

2015

Perceptions of Parental Involvement Among Rural Parents, Teachers, and Administrators

Sandra Elaine Cheairs
Walden University

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Sandra Cheairs

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University

2015

Abstract

Perceptions of Parental Involvement Among Rural Parents, Teachers, and Administrators

by

Sandra Elaine Cheairs

MEd, Freed-Hardeman University, 2001

BS, Union University, 1997

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Walden University

June 2015

Abstract

Parents, teachers, and administrators have different perceptions of the importance and effects of parental involvement. A rural school district was experiencing low levels of parental involvement; therefore, to address that problem, the purpose of this concurrent mixed methods study was to explore the experiences and ideas of parents, teachers, and administrators related to parental involvement. The theoretical framework was based on Epstein's 6 types of parental involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating. Data were collected from parents ($n=67$), teachers ($n=4$), and administrators ($n= 3$) from 5 rural elementary schools. Instruments included Epstein's School and Family Partnership Survey and a qualitative questionnaire to examine the perceived effects of parental involvement. Descriptive analysis of the survey data indicated that parents wanted more communication from schools; teachers reported that active participation from parents is vital for student success, and administrators indicated the need to support both parents and teachers. Content analysis of the qualitative questionnaire determined common themes, indicating that frequent communication was an important factor in projecting student outcomes and future relationships within the learning community. The study contributes to positive social change by providing the local district with knowledge that supports parental involvement programs and provides ideas for improvement, which may ultimately improve student outcomes.

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to my husband, two sons, and other family members. With God's help, I have accomplished my goal. Thanks for your love along this journey by giving your support through prayer. I hope that my tenacity has motivated and encouraged you to move forward to accomplish your goals in life. I pray God's blessings on all of you.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

In order to successfully work with young children, education professionals must understand and appreciate their home settings. This means, in part, that one must be able to form a working relationship with the parents and family of the child. Part of that equation includes an understanding of the culture of the family and how it may affect parenting within that family. Rogoff (2003) supported this by stating that “people develop as participants in cultural communities: Their development can be understood only in light of the cultural practices and circumstances of their communities – which also change” (pp. 3-4). This study looked at the culture of rural western Tennessee families and how that culture influenced the ideas and opinions of parents about their level of involvement in local schools. Rogoff further stated that “parents do not face child-rearing issues on their own...each generation of parents relies on cultural practices that have developed historically to meet prior circumstances” (p. 110). So, how parents were raised and the rules and norms of the local society contributed to parental views and opinions about to all facets of children’s upbringing, including that of education. When parental history is a factor in a study, some areas to consider are racial socialization and racial identity, ethnic and cultural identity, religious or spiritual beliefs, language, and- where-applicable immigration and migration.

There is general agreement among educators that parental involvement contributes to students’ personal growth and achievement in any school (Irvin, Farmer, Leung, Thompson, & Hutchins, 2010). However, in one rural school district in western Tennessee, the perceptions, beliefs, and values of rural parents, teachers, and administrators were factors that decreased, or even negated student growth and affect the levels of parental involvement. Researchers observed

and concluded that such communities suffered from failures to thrive (Irvin et al., 2010). The annual Tennessee Report Card for 2010-2011 revealed that Tennessee schools were struggling to meet annual yearly progress (AYP). According to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), all schools must achieve 100 % proficiency in reading and math before the 2013-2014 school year (Barley & Wegner, 2010). This was an unattainable goal, but research indicated that student outcomes increased as a result of NCLB to the extent that there was a positive relationship between home-and school (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007; Kim, 2009; Ouellette & Wilkerson, 2008; Wanat, 2010). Therefore, programs for parental involvement helped students better meet the mandate of this legislation. When educators and families come together as a team, students not only succeed in school, but also in life (Green et al., 2007). According to Howley and Maynard (2010), although research has provided conflicting findings on the opportunities and challenges of rural school settings, researchers and educators agree that a parent's role is important in establishing a parent-school partnership. Parental involvement programs for rural communities work best when they respond to the particular features of the communities they serve and these features tend to be different from those of urban and suburban communities and are said to be more common in rural communities (Howley & Maynard, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Parent involvement is important in schools yet the degree of such involvement is not known in the rural school sites of this study. The purpose of this research addressed was how the relative perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators present barriers to effective parental involvement at five rural elementary schools in western Tennessee. The mandates of (NCLB) guided the educational direction of the school district. For example, in a speech given in March

2011, President Obama urged swift reform of the Act to close student achievement gaps. This plea also invited parents to become actively engaged in student learning.

President Obama stated:

We need to make sure that we are graduating students who are ready for college and a career in the 21st century. It is not enough to leave no child behind. We need to get every child on a path to academic excellence (Obama, 2011, p.1.

NCLB also included guidelines on how schools need to involve parents. According to Howley and Maynard (2010), parental involvement programs for rural communities work best when they respond to particular features of the community, such as low income areas and lack of or no employment. Thus, the western Tennessee school district under study implemented school-related activities, parent-teacher organizations, and community-wide computer programs through local churches to promote and enhance parental involvement within the school district.

Jesse (2010) explained that parental involvement included: (a) direct involvement in school management by being present in the schools (e.g., parent volunteers), (b) parent participation through family resource and support programs, such as community computer centers throughout the county, and (c) mentoring and tutoring programs such as an extended day school that addressed the academic needs of the students. Although efforts were made to promote parental involvement, there were barriers that impacted student learning, development, and achievement. The National Center for School Engagement (NCSE, 2010) indicated that the four common barriers were (a) attitudes, (b) logistics, (c) system barriers, and (d) lack of skills. In addition, recent research (Green et al, 2007; Kim, 2009; Ouellette & Wilkerson, 2008; Van

Velsor & Orzco., 2007; Wanat, 2010) indicated the following parental characteristics as potential obstacles:

- Limited education levels attained- (Green et al., 2007).
- Long term-low socioeconomic status- (Ouellette & Wilkerson, 2008; Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007; Wanat, 2010).
- Physically demanding jobs/labors with low pay- (Ouellette & Wilkerson, 2008).
- Low self-esteem of parents - (Kim, 2009; Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007; Wanat, 2010).

This research indicated that while the characteristics were common in most schools, they were more common in the rural schools where the study occurred. This included recorded evidence, such as parents' comfort level regarding cooperation with the school; grandparents as guardians- (which limited involvement and educational interest); and limited access to educational resources.

Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008) emphasized that parents enhance the atmosphere of the school when they visit, become involved, participate in governance, and celebrate the success of the school and student achievement. The challenge to leadership was to encourage, promote, build, and strengthen effective parental involvement at all ages, grade levels, and school settings to build and strengthen partnerships between the school and parents. This study was expected to contribute to the body of knowledge needed to address this problem nationwide, and especially in a rural elementary school setting, by examining factors that guided the perceptions of rural parents, teachers, and administrators.

Nature of the Study

This research study used a mixed-methods design to obtain and analyze information about the perceptions of rural parents, teachers, and administrators and how these perceptions become barriers to effective parental involvement and student achievement. The surveys were used to explore the trends, attitudes, and opinions of the learning environment (Creswell, 2009). Through the results of the surveys, I was able to gather information that measured the different aspects of the research, such as attitudes of parents, perceptions of student abilities, teachers' assessments of family engagement, and teachers' concerns about the level of parental involvement. The results of the surveys indicated what the barriers were to parents becoming more involved in schools. Finally, the surveys addressed perceived barriers of administrators for getting parents and teachers more involved in promoting student achievement. The administrators completed a separate survey. The research design of this study comprised both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The use of quantitative methods indicated if there was a significant relationship between the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators and parental involvement in a rural school setting. Through the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, the study explored the impact of parental involvement or the lack of it in this particular school district. The study provided information and ideas about how to develop a comprehensive program that included six major types of partnership activities. A more detailed discussion of this study design is given in Section 3.

Research Questions

The quantitative survey explored the experiences and ideas of parents, teachers, and administrators related to parental involvement. The quantitative survey questions focused on the

relationship between student outcomes and parental involvement, as well as on the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators about parental involvement in a rural area. The qualitative survey examined the perceived barriers of parental involvement and solutions to overcome the barriers to effective parental involvement.

Quantitative:

1. What are the reported experiences of parents, teachers, and administrators with parental involvement efforts at their schools?
2. What are the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators about current parental involvement efforts at their schools?

Qualitative:

1. What are the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators about the effects of parental involvement?
2. What are the suggestions of parents, teachers, and administrators for improving parental involvement?

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to explore the experiences and perceptions and ideas of parents, teachers, and administrators related to parental involvement. The study also explored the perceptions of rural parents, teachers, and administrators about parental involvement in a rural elementary school setting at the fifth grade level. In the past, educational research examined the perception of parents and teachers in depth. This research study **also** examined the perceptions of the administrators and showed how their perceptions affected

parental involvement as well. The findings allowed the audience to pinpoint perceptions that impacted parental involvement and share suggestion for improving parental involvement.

Theoretical Framework

The review of literature revealed Epstein's theoretical framework as a supportive resource for parental involvement, it lent substantial support in building a professional community of practice. The first strategy is parenting, which improved recruitment and training of parents. Parental involvement activities enabled parents to participate in and observe school-related events. Parenting classes assisted families with parenting skills, family support, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions to support learning at each age and grade level (Epstein & Salinas, 1993). Second, NCSE (2010) indicated that communicating with families about school programs and student progress builds trust among the learning community. Epstein and Salinas (1993) also described communicating as a school-to-home and home-to-school program. With effective communication, the school/ family partnership was impacted greatly. Third, volunteering offered participation from the learning community, which included students, parents, teachers, and other stake holders. This parental involvement type created an understanding, readiness, and awareness of student learning (Epstein & Salinas, 1993). Fourth strategy is learning at home and it involved families doing: homework, setting goals, and participating in other curriculum-related activities. Parents were involved in helping children connect family learning to school learning (Epstein & Salinas, 1993; NCSE, 2010). The fifth strategy is decision making that included families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy activities through school councils or improvement teams, committees, and parent organizations (Epstein & Salinas, 1993). The sixth strategy, collaborating with the community, included(a) coordinating resources and services for families,

students, and the school with community groups, including (b) business, (c) agencies, (d) cultural and civic organizations, and (e) colleges or universities (NCSE, 2010). Epstein and Salinas (1993) noted that parental involvement was a positive way to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

Definitions

In the context, of the research, several terms carry unique, research based meanings. The following list of terms was integral to this study.

Achievement: The act of achieving is something achieved by great effort. One author emphasized that keeping a laser focused on test scores was the only way for a school to improve (Jesse, 2010).

Collaborating with the Community: Coordinating resources and services from the community for families, students, and the school, and providing services to the community (Epstein & Salinas, 1993).

Communicating: Conducting effective communications from school-to-home and from home-to-school about school programs and student's progress (Epstein & Salinas, 1993).

Decision Making: Including families as participants in school decisions and developing parent leaders and representatives (Epstein & Salinas, 1993).

Hawthorne Effect: Process where human subjects of an experiment change their behavior due to the fact that they were being studied (Shuttleworth, 2009).

Learning at Home: Involving families with their children on homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions (Epstein & Salinas, 1993).

Parenting: Providing positive support physically, mentally, emotionally, financially, spiritually, and socially. To nurture and guide children in right way (Epstein & Salinas, 1993).

Parental involvement: The participation, cooperation, and collaboration of the school, parents, and students (NCSE, 2010).

Qualitative research questions: Open-ended general questions that the researcher would like answered during the study (Janesick, 2004).

Quantitative research: inquiry approach used to describe trends and explain relationships among variables (Fink, 2006).

Rural community: An area that has a population of less than 2,500 people (Grant, 2009).

Volunteering: Organizing volunteers and audiences to support the school and students. Providing volunteer opportunities in various locations and at various times (Epstein & Salinas, 1993).

Assumptions

The study was conducted under the assumption that parents, teachers, and administrators agreed to answer the survey questions completely and honestly. It was assumed that parents, teachers, and administrators were a representative sample of the rural school population. It is further assumed that this research study offered insight into strategies that would significantly increase parental involvement in the western Tennessee rural school district sites. The participants were from various ethnic backgrounds; therefore the researcher assured that all parties are represented equally based on the demographics for the school system.

Limitations

A potential weakness of the study was the small sample size for administrators and teachers. The research study included the following limitations: The research population was composed of only five elementary schools in western Tennessee. The surveys targeted a population of the parents of fifth grade children, fifth grade teachers, and the

administrators/designee from the five elementary schools. Other probable limitations to the study included (a) beliefs, (b) perceptions of teachers and administrators, (c) lack of parental commitment, and (d) confusion about the role of teachers (Jesse, 2010).. Furthermore, other researchers have indicated that there may be other impediments to student success and educational attainment:

1. Parents who have less education sometimes do not feel adequate to teach their children (Green et al., 2007).
2. Families with low socioeconomic status were not able to provide sufficient resources for learning. (Wanat, 2010).
3. Parents with difficult working hours were not able to be actively involved (Ouellette & Wilkerson, 2008).
4. Parents with bad school experiences were reluctant to getting involved with their own child's education (Kim, 2009).

