PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION:
HOW DO SCHOOLS GET PARENTS INVOLVED?

A Thesis
Presented to the Graduate Division
School of Education
New Mexico Highlands University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts in Education
Concentration in Educational Leadership

By
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New Mexico Highlands University
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And, I thank God, for the strength and grace to take me through this program. May He be glorified!
DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my darling mother Che Neba Siona for the wonderful love and care she has always shown me and my family. I also dedicate it to my father, Che Neba Raphael, who has been very supportive and encouraging, and my brothers and sisters; Delphine, Agness, Fidelis, Peter, John, Patricia, Blaise, and Junior, who have all been very supportive, morally and spiritually.

I love you all and will ever remain grateful for everything you have done and continue to do to make me who I am. I am so grateful and will always remain faithful to you all.
ABSTRACT

This study investigated the ways schools involve parents. Many studies on parental involvement assert that when parents become involved, academic achievement increases, school satisfaction increases, and there is a successful school setting. The study, therefore, investigated ways by which schools succeed at getting parents involved and examined the levels of home-school communication. This study has investigated schools, parents, and school organizations (such as PTA, school councils, etc) on different ways to get parents involved.

The research sampled approximately 600 school principals from three states: New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah. The sample was one of convenience, based on available email addresses of principals. The study issued a descriptive survey utilizing a five-point Likert-type scale and an open-ended (purely qualitative) question. The data were collected electronically through on-line software (Survey Monkey) and analyzed using descriptive tables, summary narratives and content analysis.

In summary, over ninety-percent of the participant principals either agreed or strongly-agreed on the following:

1) Parents are welcomed into their schools,
2) Student-parent handbooks are given out at the beginning of the school year,
3) Information about school events is distributed regularly, and
4) Parents are invited to attend at least one school activity during the school year.

In contrast, fewer than twenty-percent of the participant principals either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the following statements:

1) There is a parent resource center in the school,
2) A copy of the Home-School Partnership Board Rule (required under NCLB) is given to parents,

3) An educational agreement or compact is given to parents at the beginning of the school year, and

4) A community involvement specialist or liaison person actively recruits parents to participate in learning opportunities.

Despite urging by educational researchers and the government to get parents involved, the study demonstrates that many schools have done so at minimal levels. It is, therefore, time for schools to take parental involvement to another level, using innovative approaches to involve parents.
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PREFACE

Parental involvement is a vital issue in the educational process and therefore requires schools to engage and collaborate with parents to improve on school success. As an international student, I came to realize that parental involvement is emphasized more in the US than in my home country, Cameroon. Although the schools in my country have parent-teacher organizations, parents’ participation is most often limited to financial discussions.

A course in School and Community Relations broadened my knowledge on the importance of parental involvement in education. I was motivated to explore ways schools involve parents in the education of their children.

I believe this study would explicate and reveal the various ways schools involve parents in the U.S.A., which might be copied by schools back in Africa (Cameroon), and in the world at large.

I want to thank my committee members, Dr. James Burns, Dr. Chris Nelson, and Dr. Salazar for their inputs and reviews in the realization of this study.

_________________________
Sylvia Che
Investigator

Date: ________________
Place: ________________
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

Background

The school exists in a society representing people in many walks of life, all of whom have passed through some form of schooling, be it formal or informal. Most people in the community have an interest in, and are willing to contribute to the success of children and their safety in school. The school receives input from the society (e.g., students, staff and resources) and, consequently, graduates students into professions addressing the needs of the society. Thus, it is an open system. It is, therefore, important that members of the community – parents, business companies, seniors, and stakeholders – work in partnership with the school for the success of children. Specifically, parents have direct impact on their children’s progress in school.

Conceptual Underpinnings of the study

In the 1980s, the United States became particularly concerned with the quality of its educational system. Parental involvement in schools became a major issue. Communities also became more watchful of the expense of public education, while local schools became concerned with continuous provision of high-quality teaching and other services. All of this occurred in a time of dwindling resources. Additionally, parents wanted assurance that their children were receiving preparation adequate to lead rewarding adult lives (Kathleen & Karen, 1989).

Riley (as cited in Moles, 2000) explained that “parents are the essential link in improving American education, and schools simply have to do a better job of reaching
out to them” (p. vii). Parental expectations regarding their children appear to be a constant in children’s academic achievement and social adjustment. Although many parents may not be certain how to help their children with assignments, with guidance and support they can become actively involved in home learning activities, have an opportunity to teach, be models, and guide their children (Michigan Department of Education, 2001).

I became interested in how schools in the U.S. involve parents in the education of their children because of the situation in my home country, Cameroon. During my education in Africa, I observed that students whose parents were not involved in their education did not perform well. Many dropped out of school or failed to further their education. In the United States, parental involvement is discussed as a major focus. That is not the case in Cameroon. There, parents have little voice in pedagogy and content.

According to Keane (2007), parental involvement improves the chances of children’s success at school, yet research suggests that parent participation may be on the decline. Keane further asserted that student achievement represents more than just grades. Attendance, students’ attitudes toward school, student behavior, and the drop-out rate all connect with student achievement. A recent report conducted by the National School Public Relations Association (2005), showed that enhanced parental involvement leads to better academic performance, better attendance, and improved behavior at home and school (p. 44).

**Statement of the Problem**

Research on parental involvement has shown that when parents are involved in their children's education, they improve their chances of succeeding in school (Hoover-
Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). However, in many schools the most that is being asked of parents is to be aware of what is going on in the school, attend school events, or make sure their child completes his or her schoolwork. While these activities yield benefits, research indicates that parents using home-learning activities with their children will make the greatest contributions to education (Barclay & Boone, 1996).

The problem in this study was, therefore, to identify various ways schools involve parents. This study utilized an electronic survey to collect data from school principals across New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive tables, summary narratives, and content analysis to come up with the findings.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to:

1) Determine ways schools engage parents,

2) Examine the levels of home-school communication, and

3) Identify the barriers to parental involvement and how they can be overcome.

**Research Question**

The study sought to address the following research question: *What are the ways schools get parents involved?*

**Significance of the Study**

This study may benefit schools seeking to enhance parental involvement. Principals may see different types of parental involvement not currently practiced in their schools. Also, when implemented, these factors may increase students’ satisfaction and success in the school setting.
Limitations, Assumptions, and Design control

This study was addressed to Public Pre-school, Elementary, Middle, and High school principals in three states: Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. Results of the study may, therefore, be limited in their generalizability for schools outside this region. Generalization of the results will depend on the similarity of a school to those participating in the study.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study:

Parental involvement was defined as including several different forms of parent participation in education and with the schools. Parents can support their children's schooling by attending school functions, responding to school obligations (parent-teacher conferences, for example), and becoming involved in their children’s schoolwork. They provide encouragement, arrange for appropriate study time and space, model desired behavior (such as reading for pleasure), monitor homework, and actively tutor their children.

Parent is used in this study to include guardians, grand-parents, foster parents and anybody who takes care of the children.

School Success is success measured by factors including grades, student satisfaction with school, student success within the school, and graduation rates from high school.

