio-economic families are often lacking in emotional stability leading to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety and depression. Children can often act impulsively and crave attention (2005). This study supports Pellino's research. When the study population of children were treated respectfully and made to feel secure, they responded by acting respectfully and showing appreciation.

Although the children in the study population did not complete journal entries, several children stated that they liked working with their parents at home and felt they were doing better at school. One student asked why this program hadn't started when she was in first grade. A recommendation for further study would be to survey the children to determine if their self-efficacy related to their schoolwork had changed as a result of their parents' increased efficacy.

Conclusions

This study contributes to the already existing body of research available on the importance of self-efficacy. This study, however, forges new paths in the study of self-efficacy as it relates to parent involvement of low socio-economic parents, validating that a parent training program can have the effect of significantly raising self-efficacy of parents of low socio-economic status as it relates to their ability to help their children with schoolwork.

A primary limitation of this study, as with any study utilizing survey data, was the fact that the researcher relied on the honest feedback of the sample population. In some cases, comprehending the survey information appeared to be a difficult task due to the limited reading ability of the participants.

As previously discussed in each of the hypotheses summaries, study results support the positive impact of a research-based, parent training workshop intervention on the self-efficacy of the parent characterized as being of low socio-economic status. Participating parents report a considerable change in their confidence level when working with their

children, a willingness to get involved in other parent workshops, and a desire to continue

to help their children and get more involved in the school.

The implications of this study are vast. The duplication of the Parents Feeling

Capable Workshops in other school districts should result in increased parental self-

efficacy and increased parent involvement. The duplication of the Parents Feeling

Capable Workshops would also allow school districts receiving Title I resources to

comply with the provisions of the No Child Left Behind Law (NCLB, 2002) by providing

parents of students in economically disadvantaged schools with opportunities to learn

new skills and techniques to increase their capacity in working with their child at home

on schoolwork. When treated with respect, given genuine opportunities to learn, and

provided with motivating, relevant activities, parental self-efficacy is improved—

resulting in a renewed interest in their child's education.

Discussion

The Pfc Workshops were extremely successful as evidenced by the pre- and post-

survey data as well as the anecdotal data. This researcher feels that several aspects of the

workshop format were instrumental in bringing about these positive results.

Every attempt was made to eliminate obstacles from the paths of the participants and

make them feel welcomed and appreciated. A totally non-threatening, informal climate

was established. The workshops were held in the school library. All participants wore

casual dress. Refreshments were served during the workshops and dinner was served

after the workshops. A shuttle was provided to transport participants without access to

transportation. Child care and/or tutoring was provided in the art room of the school supervised by three teacher volunteers, pre-service teacher candidates from Duquesne University, and a Master's Degree candidate.

Parents were compensated for their time, and incentives were raffled at each workshop, including Duquesne City School cups, Steeler T-shirts and two bicycles. A free discussion period was held prior to each workshop when the participants were free to discuss personal issues or ask personal questions using cards provided by the researcher each week. These issues and questions would be addressed by the researcher as per the participants' preference. This process helped to personalize the workshops and allow the participants to know that the researcher was sincerely interested in helping each person on an individual basis.

On the first night of the workshops, this researcher shared that this adventure was a symbiotic relationship. He hoped he would be able to help each participant feel more capable when working with his/her child, and he also hoped that they would be able to give him constructive feedback on how the workshops could be improved. By the end of the workshops, the participants displayed a new confidence in themselves, but much to the surprise of the researcher, he too had benefited from the workshops by claiming a new appreciation for those living in less-fortunate circumstances. Several revelations became abundantly clear to this researcher:

- These parents loved their children and wanted to see them escape the culture of poverty by completing school.

- These parents asked high level questions and participated in discussion in an intelligent manner.

- Language continued to be a huge stumbling block. It was often difficult for the researcher to interpret dialect differences among participants. Both reading and writing were difficult tasks for the majority of the participants.

Recommendations for Further Study

1. Although this study focused on parents of children from ages 10 to 14, further studies should be conducted focusing on parents of primary age children and/or high school students.