Scope and Delimitations

The study investigated parental involvement through the perceptions of rural parents, teachers, and administrators, which are stakeholder in the learning community. The study was limited to five elementary schools in a western Tennessee school district and the study involved parents and teachers of students in the fifth grade only. The sample consisted of those parents, teachers, and administrators who volunteered to participate. Implied consent was used thus no signatures were collected. Participant's completion and return of the surveys indicated if they choose to participate.

Significance of the Study

It was anticipated that this study would be significant to parents, teachers, and administrators in the west Tennessee school district. Understanding the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators would help bring an awareness of the barriers that were often associated with parental involvement or lack thereof, such as parents level of education; teachers pre-conceived ideas about parents participation level; and administrator's knowledge of how to bring parents and teachers together to benefit student learning. Furthermore, the results of this study were as expected to be significant because it offered other rural schools whether local or national with information and ideas about a comprehensive program that included six major types of partnership activities (Epstein & Salinas, 1993). Finally, this study was expected to create social change by promoting parental involvement, one of the most important factors in students' worth, dignity, and development.

Summary

This study examined the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators in five rural elementary schools in western Tennessee at the fifth grade level. From these perceptions, barriers were created, which impacted the levels of parental involvement. The research study used Epstein's six types of parental involvement to enable schools to understand, maintain, strengthen, change, or add practices of partnership. In the remaining part of Section 1, the following was discussed: nature of the study, research questions, the purpose, the theoretical framework, key terms, and significance of the study. Section 2 provided the literature review, consisting of peer-reviewed articles that compared-, and contrasted the different aspects of parental involvement. Section 3 provided a description of the research method included: the research design and approach, setting and sample, treatment and questions, data collection, data

analysis and validity, and protection of participant's rights. Section 4 provided the results of the study and Section 5 provided the interpretation of the results and recommendations for future studies.

Section 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences and ideas of parents, teachers, and administrators related to parental involvement in a rural elementary school setting. This literature review described the importance of parental involvement. Researchers agreed that when parents were involved in their child's education, it was the most positive influence on academic achievement and social adjustment (Cotton & Wiklund, 2008; Gordon & Louis, 2009; Hawley 2007; Howley & Maynard, 2010; Jesse, 2010; Southwest Educational Development, 2009).

Therefore, the purpose of this literature review's peer reviewed articles was to explore the perceptions of rural parents, teachers, and administrators about parental. The following topics were addressed: (a) educational aspects, (b) family aspects, (c) perceptions, (d) barriers, and (e) solutions as they related to parental involvement in a rural elementary school setting.

Search Strategy

Literature for this review was obtained from the following databases: Sage Online, ERIC, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. Two other electronic resources proved useful: Joyce Epstein's School and Family Partnership and Walden Doctoral Study. The following key words were used: Parent, parental, involvement, rural, education, perceptions, teachers, administrators, perceptions, strategies, and activities

Review of Related Literature

The review of related literature focused on the aspects of parental involvement, which included education, family, perceptions, barriers, and solutions. The literature included approximately 85 peer-reviewed articles that addressed the relationship between the two

variables, parental involvement and the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators. The peer-reviewed articles explained the impact of parental involvement or lack thereof in rural school communities by comparing and contrasting different points of view presenting pros and cons of parental involvement. The related literature review also provided a reference to past research that strengthened the mixed- method, concurrent, transformative design.

The related literature discussed Epstein's six types of parental involvement activities. It discussed strategies that enabled schools to understand, maintain, strengthen, change or add practices of partnership (Epstein & Salinas, 1993). Finally the review corroborated the facts and authorized by the cited resources from the Walden's Library research database and other resources that were connected to the research study.

Educational Aspects

No Child Left Behind and Common Core Requirements

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB, 2002) was perhaps one of the greatest challenges for rural education. According to Powell, Higgins, Aram, and Freed (2009), NCLB not only impacted the curriculum and instruction decisions of rural principals and teachers, but it had a long-term overall effect on rural education. The purpose of the NCLB Act was to ensure that 100% of students in Grades 3 through 8 were able to read and perform at a proficient level in math and science by 2014. Powell et al. (2009) noted that the NCLB impacted rural schools in ways that were different from large or suburban schools. For example, a third-grade reading score in a K-6 school in rural Missouri will have a greater impact on the school's AYP (Annual Yearly Progress) than a reading score from one student in St. Louis, Missouri (Powell et al., 2009). Therefore, understanding how to plan effective curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of all students was of great importance in rural settings.

In order to understand the effects of NCLB, Powell et al. (2009) conducted two studies. In Missouri, the authors surveyed elementary school principals, and in Maine rural teachers were interviewed.

Three goals were used to guide the study:

1. The first goal was to determine what curricular and instructional changes were made as a result of the implementation of NCLB.
2. The second goal was to learn if there were changes in the resources available as a result of NCLB and how they benefited students.
3. The third goal was to give a voice to rural educators with regard to both intended and unintended implications of NCLB policies as implemented in rural areas (Powell et al., 2009, pp. 20-21).

The NCLB Act was restructured to be a flexible system that offered empowerment to teachers and principals, focused more resources on low-performing schools, and employed advanced assessments capable of measuring individual student growth. The accountability structure was fashioned into one of shared responsibility for improvement and one that rewards excellence (Obama, 2011).

Another education initiative that was put in place in the state of Tennessee was the Common Core Curriculum Standards. The demands of the global economy have forced our educational system to ensure all students across the nation are receiving the same level of education. In July 2010, the State Board of Education adopted Common Core Curriculum Standards. The Common Core was a joint effort between the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governor's Association (NGA). The purpose of the standards was to have fewer, higher, and clearer academic standards, which focused on Math and

English Language Arts K-12. These standards were designed to address: alignment with college and work expectations; current educational research and evidence; benchmarking to high performing countries and states; and rigorous standards emphasizing skill and application of content. In other words, the standards prepared students to be college and career ready.

Therefore, through the implementation of Race to the Top program, the United States Department of Education funded a state consortium for the development of common assessment aligned to the Common Core Standards (The common core state standards initiative: Race to the top implementation status, 2010). Although these educational changes were challenging, it is a work in progress to benefit the future outcome and success of rural students, as well as those in urban and suburban districts (The common core state standards initiative).

Rural Education

Current educational reports showed that nearly four out of every ten public school students attended rural schools in Tennessee. Barley and Beesley (2007) agreed that further research is required to address the current issues of parental involvement in rural communities. During the 2011-2012 academic year, more than 375,000 student attended rural schools in Tennessee compared to the national average of only 141, 486 students. In addition, the percentage of rural students living in poverty in Tennessee (46.8%) was also higher than the national average of 41% (Strange, Johnson, Showalter, & Klein, 2012).