Communication is defined as a process of transferring information between home and school. In this study communication refers to a two-way process in which there is shared understanding and action.
**Barriers** are obstacles or impediments that limit parents from participating in the education of their children.

**NCLB** is the No Child Left Behind Act, the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education act of 1965.

**AYP** is Adequate Yearly Progress, performance standards developed by states to meet the NCLB Act.

**EPSS** is the Education Plan for Student Success

**Urban:** characterized by higher population density and vast human features in comparison to areas surrounding it.

**Suburban** is a residential district located in the outskirts of a city.

**Small town** is a community of people smaller than a city.

**Rural** defines areas with low population density

**Summary**

In this chapter, I introduced the general topic of parental involvement in schools. The purpose of the study and the statement of the problem were presented. Finally, the definition of terms, significance of the study, and its limitations were stated.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This study employed survey research to determine ways schools engage parents, examine the levels of home-school communication, and identify the barriers to parental involvement and how they can be overcome to increase academic achievement. In this chapter, literature will be reviewed regarding parental involvement in the following areas: definition, ways of engaging parents in school, parental effect on academic performance, levels of home school communication, importance and benefits of parental involvement, barriers to parental involvement and how they can be overcome, and ways by which parental involvement can be increased and sustained.

History of Parental Involvement

In the post-World War II Era (1945-1950s), parental involvement included participation in parent conferences, monitoring of homework, signing of report cards, attending PTA meetings, and fundraising events. In the 1960s educators and policy makers focused on parental involvement as a way to improve educational success for the poor and underachieving students. This led to the development of a variety of models and strategies to promote such parental involvement (Milbrey & Shields, 1987).

In 1965, Haiman began experimenting with parent involvement program strategies. He designed and wrote the Parental Involvement Performance Standards for the National Head Start and this was used as a consultant to Head Start throughout the nation (Haiman, 1965). In 1968 he spoke on the relevance of curriculum, administration and community involvement (Chicago Tribune, 1968). By 1979, many schools had
started incorporating parental involvement into their school programs. Parental involvement in special education programs also increased (Los Angeles Times, 1979).

By 1989, the National Education Organization had started incorporating parental involvement programs in their agendas. They provided training to school staff and parents on parental involvement. The School Board Association produced sample school policies on parental involvement which they believed would make schools more secure and more likely, academic development would take place. Best practices and models to support parental involvement were developed. Many reports were written to recommend the necessity of parental involvement in school improvement (USA Today, 1989). In the 1990s, studies demonstrated that parental involvement could predict academic achievement. Parental involvement was considered an integral part of the school curriculum. The level of parental involvement was increased in most of the school districts across the nation (USA Today, 1990).

Today, laws have been created to enforce parental involvement in schools including provisions of NCLB and School Accountability Teams. Movements for community control of education such as the education of low-income children, special education students, and English Language Learners have been developed to meet the needs of students. Districts focus on implementing strategies to promote parent, family, and community involvement (National Center for School Engagement, 2004).

The Family Strengthening Policy Center (2004) established that states can develop a state-wide network to support teachers’ preparation for parental involvement, and also provide technical assistance to local districts and schools on how to get parents involved. School districts must have a written policy for administrative support and
training for staff, parents and community members on parent involvement programs. The community should be able to advocate with state education agencies and school districts to promote widespread and effective parental involvement policies and practices.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (1997) a sustained mutual collaboration, support, and participation of school staff and families are required for a successful school-family partnerships and children's learning. Although the success of school-family partnerships is difficult to reach, it is important to note that the benefits to children and their educational success depends on hard work required to sustain the school-family partnerships (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, & Simon, 1997).

In line with the mandates of NCLB, the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) has developed statewide standards which establish expectations for all New Mexico public school students. These standards require every district in New Mexico to develop an Education Plan for Student Success (EPSS) — a long-range strategic plan to promote students’ success and continuous school improvement (Parents Searching Out, 2009).

**What is Parental Involvement?**

Parental involvement means different things to different people. A recent newsletter published by The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2006) explained that some people equate involvement to chaperoning field trips or volunteering for PTA committees while others define it as attending an open house or signing off on homework folders. NCLB (2001) described parental involvement as regular participation of parents, a two-way process, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities. NCLB pays particular
attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background. Under NCLB, schools are required to do evaluation and design strategies for more effective parental involvement, and also to revise, if necessary, the parental involvement policies. It also places the responsibility for schools to be certain that parent involvement initiatives are properly developed and evaluated.

NCLB reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965) with four principles to frame ways in which families, educators, and communities can work together to improve teaching and learning. These principles include: accountability for results, local control and flexibility, expanded parental choice, and effective and successful programs that reflect scientifically based research. Enhancing connections within families, between families, and with their communities and the institutions that affect them should result in better outcomes for children and their families. These principles stress that parents and schools should be accountable for students’ achievement. In addition, plans for parental involvement should be flexible to address the local needs and build parents’ capacity to improve on their children’s achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2004; Family Strengthening Policy Center, FSPC, 2004).

The Family Strengthening Policy Center, FSPC (2004), observed that there is no universal definition of what parental involvement in education entails. Some definitions include greater participation in the life of a school, while others are focused on the increased contributions to an individual child’s learning process. Still others incorporate the family into the learning process through adult education, parenting, and after school activities. Reenay and Vivian (2007) defined parental involvement as encompassing three
areas: a) direct contact with teachers, b) parental actions at school, and c) parental actions at home. In many schools, parents are engaged in the governance and planning processes in building students’ achievement goals (FSPC, 2004). Nonetheless, parental involvement takes place when parents actively, resourcefully and responsibly contribute to promote and develop the well being of their communities (Family Support America, 2001; Northwest Regional Education, 2001; Jesse, 2009).

Davies (1991) defined parental involvement from a shifting perspective. Restructuring the society, communities, and schools leads to the transformation of parental involvement. The following evolving definition illustrates this paradigm shift.

**Evolving Definition**

Parental involvement shifts from “parent focus to family focus, family to community agencies, school to home/neighborhood setting, eager parents to hard-to-reach families, teachers/administrators agendas to family priorities, and deficit view of urban families to emphasis on inherent strengths of families” (Davies, 1991). He further explained that even though non-traditional families are much more common nowadays than they were in the 1950s, alternative family structures are effective and should be recognized by the school.

Liontos (1992) mentioned recent beliefs about parents and families that schools should consider when involving them in their children’s’ education: “1) All families have strengths, 2) parents can learn new techniques, 3) parents have important perspectives about their children, 4) most parents really care about their children, 5) cultural differences are both valid and valuable, and 6) many family forms exist and are legitimate” (pp. 30-31).
Jesse (2009) noted that parental involvement has two independent components: parents as supporters and parents as active partners. This approach of parental involvement would be insufficient if schools make use of only one of these components. Parents can be active, yet not supportive of the education process and vice versa. He further indicated that parental involvement should take many forms. For example, parental involvement can be reading to children, volunteering at the school, collaborating on decision making committees, and advocating for children. Hewison and Tizard (1980) explained that parental involvement can be focused if the school addresses the following issues: a) define what is meant by parent involvement, b) define what the school means by parental involvement, c) provide examples of parents' decision making roles, d) remove structural barriers, and e) identify who else has an interest in increasing the parents’ role in the school.