2. The Parents Feeling Capable Workshops were designed to be delivered in two-hour sessions for a period of five weeks, as per the research of Cotton & Wikelund (2001). Feedback from parents indicated a need to continue the workshops throughout the year. Further studies should be conducted to validate the continued success of the workshops as they serve to enhance self-efficacy over a greater period of time.

3. Parents were compensated to attend the Parents Feeling Capable Workshops. Further studies should be conducted to determine if parent involvement could be sustained without monetary compensation.

4. There is still a great deal of research needed in the area of what aspects of parent involvement are most valuable. The Parents Feeling Capable Workshops focused

on helping children with schoolwork. Further studies should be conducted on other aspects of parent involvement (attending teacher conferences, volunteering in school, participating in PTA, etc.) and its relationship to parental self-efficacy.

5. This particular study involved only parents living in the Duquesne City School District. Comparative studies need to be done involving parents in other school districts categorized as low socio-economic environments.

6. Longitudinal studies need to be done to determine if the positive change in self-efficacy experienced over the short training period will have lasting results over a longer period of time.

7. Bandura's (1986) studies suggest that children's self-efficacy is influenced by their parents' self-efficacy. Further study is needed in this area to determine if the child's self-efficacy was raised in proportion to his/her parent.

8.   Lisa Delpit's research (1995) suggests that language is a great stumbling block to the success of those living in poverty. Further study is needed in this area to determine if self-efficacy is also related to oral and written language.

9. Raising student achievement was always the hope of this study, although it was not the focus. Longitudinal studies need to be done to determine if the increase in parental involvement over the course of the workshop period had a positive effect on student achievement.

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APPENDIX A

Parents Feeling Capable Workshops

PARENTS FEELING CAPABLE WORKSHOP ONE

Importance of Expectations

GROUP ACTIVITY: GETTING TO KNOW YOU

GOAL: To develop a comfort level for all participants by getting to know one another.

TIME REQUIRED: 30 minutes

MATERIALS: Seek, Pair, Share form

PHYSICAL SETTING: Enough space so participants can move around the room freely

PROCESS: The parents will participate in a Seek, Pair & Sign activity to get acquainted in a non-threatening manner. During the activity the parents will introduce themselves to each participant. Through a numbered system (perhaps on the back of the activity), parents will choose a partner and share one goal or expectation they have for themselves from attending the workshop. (This partner will remain their support partner throughout the workshop.)

GROUP ACTIVITY: PRESENTATION TO GROUP—OVERVIEW OF THE FIVE WORKSHOPS

GOAL: To develop an understanding of the structure and content of each of the five workshops and the philosophy underpinning the Parents Feeling Capable treatment.

TIME REQUIRED: 30 minutes

MATERIALS: Pfc Workbook

PHYSICAL SETTING: Regular training room

PROCESS: Facilitator will present an overview of the five sessions, review the workbook

with participants, and discuss the philosophy underpinning "Parents Feeling Capable."

Facilitator should ask for questions and address the questions with the entire group.

GROUP ACTIVITY—IDENTIFYING EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUR CHILD

GOALS: 1. To identify at least one goal or expectation for themselves from attending

the Parents Feeling Capable Workshop.

2. To identify realistic goals and expectations for his/her 10- to 14-year old

child.

TIME REQUIRED: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Copies of old magazines, glue, file folders, magic markers

PHYSICAL SETTING: Tables for hands-on work area

PROCESS: Facilitator will start the activity by explaining the power of expectations on

the performance of all human beings, kids and adults alike. The facilitator should ask

each participant to identify his/her expectations for these workshops. If participants feel

comfortable, ask them if they would like to share their expectations with the group.

After the discussion of the participants' expectations for the workshops, pass out a file

folder to each participant and ask that they make a collage using pictures cut from the

magazines that illustrate their expectations for their child at two points in his/her life:

 at the end of high school, and when they are 30 years old. The facilitator should show an

 example that he/she has made for one of his/her children. After these collages are made,

have the participants share their collage in small groups (3-4) and explain what they

represent.

ASSIGNMENT: Have your child complete this activity at home and discuss their

expectations. Be sure to share your collage with them and discuss the expectations you

have for them. Be sure to ask your child for permission to take their collage to your next

workshop to share with others. If they would prefer not having you share their collage

with others, honor their wishes. Share your reflection of this activity in your journal.