Barley and Wegner (2010) emphasized that parents were the key factor in implementing supplemental educational services (SES). Barley and Wegner (2010) noted three key characteristics of successful SES: a positive approach from district and school personnel, working closely with service providers, and informing and supporting parents in their roles. Likewise, Gary (2007) revealed that parental involvement included educating parents on how

important they were to the educational and social growth of their children. The research indicated that rural schools faced challenges to supplemental education services. “The challenges involved included geographic location, lack of qualified tutors, inadequate transportation to and from service locations, inconsistent internet access and limited number of providers who actually offered services in the area” (Barley & Wegner, 2010, p. 3).

In reference to rural education, Demi, Coleman-Jensen, and Snyder (2010) indicated that “student aspirations and future goals were strong predictors of actual attainment” (p. 3). The research reported that because rural families often experience poverty, educational attainment was sometimes limited. Similar to Wanat (2010), Demi et al. (2010) revealed that socioeconomic status is often lower for rural families and was closely related to rural poverty. The research also indicated that in rural areas, the nature of parental bonds hindered rather than encouraged postsecondary school attainment. The authors noted that the rural school often served a social and cultural function for the community, which included church and family.

Research have further suggested that because rural communities were often small and tight knit, there was increased parent involvement in virtually every aspect of their children’s lives, including in education. When compared to urban and suburban communities, rural parents were reported to have a more significant level of involvement in their children’s education than the urban and suburban community types. However, when parental communication with children about the school day was measured and controlled for poverty, rural communities were no different than any other community (Strange et al, 2012).

Furthermore, a positive parent/child relationship translated to encouragement and expectations to attend college. Demi et al. also noted that when students, teachers and parents get along, academic achievement increased and the dropout rate decreased. In addition, schools

that have supportive and caring teachers were more likely to have students that like school and feel connected to the school. A student's perception of the school was associated with future educational outcomes (Demi et al., 2010).

In the past, educators have used several methods to motivate students and encourage parental involvement. McCollough (2011) showed how a family science program was used to involve parents of a rural school community. Because science was considered to be a nonrelevant subject, the student and parent participation was very limited. Similar to Demi et al. (2010), McCollough (2010) indicated that low socioeconomic households expressed inferiority about their present circumstances, which was related to lack of motivation. Nevertheless, the program was able to reach the Hispanic population, which dominated the rural school community. Although the schools struggled with effective partnership with poor minority parents, the family science program was used as a tool to motivate and encourage students to pursue postsecondary education.

Education is constantly changing; therefore qualified teachers and supportive resources were also essential for rural school success. Barley and Beesley (2007) identified four components to success in rural area schools: leadership, instruction, professional environment, and community and school environment. Leadership and instruction were two important cornerstones of any school. With effective leadership and quality instruction, students perhaps have a chance to succeed and move beyond the rural area situation, which was often associated with poverty. McCollough, (2011), and LaRocque, Kleiman, and Darling (2011) pointed out that when the community and school environment, which included parents were working together to help students, student outcome increased.

Teacher Quality

For years educators have worked to improve student achievement and teacher quality. According to Ganley, Quintanar, and Loop (2007), teachers quality was achieved through accountability, collaboration, and social justice. The research indicated that when teachers were empowered and motivated with knowledge of quality teaching, it lead to academic success. Although barriers like poverty and language (Irvin et al., 2010;McCollough, 2011) were a challenge, teacher expectations were an important factor in the academic success of all students.

Ganley et al. (2007) emphasized that collaboration was one of, if not perhaps the most important, factors to student success. Furthermore, the authors stressed that respect for others was a cornerstone to learning. Collaboration was considered to be an important tool that strengthened individuals and groups as well. The research indicated that the role of collaboration was the main difference between high-and-low performing schools. The authors also suggested that teacher-to-teacher collaboration was the foundation for successful schools.

Finally, Ganley et al. (2007) revealed that the self-fulfilling prophecy was often translated by teachers when they voice remarks such as, “She’s not motivated,” “His parents don’t care,” or “She’s definitely not college bound.” (p. 5). The authors confirmed that this attitude does not promote learning. However, the research indicated that star teachers were known to have success with the same students. The goal of the study was to advance social justice in an effort to reach all students. These types of attitudes could be prevented if there was a framework for consistent communication between parents and teachers. In the western Tennessee district, there was no model for parental involvement of rural parents. This study established a framework for a centralized policy.

Family Aspects

Parental Involvement

The effects of parental involvement were more powerful if they were started earlier in the child's life at the elementary level (Cotton & Wikelund, 2008). Their research study was significant because it also provided solutions to overcoming the barriers of effective parental involvement. In addition, Epstein and Salinas (1993) and Project Appleseed (2008) introduced effective strategies to increase parental involvement. The strategies included the six practices that allowed parents to become active participants in their child's education:

1. Parenting assisted in understanding and building confidence about parenting, child and adolescence development, and changes in home conditions for learning as children through school (p. 4).
2. Communication promoted interactions with teachers and ease of communication with school and teachers (p. 6).
3. Volunteering created awareness that families were welcomed and valued at school (p.3)
4. Learning at Home provided an understanding of instructional program each year, and what child was learning in each subject (p. 7).
5. Decision making promoted shared experiences and connections with other families (p. 8).
6. Collaborating with community brought an awareness of school role in the community, and community support and contributions to the school (p. 10).

This involvement often took many forms such as participation in parent-teacher organizations, volunteering at school, checking homework, collaborating with the school on the child's

progress, having a conversation with the child about the school day or just talking about future education endeavors (Hinkle, 2011).

Educators and researchers have long agreed that parental involvement in every area is significant to a child's physical, emotional, and mental development. Evans, Radunovich, Cornette, Weins, and Roy (2008) discovered that positive engagement was directly related to parent, child, and family functioning.

The perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators have become one of the greatest challenges to student achievement and positive home-school relationships (Green et al., 2007; Kim, 2009; Ouellette & Wilkerson, 2008; Wanat, 2010). However, attention to the relationship link of parental involvement to student education and success, have expanded to some of the highest levels of government in many ways. This was a positive development, especially for rural settings where the expenditure per student was lower than in urban and suburban schools (Strange et al., 2012).