**How do Schools Engage Parents?**

Hanke (2006) pointed out that lack of parental involvement is due to lack of helpful information to parents. Emails, phone, letters, newsletters and personal contacts can be made by schools to reach out to parents. If schools communicate with parents regularly and consistently using the various means, the gap between school and parental involvement will be reduced. Students’ expectations and achievement will increase if families show high levels of interest (National PTA, 1998). Six different areas of parental involvement are identified by Epstein and associate (1997): parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community.

Two types of communication exist (Tracy, 2000, cited in The Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, 2006). These two types include one-way (transmittal) and
two-way communication. In one-way communication, the school disseminates information to parents on how they can help their children at home. Examples of this type of communication are newsletters and informational fliers. The two-way communication is considered much more interactive and perceived as a partnership between the school and families. Examples include surveys and questionnaires structured to collect informational data pertaining to students (The National Center for Family Literacy, 2003; The Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, 2006; Lordeman, 1977).

Reenay and Vivian (2007) explained that even though the invention of new technologies has made it easier for schools to reach out to parents (through emails, cell phones and internet websites), the use of traditional methods in communication has been found to be an effective way for schools to communicate with parents, but this has been limited in use by schools because of time constraints. In addition, it has been assessed that the frequent use of mass communications (newsletters, calendars, letters and handbooks) by school educators has not been effective in changing student behaviors. However, as Jonson (1999) reported, many parents do not communicate with their children's schools due to a vast number of reasons. For example, their concerns might not be heard or responded to promptly, or they are busy at work. Despite the fact that technology is a tool providing new channels for communication, studies have shown that parents and teachers find difficulty in using them or lack access to them (Weifeng & Jialing, 2007; Blanchard, 1997).

**Parental Effect on Academic Performance**

Part A of Title II Law requires that funds granted for teacher development/highly-qualified teachers be used to expand teachers, principals and other school
administrators’ ability to effectively engage parents in the education of their children and in school improvement. Such training might include parental involvement groups and organizations at local and state levels, and school’s parental involvement plan stating the parental involvement strategies and accountability goals (National PTA, 2006).

According to the New Skills for New Schools (1997) teacher organizations acknowledge the need for teachers to develop skills to involve families in their children’s education. For example the National Board for Professional Teaching Standard integrated parental involvement as a separate standard into the Professional Teaching Certificate (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1991; De Acosta, 1996). The aim of these organizations is to provide pre-service and in-service training to teachers on parental involvement. However, little is known about preparing teachers to work with families (New Skills for New Schools, 1997).

**Levels of Home-School Communication**

In their research on School, Family and Community Partnership, Epstein and Associates (1997) developed six types of parental involvement frameworks to help educators develop more comprehensive programs for school, family, and community partnerships. Although this framework may be used by schools as a guide, it is important to note that each school must choose practices that will help achieve its goals and meet the needs of its students and families. The six types of parental involvement framework include parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community (National Network of Partnership Schools, 2000: Michigan Department of Education, 2001: NMSA Research Summary, 2006).
Epstein and her colleagues also emphasized the duty of the school in helping families establish home environments that will support children, design effective forms of home-school communication about students’ progress and school programs, and provide training and schedules that allow parents to get involved. Parents must be involved in the school decision-making process, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils committees, and other parent organizations. Schools have the responsibilities to work in partnership with businesses, agencies and other groups to coordinate resources and provide services to the school and the community (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, & Simon, 1997; US Department of Education, 1997).

Parental involvement has always been a key component in Title 1 Law (Wayne, 2008). This law requires that each school develop and distribute to parents a written parental involvement policy they agreed upon. NCLB (2001) required districts receiving Title I funds to notify parents on their rights to get information from the school regarding the professional qualifications of the child’s classroom teacher and paraprofessionals. The NCLB Act also requires all districts and schools to notify parents regarding the results of the district and school’s Adequate Yearly Report (AYP).

**Importance of Parental Involvement**

Extensive research has shown that student achievement increases when parents get involved (Harris et al, 1987). Teachers have acknowledged that priority be given in the public education policy to strengthen parents’ roles in the education of their children. On Target Family Involvement (2000) explained that research on K-12 schools have linked parental involvement to student out comes including increased achievement in test results, a decrease in dropout rate, improved attendance and student behavior, improved
parent teacher relations, greater commitment to schoolwork, and improved attitude toward school (Gillum, 1977; Rich, Van D... 1980).

The following conclusions were made by Public School Review (2003) on parental involvement:

Increase in parental involvement leads to an increase in academic achievement, better classroom behavior and conduct, greater self esteem, increased motivation and attitude towards school, low rate of absenteeism, increased school satisfaction, and increased school climate (Balli, Wedman & Demo, 1997; Bryan & Sullivan-Burnstein, 1998; Griffith, 1996; Russell & Reece, 2000).

Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) advised that parents should start getting involved in their children’s education from pre-school which can also make a positive difference at all levels, especially in the early years of school. In their study, Feinstein and Symons (1999) came up with the finding that parental involvement has been identified as a predictor for students’ achievement at the age of sixteen. Other studies have also shown that parental involvement of middle and high school students are equally important.

The NCLB (2001) has as one of its goals to get parents of under-achieving and low-income children involved in their education by providing them with adequate training and encouragement. Through parental involvement teachers’ morales are improved as parents develop greater appreciation of the challenges they are facing in the classroom. Teachers become aware of whom students are when they communicate with parents, and through that, they are able to develop individual teaching styles to meet the students’ needs. Many researchers have also confirmed to the fact that parents become
more supportive and engage in their children’s schooling when two-way communication is established by the school (Bauch, 1989; Taylor, 1999).

**Benefits of Parental Involvement**

Parental involvement benefits children, parents, as well as the community, at different levels. By becoming involved in their children's education, parents have a better understanding of the school curriculum and activities. This makes parents more comfortable with the quality of education their children are receiving. Studies have shown that children whose parents are involved show greater social and emotional development (Allen & Daly, 2002). In addition, parental involvement leads to greater self-satisfaction, self-direction and control, social adjustment, and competence; more supportive relationships, positive peer relations, tolerance, successful marriages; and less delinquent behaviors (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Gillum, 1977; Rich, Van Dien & Mallox, 1979; Comer, 1980).

The U.S. Department of Education (1997) research on parent involvement outlined three important aspects for children’s development and academic success. These include demonstrating attitudes, values, and interactions about learning through parenting; creating partnerships between schools and homes using two-way communication; and developing a sense of shared responsibility for learning outcomes by both schools and parents (Supreme Education Council, 2008).

Henderson and Berla (1994) explained that when parents are involved in education, teachers build high expectations for students, and high expectations for parents’ opinions on their ability to help their children at home. As a result of parental involvement, parents develop more self-confidence and become motivated to advance
their own education. Families are willing to support children’s learning to increase achievement and, thus, the school gets a better reputation from the community (Henderson & Berla, 1994; National PTA, 1998).

The New Skills for New Schools (1997) reported that research reviewing historical trends on parental involvement and student achievement has shown inconsistency in their findings and do not support the relationship. A number of studies have revealed that the benefits of family involvement are not restricted to student achievement but also include other factors based on educational accountability. For example, in Kentucky, the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence provided parents and the community with information on specific components of school reform and informed them about their roles in implementing the education reform law.