PARENTS FEELING CAPABLE WORKSHOP TWO

Understanding your 10- to 14-year old

GROUP DISCUSSION—CHILD'S REACTION TO EXPECTATION ACTIVITY

GOAL: To have the opportunity to report on the reactions of his/her child to the

Expectation Activity

TIME REQUIRED: 20 minutes

MATERIALS: None

PHYSICAL SETTING: Large group circle

PROCESS: Facilitator poses the question as to how the activity was received**.**

GROUP ACTIVITY—VIDEO EXCERPT FROM EVERYBODY LOVES

RAYMOND

 GOALS: 1. To understand that all of the participants are experiencing similar situations

with their 10- to 14-year old.

2. To understand the importance of a consistent approach by all adults in the

home toward the interactions of the 10- to 14-year old

TIME REQUIRED: 20 minutes

MATERIALS: Video Tape of Everybody Loves Raymond (Skrovan, 2004)

PHYSICAL SETTING: Regular training room

PROCESS: The facilitator asks the participants to watch the video and see if they have

ever experienced a similar episode in their home. Once the episode is reviewed,

participants should be encouraged to share their thoughts and experiences relevant to this episode.

GROUP PRESENTATION ON AGE CHARACTERISTICS

GOALS: 1. To understand the developmental characteristics of the 10- to 14-year old

so that the participants can more appropriately react to their child's

developmentally based behaviors.

2. To understand why 10- to 14-year olds behave as they do in certain

situations.

TIME REQUIRED: 60 MINUTES

MATERIALS: Copy of PowerPoint or DVD of age characteristics presentation (Furman,

R. L. & Luke, C. L., 1999)

PHYSICAL SETTING: Group participants into triads.

PROCESS: Show presentation and then have participants in their groups discuss the

contents of the presentation.

ASSIGNMENT: Try to list in your journal episodes that occur at home which are

outgrowths of one of the age characteristics. Be prepared to share at next meeting.

GROUP DISCUSSION AND PRESENTATION ON HOMEWORK

GOALS: 1. To develop homework strategies that accommodate learning.

2. To develop homework consistency.

TIME REQUIRED: 20 minutes

MATERIALS: Homework Packet: Lee Canter, *Homework Without Tears* (Canter, L., 1987)

PHYSICAL SETTING: Training Room

PROCESS: Briefly discuss the importance of routine and structure when accomplishing the task of doing homework. The facilitator will briefly share the importance of creating an environment conducive to learning.

The facilitator will distribute and review a packet of homework strategies to implement at home. Strategies include:

1. A schedule that accommodates individual family needs but provides a consistent homework period of 45 minutes to 1 hour per day.

2. An *X MARKS THE SPOT* handout to determine a consistent spot in the home where the child places his/her homework (including notes, library books, etc.) after school and returns it to that spot to pick up in the morning.

3. A special place designated as the homework working area. This might be the kitchen table, a special desk, or other place free from distractions.

4. A supply sheet handout sharing those supplies necessary to have available in the designated homework area at all times.

PARENTS FEELING CAPABLE WORKSHOP THREE

Using Memory Techniques to Guide Your Child's Learning

GROUP DISCUSSION—WHAT KINDS OF STUMBLING BLOCKS DO YOU ENCOUNTER WHEN TRYING TO HELP YOUR CHILD WITH HIS/HER HOMEWORK?

GOALS: 1. To brainstorm already existing problems during homework sessions

2. To develop awareness that many problems are similar in nature.

TIME REQUIRED: 30 minutes

MATERIALS: None

PHYSICAL SETTING: Large group circle

PROCESS: Facilitator poses the question and allows the participants to brainstorm personal needs. Consolidate those responses similar in nature. Anticipated Responses: Content not understandable, behavior problems, time restraints, and communication issues.

GROUP PRESENTATION—HOMEWORK STRATEGIES

These techniques include: Mnemonic devices, PiggyBack songs, graphic organizers, highlighting textbook topics, key words for comprehension, questioning.

GOALS: 1. To provide the parent with homework strategies to meet the needs of the reluctant learner.

2. To develop memory techniques to use when working with children to make

    content more understandable.