Educators, theorists, and researchers have defined parental involvement in several ways. Kim (2009) and Green et al. (2007) classified it as having different domains, parental involvement at home and parental involvement in the school. From this viewpoint, parents have different perceptions about their role in their child's academic success. Kim eluded that when parents were active in their children's school lives by volunteering in school, participating in school activities, and attending teacher-parent conferences, the children achieve more in school. According to Kim's research, parental involvement has highlighted the visibility of the parents in the school as an important factor in the academic success of the child.

Similarly, Wanat (2010) explained the types of themes found in comments from parents: (a) types of involvement that parents found meaningful, (b) ability of all parents to contribute to

schools, (c) parent involvement in decisions about student learning, curriculum, and classroom policies, and (d) home-school relationships. Like Kim (2009), Wanat (2010) showed that satisfied parental involvement focused on school activities and policy decisions, and parents who were dissatisfied with home-school relationship valued involvement with their children at home. Wanat (2010) used Epstein's (2002) framework to describe the types of parent involvement based on parent satisfaction or dissatisfaction illustrated their perceptions. Satisfied parents practiced the following:

- Were involved in ways that required direct contact with the school.
- Communicated often with teachers about their children.
- Volunteered regularly.
- Served as representatives on committees.
- Collaborated on various programs.

On the other hand, dissatisfied parents exhibited different actions:

- Concentrated on parenting and helping with learning activities at home.
- Did not volunteer in school PTA activities.
- Said they did not think their children would benefit from PTA involvement, even though they paid dues.
- Parents came to school if they had a complaint.
- Did not build a relationship with teachers through interventions (Kim, 2009; Wanat, 2010).

The NCLB (2002) challenged parents, teachers, and administrators to assure 100% student proficiency in core subject areas by 2014 (Barley & Beesley, 2007). Therefore, the ideals of a cooperative and stable education community were realized when there are mutual feelings of

responsibility, communication, collaboration ownership, respect and support from school community leaders towards parents (Giles, 2006).

Parental involvement was classified in several ways. According to J. S. Lee and Bowen (2006), there are five types of parental involvement that have an impact on elementary school success that were related to race/ethnicity, poverty, and parent educational attainment. The five types include: involvement at school, parent-child educational discussions, helping with homework, educational expectations, and parental management of a child's time on literacy activities. The research indicated that parents with different demographic characteristics showed different types of involvement and that the types of involvement exhibited by parents from dominant groups had the strongest association with educational success.

Since education was perceived as a viable weapon against poverty and social inequality, increasing parental involvement has been identified as a possible strategy for reducing the achievement gap in all types of school communities, including rural learning communities. Parental involvement at the school included parent-teacher conference programs featuring students and volunteer activities. Parental involvement at home included providing help with homework, experience at school, and structuring home activities. Furthermore, J. S. Lee and Bowen (2006) suggested that parental involvement may be attenuated by two factors. Parents of children with low achievement often encountered resistance to their involvement in the schools. For example, rural parents that were less educated with physically demanding jobs often have low self-esteem (Green et al., 2007; Ouellette & Wilkerson, 2008; Wanat, 2010). This was a common occurrence in rural environments.

The research examined ways to measure parent involvement. The activities at school revealed a relationship between parent involvement and academic achievement (Green et al.,

2007; Kim, 2009; J. S. Lee & Brown, 2006). The research noted that home involvement included reading, cooking, discussing, and going on field trips with children, which were not associated with academic attainment. However parental attitudes, educational expectations, and aspirations for their children were often associated with academic achievement in elementary school. The author discovered that social and cultural achievements have an impact on student achievement in several ways. For example, social capital was obtained through visits to the school, upcoming events on available enrichment activities.

A case study completed by Smith (2006) was conducted in order to gain further knowledge of parental involvement among low-income families. The research considered parents in two different ways. First, strategies were used to meet the need of the parents of the low-income neighborhood residents. Next, strategies were created and implemented to enhance the involvement of parents at Clark Elementary, the research site. The research was conducted through interview, observations, and document reviews. These were the same type of data tools proposed in this mixed methods study. Smith (2006) posed two broad research questions:

1. How did a low-income school create intentional parental involvement strategies?
2. What were the effects of these strategies?

Like Jeynes (2007), Smith (2006) described the concerns of the parents, teachers, and administrators in regard to parental involvement. Similarly, Green et al., (2007; Ouellette & Wilkerson, (2008); and Wanat, (2010) along with Smith identified barriers like job situation (unemployed or underemployed), income level, and limited English skills. Therefore, programs were implemented to address the needs and strengths of the neighborhood residents. The research study helped strengthen the communication between the family and the school. Smith

(2006) explained that because of the research, teachers were able to develop an understanding of the families and life circumstances of the families that tend to be judged when students were challenged academically. The research also defined parental involvement from a broader perspective. Although the parents of Clark Elementary were not involved in the same manner as the counterparts in the proposed study, participation in any way was considered parental involvement.

For years, it has been proven that parental involvement improved overall student success (Gary, 2007; J. S. Lee & Bowen, 2006; Smith, 2006; Townsend, 2010). Although parental involvement decreased when students reached middle and high school, Bartel, (2010) and Sirvani (2007) pointed out that when parents were involved; there was an increase in the academic achievement and success of students. The research described two groups of students, the control group and the experimental group. The experimental group parents received monitoring sheets, with homework and test grades twice a week in addition to the regular school progress reports. In contrast, the control group parents did not receive monitoring sheets, only the required school progress reports (Sirvani, 2007).

Sirvani (2007) posed three questions that impacted the effects of parental participation:

1. What are the effects of parental involvement on student achievement in mathematics courses?
2. Are female and male students affected differently when students' parents become involved in their children's education?

3. How does parental involvement affect lower performing students when they are compared with other lower performing students that have parental participation?
(Sirvani, 2007, p. 35).

The results indicated that the experimental group scored higher than the control group. The research suggested that when parents were involved and children know that they were concerned about their grades, performance levels increased (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Stewart, 2008; Trask-Tate & Cunningham, 2010).

For years, researchers and educators have discovered that parental involvement was directly connected to a child's quality of life. Cripps and Zyromski (2009) reported that parental involvement affected a student's (a) sense of psychological well-being, (b) self-esteem, (c) self-evaluation, and (d) peer relationships. Like Sirvani (2007), Stewart (2008) Griffin and Galassi (2010), Cripps and Zyromski agreed that parental involvement directly impacted student success.

Student Outcomes

In education, several factors contributed to student success. Irvin et al. (2010) described how school, community, and church activities promote academic success of low-income African Americans in the rural Deep South. Irvin et al. suggested that as students get older they become more involved in activities with the school, community, and church, which promoted personal achievement and self-esteem. These activities supplement the traditional classroom learning activities for rural students.