**Barriers to Effective Parental Involvement**

It is believed by Lazar and Slostad (1999) that parents are willing to get involved in the education of their children, but the negative perceptions of parents persist because teacher education programs do not educate teachers to work with parents. Foster and Loven (1992) shared that the major explanation for this, according to researchers, is the fact that “very little attention is given to preparing teachers to work with parents and other adults” (Lazar, 1999, p. 207).

Despite the importance attached to parental involvement, it is still being ignored in schools (The New Skills for Schools, 1997). According to Lazar and Slostad, (1999) “the way parents viewed their roles was shaped by the circumstances and norms of particular cultures” and “their beliefs about their own effectiveness as teachers or tutors” (p. 208). Major barriers to parental involvement in schools include the school
environment, school culture, time constraint, changing demographics and employment patterns, and the lack of teacher preparation in involving parents in their children’s schooling (New Skills for Schools, 1997; National PTA, 1997).

In her study of school programs and teacher practice of parental involvement at inner-city elementary and middle schools in 1991, Epstein found out that teachers had doubts whether they could motivate parents to become more involved even though they thought that parental involvement would improve students’ achievement. Teachers lack the attitudes, knowledge, skills, and strategies needed to collaborate with families leading to a weak school-family partnership (De Acosta, 1996; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Foster & Loven, 1992; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Midkiff & Lawler-Prince, 1992; Williams, 1992). A report by the U.S. Department of Education (1997) indicated that 48 percent of principals who participated in a study believed that lack of staff training on parental involvement posed a barrier to parents’ involvement. The lack of preparation by teachers to involve parents in the education of their children remains a weakness in teacher education programs (Bredekamp, 1996).

**Overcoming Barriers to Parental Involvement**

The U.S. Department of Education (2004) presented data from two national representative surveys which suggested that lower-income parents and parents with less education participate less often in school-based parental involvement activities than parents with higher-income and higher education levels. Also, parents of older children participate less often than parents of younger children. These studies also illustrated that when school, family, or community-related barriers limit parents from becoming involved, the consequences might affect students’ academic achievement. Strategies for
overcoming barriers to parental involvement in schools include overcoming time and resource constraints, providing information and training to parents and school staff, restructuring schools to support family involvement, bridging school-family differences, getting external supports for partnerships, meeting families' basic needs, providing flexible times and places for parental involvement, and helping staff communication with parents (The U.S. Department of Education, 2004; Family Involvement in Children's Education - October 1997).

The National School Public Relations Association, NSPRA (2004) suggested some ideas to help schools and families work collaboratively (as cited in Padgett, 2006). These ideas include creating a formal policy including specific goals for parents and teachers working together, identifying barriers that are specific to the school and its culture, assessing, evaluating and improving the current programs, and involving the community at large. Schools must encourage parents to support their children’s learning by making them feel welcome in the school. Schools should also involve parents in the process of attaining the goals related to students’ success (Jesse, 2009).

**Improvement and Sustainability of Parental Involvement**

The U.S. Metric Association, USMA (2002) explained that the roles of parents have been limited to activities such as PTA meetings and parent teacher conferences. Recently, the Goals (2000) in regard to the Educate America Act of 1994 (as cited in USMA, 2002) called for more challenging academic standards as well as an increase in parent participation. Despite the fact that parental involvement programs are still in the preliminary stages of development, it is required that schools develop parental
involvement programs based on the unique needs of the school and that of the community (Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

A study by Nistler and Maiers (2000) came up with the findings that schools are able to remove the barriers to parent participation in order to increase involvement. In their opinion, schools should provide for childcare and transportation to parents who find difficulties to participate in school activities. Schools should also create opportunities and provide training to parents in order to increase their awareness of their children’s potentials. The most appropriate strategies for parental involvement of a particular community depend on the local needs, interests, resources, and successful approaches used to promote parental involvement. These strategies, according to Nistler and Angela, should place emphasizes on innovation and flexibility. Based on this assumption, the US Department of Education (1997) asserted that schools must develop different approaches to home school partnerships and be flexible in providing many forms of parental involvement through workshops, conferences, seminars and meetings (Epstein, & Jansorn, 2004).

According to the US Department of Education (1997) a sustained mutual collaboration, support, and participation of school staff and families are required for a successful school-family partnerships and children's learning. Although the success of school-family partnerships is difficult to achieve, it is important to note that the benefits to children and their educational success depends on hard work required to sustain the school-family partnerships (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, & Simon, 1997).
Conclusion

By bringing parents into the educational process schools provide the opportunity to enrich school programs. Effective approaches to parental involvement will build positive relationships and trust between the school and families, healthy child development, and safe school environment. Parental involvement programs should be developed to meet the unique needs of the school and the community (Russell & Reece 2000).

Regardless of ethnicity or minority group status, parents are concerned about their children’s education and are willing to take an active role in the educational process (Chavkin & Williams, 1993). However, parents need to be informed and guided by the school on parental involvement activities. Many professionals agree that it is the responsibility of the school to make the first move in reaching out to families to involve them in education (Harris, Kagay, & Ross, 1987; NCATE, 1994). Therefore, it is important that parents and guardians become aware of the significant contributions they can make to their children’s success by providing a stimulating environment and also supporting them at home during their early years, as well as secondary and tertiary years of schooling (Chavkin & Williams, 1993).
Summary of Literature Review

This chapter reviewed literature on parental involvement in education in the following areas: history, definition, how schools engage parents, parental effect on academic performance, levels of home-school communication, importance of parental involvement, benefits of parental involvement, barriers to effective parental involvement, overcoming barriers to parental involvement, and improvement and sustainability of parental involvement.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study utilized survey research to determine the ways schools engage parents, examine the levels of home-school communication, identify barriers to parental involvement and how they can be overcome. This chapter describes my research methodology, its design, the sample, instrumentation, procedures for data collection, and analysis/interpretation.

Scheuren (1980) defined surveys as a method used to gather information from a group of individuals. Survey research can be viewed as a form of highly structured interview with great versatility in the social sciences (including education). The greatest benefit of the survey questionnaire is its ability to collect substantial data from many individuals within a very confined period of time (J. Burns, Personal Communication, September 8, 2009).

Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) outline steps in survey research that include defining the problem, identifying the target population, selecting the sample, preparing the instrument and the cover letter, choosing the mode of data collection, analyzing the data, and interpreting the results. They further identified these characteristics of a survey:

1) Information is collected from a group of people in order to describe some aspects or characteristics of the population of which the group is part;
2) The main way in which the information is collected is through asking questions or having respondents rate statements. The answers to these by the members of the group constitute the data; and

3) Information is most often collected from a designated sample rather than from every member of the population (p. 397).

According to William (2006), a survey uses questionnaires and interviews to collect data from the participants of a study. These may include cross-sectional and longitudinal studies using data collection to estimate the characteristics of a population of interest based on a sample. In this study the survey was utilized to collect data that were descriptive (Creswell, 1994).