Strategy #1 Piggy Back Songs

TIME REQUIRED: 45 minutes

MATERIALS: Copies of songs and jingles, CD player

PHYSICAL SETTING: Training room

PROCESS: The facilitator will present a short lecture on comprehension and retention.

After the presentation, the facilitator will give the participants an excerpt of content to

read and remember to the best of their ability. They will have several minutes to read and

remember the content. After the content is read, participants will take a short quiz. The

facilitator will then take new content of equal difficulty and teach it as a song. Once again

the participants will take a short quiz. Their scores, reported as a group score on the two

quizzes, will be posted and discussed. The improved performance on the second quiz will

be the point of discussion. The participants will then be given content and in small groups

will create either a song or rap to aid in comprehension and retention. Groups may share

their songs.

Strategy #2 Mnemonics to aid in comprehension and retention

TIME REQUIRED: 30 minutes

MATERIALS: Copies of various mnemonics

PHYSICAL SETTING: Training room

PROCESS: The participants, in small groups, will brainstorm mnemonics they have used in their own education. Mnemonic cards will be distributed to allow teams to interpret: Every Good Boy Does Fine, Homes, USA, NATO, FACE. Participants will be given a one page of content and be asked to work in groups to develop a mnemonic to help remember the content.

ASSIGNMENT: Use these memory techniques as you work with your child this week. Write in your journal positive and negative experiences associated with helping your child.

PARENTS FEELING CAPABLE WORKSHOP FOUR

Continuation of Memory Techniques to Use With your Child to Enhance Comprehension
and Retention

Strategy #3 Graphic Organizers

GOAL: To use key words to develop comprehension when reading for meaning and
create a graphic organizer to comprehend visually.

TIME REQUIRED: 1 hour

MATERIALS: Thunder and Lightning information sheet

PHYSICAL SETTING: Training room

PROCESS: The facilitator will ask the participants to read the information sheet on
thunder and lightning and circle one key word, square off one key phrase, and underline
one sentence. Proceed to discuss the various ideas and allow small groups to organize the
information graphically. Make the point that when organizing information, we want to
highlight the key points. The facilitator will briefly discuss the advantages of using
organizers according to available research. The facilitator will share various organizers
and relate them to different subject disciplines.

Strategy #4 Questioning Techniques

GOAL: To develop an awareness of higher level thinking and questioning.

TIME REQUIRED**:** 45 minutes

MATERIALS: Cinderella questioning sheet and questioning prompts

PHYSICAL SETTING: Training room

PROCESS: The facilitator will share the importance of questioning as it relates to higher order thinking. Begin by asking several questions about the fairy tale Cinderella. Demonstrate how questions can become more complex by allowing room for open-ended answers as opposed to yes or no answers. Give parents a list of question prompts and allow them to create questions at various levels using the fairy tale Cinderella.

ASSIGNMENT: Create five open-ended questions to use with your child's reading assignments this week. In addition, allow your child to create five questions. Use the homework strategies at home and reflect on any positive or negative results in your journal.

PARENTS FEELING CAPABLE WORKSHOP FIVE

Playing Games to Enhance Learning and Dealing with Behavior

GROUP DISCUSSION—SUCCESS AND PROBLEMS WITH MEMORY AND

LEARNING STRATEGIES

GOALS: 1. To use games as a means of reinforcing learning.

2. To use games to allow parents to work with their child in a structured

format.

3. To use games to communicate the curriculum to the parents by showing

exactly the kinds of questions, vocabulary and skills their child is expected

to have mastered.

TIME REQUIRED: 30 minutes

MATERIALS: One Family Fun-Pack per family. Frog Publications, Tampa, Florida

(Van Nagel, 2003)

PHYSICAL SETTING: Tables for small groups

PROCESS: The facilitator shares the Family Fun-Pack instructions with the parents. The

games take approximately 10 minutes to play. The game cards provide knowledge and

skills a various academic levels. Parents can play one game with a partner to become

acclimated to game format.

GROUP PRESENTATION ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR

GOALS: 1. To examine behavior issues related to accomplishing homework.

2. To provide parents with strategies that are nonjudgmental.

3. To provide parents with agencies that are able to help with behavior issues

beyond the scope of these workshops.