Irvin et al. (2010) described the positive relationship between school, community, and church activities and student achievement. Benefits from these activities included: attendance, interpersonal competence, education, occupational aspirations, and academic efficacy. Like

Demi et al. (2010), Irvin et al. (2010) indicated that these activities could lead to postsecondary enrollment, a sense of belonging, and adoption of positive social norms. Although rural African Americans youth were more likely to experience low achievement, the research indicated that by participating in activities, youth from low-income communities and homes may overcome resource limitations that impacted educational attainment (Irvin et al., 2010). The research further suggested that participation in church activities were important for the African American adolescents. In addition to being a social activity, church involvement aided in racism and segregation encounters by African Americans in the rural Deep South (Irvin et al., 2010). The authors suggested when students were able to alleviate these adversities; it allowed them to focus on other important tasks such as learning.

Family Socioeconomic Status

Bakker, Denessen, and Brus-Laeven (2007) indicated that there is a relationship between the school achievement of pupils and their socioeconomic background. Onzima (2010) studied the socioeconomic status of parents and reported that this one factor had a greater effect on student performance than the parent's education level or occupation. In Hope County, the per capita income was listed as \$28,718. A low level of academic achievement was linked to lack of parental involvement in education.

According to Bakker et al. (2007), the effects of involvement of lower socioeconomic status parents in the education of their children were different from that of middle or high socioeconomic status parents. Because of these differences, teachers often perceived parental involvement as being insufficient as it related to student achievement. Therefore, the research posed two questions:

1. To what extent do teacher perceptions of parental involvement in the education of their children match the information provided by the parents themselves?
2. Does teacher perception of parental involvement in the education of their children or the information provided by the parents with regard to their involvement in the education of their children relate most strongly to pupil achievement?

The research focused on school attendance and attainment. Sheppard (2009) used the student's perception of schoolwork and parental involvement to guide the study. According to Sheppard, socio-economic backgrounds with lower levels predict poorer performance, but once at school actual academic performance became the predictor of attainment. The research indicated that students with poor attendance perceived parents to be less involved, which contributed to their low academic performance. Sheppard explained that parental involvement was very important in the education of children. When parents were actively involved in a positive way, children were motivated to achieve.

The research concluded that during the primary year's parental involvement has a greater impact on student development. Sheppard also indicated that parental involvement was the process that accounts for the relationship between socio-economic background and pupil achievement. Like Gary (2007), Sheppard noted that when parents know their responsibility they helped their children function in the school environment. In rural environments, parents were unsure of their responsibilities. Hinkle (2011) argued that parent passivity may be linked to a lack of knowledge of rights, poor understanding of policies and procedures, wariness of school authorities based on prior experiences. Problems also existed with rural transportation concerns and unavailable child care.

In this western Tennessee district, school officials have noted a pattern of passive parental involvement. In the schools that were predominantly minority, parents have communicated a lack of knowledge regarding district policies, issues with transportation, conflicting work schedules, and trust in school officials to handle both behavior and academic progress.

Family Support

Researchers explored many factors that contributed to student success. Houtenville and Conway (2008) explored the effects of school resources on parental involvement and parent perceptions of school resources. Like Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008), Houtenville and Conway confirmed that parental involvement was a significant impact on student outcomes. The research recognized an important fact about school resources. When resources were targeted to improve academic achievement, parents may become involved. The authors explained that this situation happened when tutorial programs were in place and class sizes were small. The research concluded that parental effort was affected by the level of school resources that were implemented.

Family influence has a great impact on student motivation and achievement. Urdan, Solek, and Schoenfelder (2007) completed research on five prototype patterns that may or may not impact student outcomes. The authors identified and described the five prototype patterns - Family Obligation, Family Pleasing, Family Support, Aversive Family Influence, and No Influence. According to Urdan et al. (2007), the Family Obligation Pattern included students that strived to please family members for their contributions to their academic success. Like the Family Obligation Pattern, the Family Pleasing Pattern demonstrated the desire to make family members proud of academic success. The authors indicated that this pattern was the most

common pattern among the five. To show the thoughts of a second-generation student, the authors inserted a quote in the research to show an expression of gratitude.

It is very important to me to do well to show him and my mom that all the effort they put in throughout the years has paid off. I am doing well because of what they have done for me. I want them to feel the payoff. (Urduan et al., 2007, p. 12)

The Family Support Pattern described authoritative parents who hold high academic expectations while providing support (Urduan et al., 2007). In contrast, the Aversive Influence Pattern described negative family role models and the individual's desire to achieve in spite of the low expectations of family members. Finally, the No Influence Pattern was characterized by no family support or involvement.

Urduan et al. (2007) explored and compared high, middle, and low achievers. The first- and- second generation students were classified as high achievers. These achievers were noted for having a strong sense of family obligation and determination to make parents proud. These students often serve as role models for younger siblings. Like high achievers, the middle achievers were also determined to please their parents academically. Their goals were motivated by the desire to avoid being poor, so they utilize their academic opportunities as a pathway out of the poverty that was often experienced by rural students.

Although these students desire to achieve, the authors indicated that the middle achievers were moderately successful in school perhaps due to a lack of resources and the limited education opportunities of parents. On the other hand, the low achievers did not have a desire to please parents, so they were much less motivated to achieve academically. Urduan et al. (2007) suggested that the low achievers were content in just passing a grade. From this study, the

authors concluded that family influence on motivation was very important and was expressed in several ways.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), there was a shift in the family demographics, which have a great impact on student future success. S. M. Lee, Kushner, and Cho (2007) described the family structure as the single and greatest predictor of student success. S. M. Lee et al. (2007) recognized the importance of parental involvement in single-parent families. The authors gave positive effects of parental involvement such as:

- Boost the natural talents of students.
- Improved school behaviors.
- Increased achievement in adolescents.
- Increased student aspirations.
- Increased math achievement.

Parental involvement was considered one of the most important factors in the educational accomplishment of students. However, LaRocque et al. (2011) suggested that an important missing link in educational equity was consistent parental involvement. The authors emphasized how families, community groups, and educators have an important role to play in the educational success of students. The research examined what schools can do to implement effective parental involvement. The traditional types of involvement were discussed such as volunteering at school, attending school functions, and helping with homework. The role of parents included a strong partnership between the parents and the school community (Gary, 2007; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008; Stewart, 2008).

LaRocque et al. (2011) indicated that the type of roles between parent and the community have been identified as parent focused, school focused and partnership focused. For teachers, the parent focused constructs means empowering parents by giving those teaching roles. The school focused approach emphasized effective separation of home and school. Last, the partnership focused approach involved the family and school working together cooperatively (p. 117).