**Problem and Purpose Review**

This study sought to identify ways schools involve parents with the aim of increasing academic achievement and enhancing student success in school. Specifically, the study examined parental involvement, ways schools get parents involved, and also the barriers encountered by schools in getting parents involved, and how the schools overcome these barriers.

**Research Question**

This study addressed the following research question: *What are the ways schools get parents involved?*

**Research Variables**

The following variables were explored:

1. Parents’ feelings, attitude and beliefs about themselves, administrators, faculty and the school in general,
2. Parents’ knowledge of the school district’s structure organization,

3. Home-school communication,

4. Parents as supporters,

5. Parents as learners,

6. Parents as teachers,

7. Parents as resources, and

8. Parents as advisors, advocates, and participants in decision-making.

Sample and Sampling

The sample identified for this study was composed of elementary, middle school, and high school principals selected from the states of New Mexico, Utah, and Arizona. This represented a convenience sample (Graham, 1983), based upon published e-mail addresses for public school principals in these states. Although a convenience sample, this sample was quite large, constituting of over six-hundred potential participants from a large geographic area. Roughly two-hundred principal e-mail addresses were located and selected each from New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah.

Research design

This was a descriptive study. According to Jacobs (2008), descriptive studies collect data to answer questions about a subject or topic of study. Descriptive research makes use of instruments such as surveys to explore individuals’ preferences, attitudes, interests, practices, and concerns. One major benefit of such methodology is that it posits expertise with the participants, rather than with the researcher (J.B. Burns, Personal Communication, September 8, 2009).
Instrumentation

This survey used five-point Likert scale (Edwards, 1957) questions, plus one open-ended question to gather comments or suggestions relevant to the study. Demographic questions sought characteristics of the sampled population regarding their state and school type (without compromising participant anonymity).

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected from participating principals in six-hundred schools from the states of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah during fall of 2009. The data were collected electronically through Survey Monkey™. Through this on-line technology, each survey was electronically submitted to Survey Monkey™, where the data were compiled. Compiled (tallied) data were e-mailed back to the researcher with school or participant identification.

Directions on first page of the survey informed participants of the purpose and objectives of the study. Participants were informed that their participation was both voluntary and anonymous and that they provided consent by completing the survey. Any information collected about individual schools was kept confidential. The first section of the survey provided instructions on how to answer the questions.

Data analysis/Interpretation

Tables, narrative summary format, and content analysis were utilized to compile, analyze, and interpret the quantitative responses. Simple descriptive statistics were used to analyze these Likert-scale responses. Categorization and identification of themes was used to analyze responses to the open-ended question.
Summary

This chapter described the research design, variables, participants, instrumentation, procedures used for data collection, and analysis/interpretation of the study. The data was collected from 600 principals in the states of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. The data was analyzed using descriptive tables, summary narratives, and content analysis.
CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine ways schools engage parents, examine the levels of home-school communication, and identify the barriers to parental involvement and how they can be overcome to increase academic achievement. This study sought to answer the question: What are the ways schools get parents involved? A survey consisting of 33 five-point Likert-type scale items and one open-ended question was utilized to collect data on parent feelings, attitude and beliefs about themselves, administrators, faculty, and the school in general; parents’ knowledge of the school district’s structure organization; home-school communication; parents as supporters; parents as learners; parents as teachers; and parents as resources; and parents as advisors, advocates, and participants in decision-making.

Organization of Data Analysis

This study used a descriptive method, a survey, to gather data. The data collected were analyzed by use of tables, narrative summaries, and content analysis. The first section of the survey collected demographic data. Tables were used to present data collected from questions 4 to 33. Variables and narrative summaries about the highest and lowest percentages on each table were highlighted.

Presentation of Descriptive Characteristic of Respondents

The survey was distributed electronically by e-mail-based electronic survey software (Survey Monkey) to a convenience sample of 600 participants (selected availability of published email addresses). Ninety-five (95) participants responded to the
survey with 92.6 % (88) complete and 8.0 % (7) with some incomplete responses. One-
hundred-ninety-one emails were returned as undeliverable, and 314 participants did not
respond. Ninety-five out of the 409 e-mails that were delivered completed the survey
which yielded a return rate of 24%.

Returned percentages by states were as follows: 39.4 % (37) from Utah; 38.3 %
(36) from Arizona; and 22.3 % (21) from New Mexico. The participants included no pre-
school respondents, 59.6 % (56) from elementary schools, 26.6 % (25) from middle
schools, and 13.8 % (13) from high schools. Of the participants, 35.1 % (33) represented
urban areas, 22.3 % (21) represented suburban areas, 27.7 % (26) represented small
towns, and 14.9 % (14) represented rural areas. The following tables summarize the
survey responses. Table 1 presents these data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Town</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-schools</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary schools</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle schools</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High schools</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey Responses

Table 2 summarized responses to questions 4-8, which asked about parents’ feelings, attitudes, and beliefs about themselves, administrators, faculty and the school in general. To the statement that parents are welcomed into the school at all times, 76.9% of the respondents agreed. On the other hand 8.7% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that parents know how to get involved in their child’s education away from school. Over 40% of the principals reported that parents are comfortable in communicating with the school (Item 6) and also felt parents’ contributions are valued (Item 7).

Table 2
Questions 4-8: Parents’ Feelings, Attitudes, Beliefs about themselves, Administrators, Faculty and the School in General