TIME REQUIRED: 80 minutes

MATERIALS: "Potluck transparency," "obstacle path," and list of agencies, Redirecting

and Correcting Misbehavior PESA Video (Los Angeles County Office of Education,

1999).

PROCESS:

Step 1. Share "Potluck" transparency and discuss that fact that when folks attend a

"Potluck Dinner" everyone brings something different to the table. Behavior is much the

same. Everyone's issues are unique to their situation and everyone brings different

feelings about the topic of correcting behavior.

Step 2. Discussion topic: Think about how a loving person in your life guides your

behavior.

Step 3. GROUP ACTIVITY: Going the Distance

Participants attempt to walk the shortest distance between two points in the room that are

identified by the facilitator; however, obstacles block the path. Make the point that

behavior is the same. It would be nice if there was one, straight path to success, but there

are always obstacles in the way. Children count on their parents to REDIRECT them

around the obstacles.

Step 4. View PESA Video Redirecting Behavior (Los Angeles County Office of

Education, 1999), and complete the worksheet: What is redirecting and correcting

misbehavior? Ask small groups to add additional examples.

Step 5. Share a large drawing of a child. While sharing examples of what is NOT

redirecting behavior, tear a small piece of the child. Explain that when we shout

obscenities or demean our children, we are tearing apart their self-esteem.

Step 6. Give parents several guidelines for dealing with behavior nonjudgmentally:

Speak firmly but calmly. Make sure your directions are clear. Support your child to fulfill

the expectation.

Appendix B

Developmental Age Characteristics of the 10 – 14 Year Old

Developmental Age Characteristics of the 10-14 Year Old

PHYSICAL
Average annual gain of 8 to 10 pounds and 2 inches
  Girls are taller and more physically advanced than boys.
  Incommensurate growth of heart and body weight could result in functional heart
  murmurs.
  Bone growth surpasses muscle development.
  Rapid growth spurts cause poor body mechanics, awkwardness.
Sexual maturation closely related to general physical development
  Genitalia growth in boys
  Breast development in girls
  Pubic hair in both
  Concern over growth, or lack of it
Variations in basal metabolic rates cause:
  Alternating periods of hyperactivity and   fatigue
  Need for release of energy
  Need for nutritional breaks
  Overexertion and sometimes chronic fatigue
  Discomfort sitting due to skeletal hardening
Overtaxing of Digestive System
  Poor food selection in large quantities is normal experimental activity.
Appearance
  Keeps up with peer and pop fads
  Sensitive about acne, moles, birthmarks, and body development outside norm.

SOCIAL
Family alliance vs peer allegiance
  Turmoil rooted in shift from family to peer values
  Family norms devalued, but not without misgivings
  Wants to make personal choices but final authority resides with adults
Desire for social acceptance
  Attempts to become gregarious
  Seeks acceptance and conforms with sub groups
  Surrenders individuality for acceptance
    - Heterosexual relations grow
    - Same sex affiliations dominate
  Shifts interests rapidly
Group loyalty and will carried out with indifference and cruelty to others
  Mannerisms, speech, dress, and behavior run counter to adult expectations
Vacillation between desire for direction and demand for independence
  Need for identification with adults continues
  Reserves right to accept or reject adult suggestions
  Willing to work hard and sacrifice, especially for social rewards
  Altruism and high ideals in search for beauty, truth
  Rising concern for oppressed

EMOTIONAL
Inner conflicts over paradoxes
  Choices no longer "black and white"
  Standards lose power, adult value system tested
  Peer group values in diametrical opposition to family values
Exaggerated responses to sexual implications
  Comparison of personal habits, practices and sexual changes with peer and media
  expectations
  Emotional challenge to sort fact from folklore
Desires attention without regard to how it is secured
  Emotional outbursts Rapid shifts and variations of moods
Intolerance of adult criticism
  Strongly desires to increase independence
  Insecure without adult reassurance and direction
Adult standards ignored, ridiculed and defied
  No longer desirous of pleasing parents and teachers
  Periods of irritability, distrust and suspicion
  Easily offended
  Believes adults do not understand
  Inconsiderate of others