Physical barriers were described as a lack of attending school activities. LaRocque et al. (2011) suggested that this barrier was significantly improved by providing a schedule or accommodation by offering an alternate time and location for meetings or activities. The authors also explained that parental involvement programs were effective in resolving family, cultural, and economic differences. Finally, the authors described several ways to encourage and enhance the school community:

- School administration facilitated the development of a parental involvement committee.
- Teachers received professional development in communication skills necessary to work with families.
- Colleges of education included the teaching of how educators can successfully include parents in education.
- Support networks provided the forum for parents to motivate each other.
- Students played a role in getting their parents excited about school happenings (LaRocque, et al., 2011, p. 120).

Business and community organizations provided financial and service support so that parents, teachers, and students can spend time together. Through two-way communication, the roles and expectations of parental involvement became a reality.

In previous educational research, education and school-related activities have been considered social functions. Smith (2006) suggested that social capital was obtained through school visits and parent participation. Student success depended upon active involvement from parents in every area of a child's life. Based on education, theorists Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988) stressed that the transformation of human capital occurred when parents were actively involved in the educational growth of their children.

Wang (2008) indicated that the lack of parental involvement was due to several restrictions based on a misunderstanding of current U.S. society, which resulted in a breakdown of social capital. Wang explained that social capital in the family was discussing with children, monitoring and helping with homework, helping the children to take advantage of the financial, cultural and human resources available to the family.

Perceptions of Parents, Teachers, and Administrators

Parents' and Teachers' Perceptions

The perceptions of parents towards involvement were based on several life context variables. Green et al. (2007) indicated that parental perceptions of personal skills and knowledge shape their ideas about the active involvement of school-related activities. For example, if a parent felt more knowledgeable in math than in science, they would assist with math homework. Therefore, parents were more likely to be motivated in activities if they believe they possessed the skills and knowledge required for a specific parental involvement activity.

Furthermore, other factors like time and energy, socioeconomic status (SES), parent home-based and school-based involvement, and age-related differences were life variables that impacted parental involvement and student achievement (Green et al., 2007).

Focusing on the relationship between leadership and student success, Gordon and Louis (2009) explained the relationship between principal and teacher perceptions of parent and community involvement. The researchers used principal and teacher surveys as independent variables. These variables indicated that schools with evidence of shared leadership between principals and teachers were more likely to collaborate with parents and community (Gordon & Louis, 2009). In addition, the literature suggested that principals perceive greater levels of parental involvement influence in the lower grades, which was consistent with the literature (Cotton & Wiklund 2008; Gordon & Louis, 2009). Finally, Gordon and Louis (2009) suggested that the more experience principals have with community interactions, the more likely they were to be open to more parental influence and the daily practice in their building.

The perceptions parents have about their self-worth were also a barrier to parental involvement and student outcome. These perceptions often were related to the attitudes of teachers and to school climate (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007). Like Green et al. (2007) and Ouellette and Wilkerson, (2008), Van Velsor and Orozco, (2007) found that parent work schedule prohibited total commitment to the child's educational success. In addition, transportation, language, and parents' intellectual abilities were factors that were often associated with parental involvement and student outcomes.

In the minority sector of the community in western Tennessee, parent perceptions of racism as well as their own negative experiences were related to at-home parental involvement while inversely related to at-school involvement (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007). For example, if

parents perceived that teachers discriminated against them based on race during their own school years, they would be reluctant to get involved. Van Velsor and Orozco (2007) suggested that teachers contributed to the level of school involvement of low income parents. Parent perceptions included the teacher generalization about families of low income and their value to the educational structure. A negative perception held by rural parents was that they are not viewed as equal partners when they interact with the teachers due to socioeconomic status. This may be a factor in all of the target schools at some level. Three of the schools were predominantly white and 56.8% of the population was classified as white persons, while 41.4% of the population was classified as black persons.

In addition, Oullette and Wilkerson (2008) discussed the perceptions social and professional status of educators and of education trainers. The research focused on the use of technology to increase parental involvement. For example, the research noted a pilot project that incorporated the use of technology to deal with logistical barriers of recruitment and retention for parents involved in parent management training programs. The aim of the project was to provide parents with technological support as a way to connect to the school environment. Because technology was essential in our global economy, preparation and readiness was essential for our students. However, rural areas became part of the digital divide for rural students. Lack of digital access in certain areas make connectivity between homes and schools a real challenge. In some areas, even cell phone service was spotty. This created a communication barrier between the parents and the school. Although rural students have access to technology when they were in the classroom, this would not be true at home. Presently, only 50% of residents living in rural areas have access to high speed internet. Factors that prohibit access have been identified as

geography, low population density, and the high cost of the service (Sheehy, 2011). In the study area, this presented a real problem with communication between parents and the school district.

The study of Patel and Stevens (2010) also focused on the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators, but takes a different approach to parental involvement. The authors examined perceptions of parents, teachers, and students concerning academic abilities affected by parent involvement and teacher implementation of school programs for involvement (Patel & Stevens, 2010). In the study, Patel and Stevens indicated that perceptions of student ability held by teachers, parents, and students have an influence on parent and teacher actions regarding family and school partnership. The research showed that when the families and teachers were in agreement, students reading levels were at or above the class.

Families and communities play an important role in student success. Farrell and Collier (2010) used an ecological framework and qualitative design to explore perceptions of family-school communities at elementary schools that serve a United States population. The research interview themes revolved around six themes: the importance of communication, communication types and formats, school climate, teacher preparation, roles and skills, and contextual influences including considerations for military families (Farrell & Collier, 2010).

The research claimed that families play an essential role in ensuring children's readiness to learn. Due to cultural changes in education reforms and parent-school partnership role realignments, there was a shift in the shared responsibilities of school and families in student success (Farrell & Collier, 2010).

Like Green et al. (2007), Farrell and Collier (2010), Oulette and Wilkeson (2007), Wanat (2010) concluded that family factors such as cultural traditions, socioeconomic status, education, expectations, and individual factors often hindered or limited the time and material resources

needed to communicate. Because a respect for one's culture was important, translating cultural understanding into clear communication was challenging (Farrell & Collier, 2010). For example, family discipline policies were contradictory to the beliefs about family-school relations.

According to Farrell and Collier (2010), when family-school communication was effective, families obtain support, teachers experience acceptance, and both experience a sense of efficacy. The research also indicated that high parental involvement promotes children's academic achievement and social adjustment.

The role of the parent was very important in the success of school-home relationships. Chikoko (2008) explained the role of the parent in school governance in rural Zimbabwe and the perceptions of school administrators, teachers, and parent governors. Chikoko focused on school organization, curriculum, employment, and appraisal of teachers, staff, and financial resources. Like Barley and Wegner (2011), Wanat (2010), and Gary (2007), Chikoko explored decision-making areas that enhanced parental involvement.