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total Responses (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Parents are welcomed into the school at all times.</td>
<td>76.9%(70)</td>
<td>19.8%(18)</td>
<td>1.1%(1)</td>
<td>1.1%(1)</td>
<td>1.1%(1)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Parents are clear about how they can get involved at school.</td>
<td>24.2%(22)</td>
<td>60.4%(55)</td>
<td>11.0%(10)</td>
<td>4.4%(4)</td>
<td>0.0%(0)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Parents are comfortable in communicating with the school</td>
<td>40.2%(37)</td>
<td>46.7%(43)</td>
<td>9.8%(9)</td>
<td>3.3%(3)</td>
<td>0.0%(0)</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>administrators (principal, assistant principal, dean)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Parents’ contributions are valued by the school.</td>
<td>57.1%(52)</td>
<td>38.5%(35)</td>
<td>4.4%(4)</td>
<td>0.0%(0)</td>
<td>0.0%(0)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Parents know how to get involved in their child’s education away</td>
<td>8.7%(8)</td>
<td>62.0%(57)</td>
<td>20.7%(19)</td>
<td>8.7%(8)</td>
<td>0.0%(0)</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 summarized the responses to questions 9-11, which asked about parents’ knowledge of the school district’s structure organization. To the statement that parents know how to contact the administration of their school, 62.6% of the respondents strongly agreed, while 20.7% of the respondents to question 11 disagreed with the statement that parents know how the school district is structured.
Table 3
Questions 9-11: Parent’s Knowledge of the School District’s Structure Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total Responses (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Parents understand the way the school system work.</td>
<td>6.5%(6)</td>
<td>50.0%(46)</td>
<td>29.3%(27)</td>
<td>13.0%(12)</td>
<td>1.1%(1)</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Parents know how to contact the administrators of your school.</td>
<td>62.6%(57)</td>
<td>35.2%(32)</td>
<td>2.2%(2)</td>
<td>0.0%(0)</td>
<td>0.0%(0)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Parents know how the school district is structured.</td>
<td>2.2%(2)</td>
<td>37.0%(34)</td>
<td>39.1%(36)</td>
<td>20.7%(19)</td>
<td>1.1%(1)</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 summarized the responses to questions 12-17, which asked about home-school communication. More than half (71.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement that a student/parent handbook containing information about school policies is given out at the beginning of the school year. Eleven percent (11%) disagreed with the proposition that a school calendar of activities for parents is distributed monthly. In response to the statement that parents utilize the various ways of communication to reach the school, 11.1% of the respondents disagreed. Over 60% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement that information about the school is given out regularly throughout the school year and that parents are informed in writing about how they may contact their children’s teacher.
Table 4
Questions 12-17 Home-School Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. Information about school events is given out regularly to parents throughout the school year.</td>
<td>64.8%(59)</td>
<td>33.0%(30)</td>
<td>2.2%(2)</td>
<td>0.0%(0)</td>
<td>0.0%(0)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. A student/parent handbook containing information about school policies is given out at the beginning of the school year.</td>
<td>71.4%(65)</td>
<td>23.1%(21)</td>
<td>3.3%(3)</td>
<td>2.2%(2)</td>
<td>0.0%(0)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Parents are informed in writing about how they may contact their children’s teachers.</td>
<td>63.7%(58)</td>
<td>35.2%(32)</td>
<td>1.1%(1)</td>
<td>0.0%(0)</td>
<td>0.0%(0)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Print material is made available to parents in their primary language</td>
<td>35.6%(32)</td>
<td>41.1%(37)</td>
<td>16.7%(15)</td>
<td>6.7%(6)</td>
<td>0.0%(0)</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. A school calendar of activities for parents is distributed monthly.</td>
<td>47.3%(43)</td>
<td>28.6%(26)</td>
<td>12.1%(11)</td>
<td>11.0%(10)</td>
<td>1.1%(1)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Parents are aware of the various ways to reach the school about their concerns.</td>
<td>29.7%(27)</td>
<td>58.2%(53)</td>
<td>11.0%(10)</td>
<td>1.1%(1)</td>
<td>0.0%(0)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Parents utilize these various ways to reach out to the school.</td>
<td>22.2%(20)</td>
<td>50.0%(45)</td>
<td>15.6%(14)</td>
<td>11.1%(10)</td>
<td>1.1%(1)</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 summarized the responses to questions 19-22, which asked about parents as supporters. To the statement that parents are invited to attend at least one school activity during the school year, 64% of the respondents strongly agreed. On the other hand, 24% of the respondents disagreed to the proposition that there is a resource center or space inside the school for parents. Over 50% of the respondents agreed with the statement that orientation meetings for parents about school procedures and programs are conducted at the beginning of the school year (Item 19), and that parents are included in the planning and implementation of school events (Item 22).
Table 5
Questions 19-22: Parents as Supporters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19. Orientation meetings for parents about school procedures and programs are conducted at the beginning of the school year.</td>
<td>46.1%(41)</td>
<td>36.0%(32)</td>
<td>10.1%(9)</td>
<td>7.9%(7)</td>
<td>0.0%(0)</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Parents are invited to attend at least one school activity during the school year. Example PTA, parent committee, etc</td>
<td>64.0%(57)</td>
<td>29.2%(26)</td>
<td>4.5%(4)</td>
<td>2.2%(2)</td>
<td>0.0%(0)</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. There is a parent resource center or space inside the school for parents.</td>
<td>25.8%(23)</td>
<td>21.3%(19)</td>
<td>23.6%(21)</td>
<td>24.7%(22)</td>
<td>4.5%(4)</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Parents are included in the planning and implementation of some school events.</td>
<td>38.2%(34)</td>
<td>49.4%(44)</td>
<td>7.9%(7)</td>
<td>4.5%(4)</td>
<td>0.0%(0)</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 summarized the responses to questions 23-26, which asked about parents as learners. More the one-third (34.1%) of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement that learning activities for parents have been held in their school. Thirteen and one-half percent (13.5%) disagreed with the proposition that the community involvement specialist or parent liaison actively recruits parents to participate in learning opportunities. Over 60% of the principals reported that their schools encourage participation in learning activities for parents (Item 24), and that learning activities are scheduled at times favorable to parents (Item 25).
Table 6
Questions 23-26: Parents as Learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total Responses (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23. Learning activities for parents have been held in the school.</td>
<td>34.1%(30)</td>
<td>48.9%(43)</td>
<td>10.2%(9)</td>
<td>4.5%(4)</td>
<td>2.3%(2)</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. The school encourages participation in learning opportunities for parents.</td>
<td>28.1%(25)</td>
<td>57.3%(51)</td>
<td>10.1%(9)</td>
<td>2.2%(2)</td>
<td>2.2%(2)</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Learning opportunity activities are scheduled at times favorable to parent participation.</td>
<td>24.7%(22)</td>
<td>53.9%(48)</td>
<td>14.6%(13)</td>
<td>4.5%(4)</td>
<td>2.2%(2)</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. The community involvement specialist or Parent Liaison actively recruits parents to participate in learning opportunities</td>
<td>19.1%(17)</td>
<td>29.2%(26)</td>
<td>30.3%(27)</td>
<td>13.5%(12)</td>
<td>7.9%(7)</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 summarized the responses to questions 27-29, which asked about parents as teachers. To the proposition that the school encourages participation in learning opportunities for parents, 57.3% of the respondents agreed. More than forty-six percent (46.6%) strongly agreed to the statement that an educational agreement is given to parents at the beginning of the school year.

Table 7
Questions 27-29: Parents as Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total Responses (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27. An educational agreement (or compact) is given to parents at the beginning of the school year.</td>
<td>46.6%(41)</td>
<td>21.6%(19)</td>
<td>9.1%(8)</td>
<td>18.2%(16)</td>
<td>4.5%(4)</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. A copy of the parent involvement – “Home-School Partnership” Board Rule is given to parents.</td>
<td>25.0%(22)</td>
<td>22.7%(20)</td>
<td>27.3%(24)</td>
<td>20.5%(18)</td>
<td>4.5%(4)</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Resources such as pamphlets, videotapes, list of references and agencies that assist parents in helping their children are available at the school site for parents.</td>
<td>17.0%(15)</td>
<td>56.8%(50)</td>
<td>11.4%(10)</td>
<td>10.2%(9)</td>
<td>4.5%(4)</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8 addressed parents as resources. To the statement that parents are encouraged by school staff to demonstrate their use of special knowledge, abilities, talents, and cultural experience in school programs and activities (in questions 30-31), fewer than half (18.4%) of the respondents agreed. Nearly 14.0% (13.8%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that parents are employed in the school where their child is attending and/or are made aware of employment opportunities through job programs.