INTELLECTUAL
Pressured to succeed academically
  Higher level cognitive processes due to brain growth spurt (ages 10-12)
  Plateau in higher thinking when growth development ceases (ages 12-14)
Enjoys intellectual and manipulative activities appropriate to state of development
  Prefers active to passive involvement
  Curious and intellectually uninhibited
  Motivated by own immediate goals and interests
  Enjoys discussing experiences with adults
  Evaluates issues critically, but not always objectively
Displays heightened egocentrism
  Argues to clarify personal thinking
  Desires self-expression and creative activity
  Transposes self and others into situations
Displays wide range of skills, interests and abilities
  Slow rate/fast rate learners approach mental maturity at own rates.
  Attention span and concentration alter: shorter rather than longer periods of focus
Seeks to understand meaning and enigmas of life from many aspects
  Concerned with intellectual, philosophical, biological, sociological and moral and
  ethical issues
  Increased ability to see through situations

  —Source: Furman, R.L. & Luke, C.L. (1999). The Challenge for Restructuring Middle
  Schools: Featuring a Working 5th-6th Model. An unpublished monograph. Used with
  authors' permission.

Appendix C

Research Study Surveys

Research Study Surveys

Parental Efficacy for Helping Children Succeed in School

Please think about your child and circle the number that most closely matches your

response to each question: 1) disagree very strongly, 2) disagree, 3) disagree just a little,

4) agree just a little, 5) agree, 6) agree very strongly

1. I know how to help my child do well in school.
    1   2   3   4   5   6

2. I don't know if I'm getting through to my child.
    1   2   3   4   5   6

3. I don't know how to help my child make good grades in school.
    1   2   3   4   5   6

4. I feel successful about my efforts to help my child learn.
    1   2   3   4   5   6

5. Other children have more influence on my child's grades than I do.
    1   2   3   4   5   6

6. I don't know how to help my child learn.
    1   2   3   4   5   6

7. I make a significant difference in my child's school performance.
    1   2   3   4   5   6

Parents' Perceptions of Personal Knowledge and Skills Scale

Please indicate how much you AGREE or DISAGREE with each of the following

statements with regard to the current school year.

Response format: All items in the scale use a six-point response format (disagree very

strongly to agree very strongly): 1 = Disagree very strongly; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Disagree

just a little; 4 = Agree just a little; 5 = Agree; 6 = Agree very strongly.

Items

1. I know about volunteering opportunities at my child's school.

                1   2   3   4   5   6

2. I know about special events at my child's school.

                1   2   3   4   5   6

3. I know effective ways to contact my child's teacher.

                1   2   3   4   5   6

4. I know how to communicate effectively with my child about the school day.

                1   2   3   4   5   6

5. I know how to explain things to my child about his or her homework.

                1   2   3   4   5   6

6. I know enough about the subjects of my child's homework to help him or her.

                1   2   3   4   5   6

7. I know how to communicate effectively with my child's teacher.

                1   2   3   4   5   6

8. I know how to supervise my child's homework.

                1   2   3   4   5   6

9. I have the skills to help out at my child's school.

                1   2   3   4   5   6

Student Report of Parent's Use of Instruction

Students were asked to respond to the following prompt:

"Dear Student,

Families do many different things when they help children with school. Please think about how your family helps you with school and fill in the circle that matches what is most true for them. Thank you!"

Response Format

The scale employed a four-point Likert-type scale: 1 = not true, 2 = a little true, 3 = pretty true, 4 = very true.

The person in my family who usually helps me with my homework teaches me…

1.   … ways to make my homework fun.

   1   2   3   4

2.   … how to find out more about things that interest me.

   1   2   3   4

3.   … to try the problems that help me learn the most.

   1   2   3   4

5.   … to make sure I understand one part before I go on to the next.

   1   2   3   4

6.   … to take a break from my work when I get frustrated.

   1   2   3   4

7.   … how to check my homework as I go along.

1   2   3   4

8.   … to go at my own pace while doing my homework.

1   2   3   4

9.   … to keep trying when I get stuck.

1   2   3   4

10   … to stick with my homework until I get it all done.

.   1   2   3   4

11   … to work hard.