Table 8  
Questions 30-31: Parents as Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30. Parents are encouraged by school staff to demonstrate their use of special knowledge, abilities, talents, and cultural experiences in school programs and activities, such as career days, mentoring programs, and tutorial sessions.</td>
<td>18.4%(16)</td>
<td>48.3%(42)</td>
<td>26.4%(23)</td>
<td>6.9%(6)</td>
<td>0.0%(0)</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Parents are employed in the school where their child(ren) attend and/or are made aware of employment opportunities through job programs</td>
<td>21.8%(19)</td>
<td>40.2%(35)</td>
<td>21.8%(19)</td>
<td>13.8%(12)</td>
<td>2.3%(2)</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 summarized the responses to questions 32-33, which asked about parents as advisors, advocates, and participants in decision making. While 5.9% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that parents are participants in decision-making committees and parent groups such as PTA committee, 57% of the respondents strongly agreed to the proposition that opportunities in the school to participate in such committees are publicized through bulletin board displays, flyers, newsletters, online websites, and or calendars of events.
Table 9  
Questions 32-33: Parents as Advisors, Advocates, and Participants in Decision-Making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total Responses (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32. Parents are participants in decision-making committees and parent groups such as PTA Committee.</td>
<td>57.6%(49)</td>
<td>32.9%(28)</td>
<td>3.5%(3)</td>
<td>5.9%(5)</td>
<td>0.0%(0)</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Opportunities in the school to participate in such committees are publicized through bulletin board displays, flyers, newsletters, online web sites, and/ or calendars of events</td>
<td>57.0%(49)</td>
<td>34.9%(30)</td>
<td>4.7%(4)</td>
<td>3.5%(3)</td>
<td>0.0%(0)</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final question was structured as an open-ended question to collect general comments or suggestions from principals on parental involvement in their schools. Thirty-three principals responded to the item. The responses collected were analyzed using a content analysis. Topics or themes mentioned most often are listed below.

1. Parents are welcomed into the school where they are involved in decision-making, planning, volunteering though PTA and School Community Council (39.9%).

2. Parents show less concern in getting involved at school (21.1%).

3. Parents hold a monthly meeting on how they can help to improve the school (12.12%).

4. There is a high level of parental involvement in the school (12.12%).

5. Schools use newsletters and other forms of communication to reach parents (9.09%).
6. Schools are working hard to improve parental involvement (9.09%).

7. Parents are provided with resources and are educated through computer awareness programs and workshops on how to get involved (9.09%).

8. A few schools acknowledged that they struggle in getting parents involved (6.06%).

Other responses were collected but were not cited as often as the ones mentioned above.

**Data Analysis**

**Areas of Agreement**

The vast majority of the findings for this study aligned favorably with the reviewed research and literature. The two main categories of variables with the highest percentages of responses congruent with previous research are the following:

Many principals (76.9%) felt strongly that parents were welcomed into the school at all times, which when combined with those who agreed (19.8%) totaled to 96.7%. Also, the distribution of the student/parent handbook at the start of the academic year was agreed upon by 71.9% of principals. This was a total of 94.5% when combined with the 23.1% of principals who agreed to this statement.

Furthermore, principals strongly agreed (64.8%) that information about school events is given out regularly to parents throughout the school year, and 33.0% of the principals agreed to this statement totaling 97.8%. In addition, the proposition that parents were invited to attend at least one school activity during the school year was strongly agreed to by 64.0%, making a total of 93.2% when the agreed percentage of 29.3% is added to it.
Areas of Disagreement

Perhaps more significant were the areas where the data reported disagreed with research endorsed practices or legal requirements. To the item, there is a parent resource center or space inside the school for parents, 24.7% of the respondents disagreed and 4.5% strongly disagreed. Also, to the proposition that a copy of the parent involvement “Home-School Partnership” Board Rule (required under NCLB) is given to parents, 20.5% of the respondents disagreed while 4.5% strongly disagreed, making a total of 25%.

To the statement that an educational agreement (or compact) is given to parents at the beginning of the school year, 18.2% disagreed while 4.5% strongly disagreed, making a total of 22.7%. Furthermore, to the proposition that the community involvement specialist or Parent Liaison actively recruits parents to participate in learning opportunities, 13.5% disagreed, 7.9% strongly disagreed, while 30.3% remained neutral.

Summary

This chapter presented the demographic data and responses from the survey. The data were summarized for each item using tables to show the percentages of the responses given for each alternative. The open-ended question was analyzed using content analysis to form categories that were developed into topics or themes, and the percentage of respondents who gave responses aligned with each theme were reported.
CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This study investigated the ways in which schools involve parents. Electronic survey software was used to collect data from principals in New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah, based on the availability of published email addresses. The study sought answers to the following question: *What are the ways schools get parents involved?* This chapter will summarize the study including its findings, conclusions, implications, future research, and summary.

Summary of the Study

Studies reviewed in the literature indicate that schools need to build parental involvement in school programs and determine how they can support their children’s education through the home. Studies pointed to the need to involve parents in areas such as pedagogy, planning, decision-making, and other activities (Epstein, et al, 1997). Also, studies found that parental involvement increase student’s achievement and school success (Harris, 1993). Despite the advantages and benefits of parental involvement, it is worth noting that schools and families face barriers to parental involvement such as time, inadequate communication, and lack of knowledge on how to involve parents. Furthermore, schools do establish good programs of parental involvement, but often fail to improve and sustain them.

The respondent principals represented elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools from small towns, rural, suburban and urban areas. Ninety-five (95) principals responded to the survey. The questionnaire was distributed to a sample of
approximately 600 principals. Of the returned surveys, 92.6% were completed; 7.4% had incomplete responses to the questions. One hundred ninety-one (191) emails were undelivered, and 314 other recipients did not respond to the survey. Of the 409 e-mails assumed delivered, the 95 questionnaires returned complete represented a 24% return rate.

**Findings**

In summary, over ninety-percent of the respondent principals agreed or strongly-agreed to the following:

1) Parents are welcomed into their schools,
2) Student-parent handbooks are given out at the beginning of the school year,
3) Information about school events is distributed regularly, and
4) Parents are invited to attend at least one school activity during the school year.

On the other hand, appropriately twenty-percent of the participant principals either disagreed or strongly disagreed to the following statements:

1) There is a parent resource center in the school,
2) A copy of the Home-School partnership Board Rule (required under NCLB) is given to parents,
3) An educational agreement or compact is given to parents at the beginning of the school year, and
4) A community involvement specialist or liaison person actively recruits parents to participate in learning opportunities.
Conclusions

*What are the ways schools get parents involved?* Given the question of the study, the highly positive findings for parental involvement practices were those considered common to many schools; e.g., welcoming parents into the school, distributing information about school events, inviting parents to attend school activities, and handing out student-parent handbooks at the beginning of the school year. While it was excellent to observe such strong approval for these items, for the purposes of this study special attention should be paid to the other list, as well.

Unlike the familiar practices executed by a majority of schools, the following less common elements contained practices that were newer, less familiar, more innovative and considerably less well-defined in proactive terms. They represent what Senge (1993) referred to as “the higher hanging fruit.” For example, the majority of respondent schools indicated not having a Parent Center. Such a place--where parents would be educated and trained to become involved—represents a long-term commitment, including planning, funding, allocating space, and staffing. As a whole, respondents lacked the Home-School Partnership Board Rule on parental involvement (a stipulation of NCLB). Furthermore, few respondents reported presenting an educational compact to parents at the beginning of the school year. Moreover, a substantial majority of the respondents lacked a community involvement specialist or another designated liaison to recruit parents to participate in learning opportunities.
It is worthy to conclude that a majority of the schools in the sample tend not to use less familiar and more innovative ways to get parents involved. It is imperative that schools increase their efforts in these challenging areas.

**Implications**

The implications for this research are summarized as follows:

1) Schools should increase their efforts in enforcing in following the directive of NCLB in giving parents a written agreement of home school partnership. Also, an educational agreement or compact should be given to parents at the beginning of the school year, so that parents become responsible in their role of educating their children at home.

2) Schools should allocate funding to build and staff a parent resource center within the school for parents, organize seminars to educate stakeholders, including parents, on how to get involved, and recruit a community involvement specialist who will make sure that parents are involved in the education of their children.

**Further Research**

This study sought answers to the following question: *What are the ways schools get parents involved?* From the findings of the study, it was noted that the majority of the schools were maintaining the traditional means of getting parental involvement. Further research could seek to answer the following questions:

1. Do school principals and teachers receive adequate education and training on parental involvement?
2. Do schools have sufficient funding to run home-school partnership programs?

3. Why are schools not using new and innovative ways to get parents involved?

A majority of the schools lack a parent resource center and a community involvement specialist to implement these resources. This might be as a result of insufficient funding, or a resistance to change to new and innovative ways to get parents involved.

**Summary**

The purposes of this study are listed below:

1) Determine ways schools engage parents,

2) Examine the levels of home-school communication, and

3) Identify the barriers to parental involvement and how they can be overcome.

Over ninety-percent of the participant principals agreed or strongly-agreed to the following:

1) Parents are welcomed into their schools,

2) Student-parent handbooks are given out at the beginning of the school year,

3) Information about school events is distributed regularly, and

4) Parents are invited to attend at least one school activity during the school year.

On the other hand, fewer than twenty-percent of the participant principals either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the following statements:

1) There is a parent resource center in the school,

2) A copy of the Home-School Partnership Board Rule (required under NCLB) is given to parents,
3) An educational agreement or compact is given to parents at the beginning of the school year, and

4) A community involvement specialist or liaison person actively recruits parents to participate in learning opportunities.

Despite being urged by experts and the government to get parents involved, this research has shown that schools have only tried to do so at a minimal level. The society is aware of the importance of parental involvement in their children’s education, as previous researches have shown. It is, therefore, time for schools to take parental involvement to a whole new level by creating new and innovative programs for parents to get involved.
Dear Principals,

As a Masters Student in Educational Leadership at New Mexico Highlands University, I understand that parental and community involvement is important in supporting our schools as they meet students’ needs. I therefore invite you to participate by completing a parent involvement survey which seeks to investigate the various ways schools get parents involved in the education of their children. I have designed a user friendly and quick to complete survey. The survey is anonymous and information about individual schools will be kept confidential. I am asking you to complete it no longer than November 6th, 2009. Please return the survey electronically by survey monkey.

I realize your time is valuable and limited. This survey should take no more than 20 minutes to complete and should present no more stress or risk than activities of a school day. Your cooperation in promptly completing and returning this survey will be greatly appreciated. (For the purposes of Human Subjects Review, please note that your participation is anonymous and voluntary and that completion and return of the survey constitutes your consent to participate.)

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me or my research sponsor at:

Sylvia Che, Primary Investigator
1010 San Francisco Ave.
Apt 305
Las Vegas, NM 87701
505-425-4280
Silnash2000@yahoo.com

Dr. Burns James Burns, Ed.D.
Research Sponsor
New Mexico Highlands University
Las Vegas, NM 87701
505 412-2609
jamesburns@nmhu.edu

Part I: Demographic Data

Instructions: Please place an “X” in the box next to the response.

1. State

☐ Arizona  ☐ New Mexico  ☐ Utah

2. School Type (Select all the school types you are leading as a principal)

☐ Preschool  ☐ Elementary School  ☐ High school  ☐ Middle School
3. Geographical region of the school

☐ Urban ☐ Suburban ☐ Small Town ☐ Rural

Part II: Survey Items

Place an “X” in the box that indicates your response: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 4 through 8. Parent Feelings, Attitude and Beliefs about Themselves, Administrators, Faculty and the School in general</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Parents are welcomed into the school at all times.</td>
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<td>5. Parents are clear about how they can get involved at school.</td>
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<td>6. Parents are comfortable in communicating with the school administrators (principal, assistant principal, dean)</td>
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<td>7. Parents’ contributions are valued by the school.</td>
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<td>8. Parents know how to get involved in their child’s education away from school.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions 9 through 11. Parent’s Knowledge of the School District’s Structure Organization</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>9. Parents understand the way the school system work.</td>
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<td>10. Parents know how to contact the administrators of your school.</td>
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<td>11. Parents know how the school district is structured.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questions 12 through 18: Home-School Communication</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Information about school events is given out regularly to parents throughout the school year.</td>
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<td>13. A student/parent handbook containing information about school policies is given out at the beginning of the school year.</td>
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<td>14. Parents are informed in writing about how they may contact their children’s teachers.</td>
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<td>15. Print material is made available to parents in their primary language</td>
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<td>16. A school calendar of activities for parents is distributed monthly.</td>
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<td>17. Parents are aware of the various ways to reach the school about their concerns.</td>
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<td>18. Parents utilize these various ways to reach out to the school.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions 19 through 22: Parents as Supporters</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19. Orientation meetings for parents about school procedures and programs are conducted at the beginning of the school year.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Parents are invited to attend at least one school activity during the school year. Example PTA, parent committee, etc</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. There is a parent resource center or space inside the school for parents.</td>
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<td>22. Parents are included in the planning and implementation of some school events.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions 23 through 26: Parents as Learners</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23. Learning activities for parents have been held in the school.</td>
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<td>24. The school encourages participation and learning opportunities for parents.</td>
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<td>25. Learning opportunity activities are scheduled at times favorable to parent participation.</td>
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<td>26. The community involvement specialist or Parent Liaison actively recruits parents to participate in learning opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questions 30 through 31: Parents as Resources</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>30. Parents are encouraged by school staff to demonstrate their use of special knowledge, abilities, talents, and cultural experiences in school programs and activities, such as career days, mentoring programs, and tutorial sessions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31. Parents are employed in the school where their child(ren) attend and/or are made aware of employment opportunities through job programs.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions 27 through 29: Parents as Teachers</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27. An educational agreement (or compact) is given to parents at the beginning of the school year.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>28. A copy of the parent involvement – “Home-School Partnership” Board Rule is given to parents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29. Resources such as pamphlets, videotapes, list of references and agencies that assist parents in helping their children are available at the school site for parents.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 32 through 33: Parents as Advisors, Advocates, and Participants in Decision-Making.</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32. Parents are participants in decision-making committees and parent groups such as PTA Committee.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>33. Opportunities in the school to participate in such committees are publicized through bulletin board displays, flyers, newsletters, online web sites, and/or calendars of events</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Question 34:** Make any further comments or suggestions on parental involvement in your school.
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