.   1   2   3   4

12   … to ask questions when I don't understand something.

.   1   2   3   4

13   … how to get along with others in my class.

.   1   2   3   4

14   … to follow the teacher's directions.

.   1   2   3   4

15   … to talk with the teacher when I have questions.

.   1   2   3   4

Appendix D

Consent Forms

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION PITTSBURGH, PA 15282-0321

February 6, 2006

Dear Parent or Guardian,

  You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate the effect of parent workshops on a parent's confidence in working with his/her child on schoolwork. Duquesne School District already has an existing parent initiative, Family Night, for which they invite parents to an evening meeting at the school. On five of those Family Night meetings, starting later this school year, I will be offering my parent workshops. As part of my study I want to determine your thoughts about working with your child on schoolwork before and after attending my workshops.

  There are two different ways you can help me with my study. 1You could participate in the five workshops, complete a survey before and after the sessions, and have your child complete a survey before and after you attend these special Family Night meetings. Even if you are unable to attend the workshops you can help me if you and your child complete the surveys before and after the workshops.

  As a way of thanking the children that complete the surveys, I am going to put their names into a drawing for two bicycles. The surveys will take only 10 minutes to complete and will be distributed by your child's homeroom teacher during a homeroom period. If you have more than one child, please choose one child only to participate in the study.

  In an effort to make it easier for you to attend, dinner will be provided prior to each workshop and babysitting services will also be available at the school. As a way of thanking you for your participation, prizes will be raffled at each workshop and a small stipend will be offered to those parents in attendance.

  In the event you would like to attend the workshops but not participate in the study, you would be welcome to attend, but not be eligible for the prizes or stipend.

  Attached to this letter are several additional sheets that will provide you with more information about my study. I will ask for you to indicate your willingness to have you and your child participate in my study. Because my study focuses on families of low socio-economic status, I will also ask your permission to consult with school administrators concerning students receiving free and reduced lunches.

  Thank you in advance for your participation. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact L. Robert Furman at (412) 714-8880.

Sincerely,
L. Robert Furman

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION   PITTSBURGH, PA 15282-0321

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE:	A Study Measuring the Effect of "Parents Feeling Capable" Workshops on the Self-efficacy of Low Socio-economic Parents
INVESTIGATOR:	L. Robert Furman 174 Sylvania Drive South Park, PA 15236 412-714-8880
ADVISOR:	Dr. Derek Whordley Department of Instruction and Leadership in Education 412-396-6599
PURPOSE:	You are being asked to participate in five workshops designed to help you work with your child at home on schoolwork. You and your child will be asked to complete two surveys to measure the impact of these workshops on your confidence level when working with your child.
RISKS AND BENEFITS:	There are no risks associated with this study greater than those encountered in every day life, but workshop participants may acquire some skills and strategies for helping their child be more successful in school as a result of their participation in the workshops. The children completing surveys will have their names placed in a drawing to win a bicycle.
COMPENSATION:	Dinner will be served each evening prior to the workshop. Babysitting services will also be provided and your children are welcome to join us for dinner. The children completing surveys will have two opportunities to win a new bicycle. Parents participating in the workshops will receive a small stipend of fifteen dollars per workshop. Participation in this study will require no monetary cost to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your name will never appear on any research survey or research instrument. 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 held by the researcher for 5 years and then destroyed.

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 your 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:

_____   1. **Complete parent and student surveys and attend workshops**. I give permission for you to invite my child to complete the two surveys, review records concerning free and reduced lunch, and include my child in the drawing for the bicycles.

OR

_____   2. **Complete parent and student surveys only**. I give permission for you to invite my child to complete the two surveys, review records concerning free and reduced lunch, and include my child in the drawing for the bicycles.

____ I <u>do not</u> want to participate in the study. I <u>do not</u> want my child to complete the surveys. I understand that a neutral activity will be provided for them during the survey time and that there is no penalty for not participating.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Dr. Paul Richer, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board (412-396-6326). To contact L. Robert Furman, the study facilitator, call 412-714-8880.

_____   _____   _____
Child's Name   Grade   Teacher

_____   _____
 Participant's Signature   **Date**

_____   _____
Researcher's Signature   **Date**