According to Chikoko (2008) parents in Zimbabwe have only basic literacy skills. Therefore, the decision-making power was left in the hands of the administration. Because financial resources were limited, parent governors were excluded from the decision-making process. The research described three types of decentralized authority that impacted the active role in school decision making. Chikoko indicated that administrative control was when school leadership power is in the hands of the administration. This control was focused on increasing accountability for expenditure of resources. Secondly, Chikoko revealed that because teachers were the closest to the learners, they use their knowledge in such areas as budget, curriculum, and sometimes in personnel. Finally, the third control engaged parents and the community. It is within this relationship that the community was able to reflect the values of the local community,

thus allowing the parental community the privilege of participating in school-decision making. Zimbabwe insisted that teachers and principals acknowledge the community as an important factor.

There were several barriers that influenced the level of parental involvement in a school district. Griffin and Galassi (2010) examined parental perceptions of barriers to academic success. Researchers Farrell and Collier (2010), Gordon and Lewis (2009), and Kim (2009) agreed that parental involvement have a positive effect on a child's social and academic success. Griffin and Galassi also indicated that parental involvement was shown to affect student achievement, reduce problem behaviors, and create a positive sense of self-efficacy.

Griffin and Galassi (2010) used Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) five levels of parental involvement to frame the middle school study for parental involvement. The first level described motivational constructs for parental involvement such as parents' belief, parents' self-efficacy, and parents' perceptions of their role in their children's education. Griffin and Galassi described role construction as parents' beliefs about home and school roles. Parental self-efficacy was parents' belief about their ability to help their children succeed in school. The research indicated that higher levels of parental involvement with elementary, middle, and high school students were due to parental self-efficacy. The research suggested that parents may be motivated to get involved if they believe that they have the ability to be effective.

The second level described types of parental involvement that parents used during involvement activities. Parents used values and goals, home involvement, school communication, and school involvement to enhance student learning. Griffin and Galassi (2010) described student perceptions of parent perception in the third level of parental involvement, which focused on encouragement, modeling, reinforcement, and instruction. The fourth level

explained student attributes conducive to achievement, and the final level focused on outcome measures of student achievement.

The research revealed that in spite of barriers such as inadequate instructional resources, student hunger, lack of parental involvement, school and student safety; all schools were expected to show proficient or above on state assessments regardless of the population (McCoach et al., 2010). In addition to the barriers mentioned above, background characteristics like SES, ethnicity, and language also predicted student achievement (McCoach et al., 2010).

In regards to parental involvement, McCoach et al. (2010) suggested that the potential barrier to parental involvement rests on parental perception. The research indicated that when parents perceive that the teachers were sensitive to student culture they are more likely to get involved. The study also noted that there are several factors that help or hinder parental involvement.

Administrator's Perceptions

Administrator perception was an important part of the educational process and may vary according to school level. For example, some school personnel perceived that the parents of adolescents should have less involvement in school activities and at the secondary level, school personnel discouraged parental involvement (Richardson, 2009). According to Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, and Davis (2007), effective parental involvement goes far beyond the traditional view of parents as chaperones and cookie bakers. It was essential that administrators establish an environment that encouraged both parents and teachers to work together. Therefore, implementing programs that included parents in all areas of education was vital. Programs such as Total Quality Management supported a philosophy that empowered, people focusing on the

system and reducing barriers to generate a quality product (Richardson, 2009). Effective parental involvement was considered to be a quality product.

As the administrator, promoting parent activity in the school community was of great importance. Richardson (2009) suggested that as the school leader, principals should assure parental involvement in the development of annual goals and policies that reflect strategies for continuous effective involvement. Like Richardson (2009), Epstein's framework indicated that parental involvement included families as participants in school decision and in government and advocacy activities that allowed the parents to become actively involved because often rural schools were linked to the population served and possess a strong sense of identity.

Richardson (2009) indicated that the principal's responsibility include providing information to parents who were not involved in their child's education. According to Richardson, school personnel under the leadership of the principal strengthened parents' appreciation of their role by providing positive feedback at every opportunity. Similarly, Epstein's (2002) framework suggested that communication was a key component between the home and school. Richardson emphasized the importance of identifying what principals considered as acceptable rules for parental involvement. Future research was important to identify strategies required for principals to facilitate parental involvement because as administrators, they set the standards for parental involvement in their respective schools.

The goal of education was for every child to receive a high-quality education. Therefore, the implementation of effective leadership along with effective educational reforms determined the outcome of future success of students. Seid (2010), a school principal, discovered that only 32% of her time was spent on instructional time and from this information School Administration Management (SAM) was implemented. According to Aguilar et al. (2011),

school leadership was the second most important factor in student achievement. From the analysis of data and school wide observations, it was concluded that effective leadership have a positive impact on student achievement.

Barriers

For years, researches have revealed several barriers to school improvement. According to Turney and Kao (2009), race and immigrant differences were barriers that prohibited parents from communicating with their children's teachers and schools. Researchers have indicated that parental involvement was a form of social capital. The authors noted that when parents were involved it socialized children and this involvement suggested that education was important. Another benefit to parental involvement was the opportunity for parents to interact with other parents, teachers, and administrators. Finally, when parents were actively involved it allowed them to become a participant in their children's education.

Turney and Kao (2009) discussed barriers to school involvement such as socio economic status, time, and family structure. The research indicated that parental involvement was based on resources that were available, and the higher the socioeconomic status the more likely parents' were involved. Furthermore, parents work schedule and family structure have a great impact on students' ability to perform. Turney and Kao utilized a parental involvement questionnaire to determine the level and amount of participation given by parents. The questions addressed attendance at different types of school activities such as: (a) attended an open house or back-to-school night, (b) attended a meeting of PTA/PTO, or parent-teacher student organization, (c) went to a parental advisory group or policy council, (d) attended a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference, (e) attended a school or class event, (f) volunteered at the school or served on

a committee, or (g) participated in fundraising for the school. The results indicated the higher the values, the involvement (Turney & Kao, 2009, p. 259).

Furthermore, Turney and Kao (2009) explored the barriers to lack of parental involvement, which were as follows: (a) inconvenient meeting times, (b) no child care, (c) problems with safety going to school, (d) not feeling welcomed by school, (e) problems with transportation, (f) problems because they speak a language other than English and meetings are conducted only in English, (g) not hearing about interesting things, and (h) family members not getting time off from work. The results revealed the total number of barriers, and the higher the levels, the greater the obstacles to parental involvement at school.

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) used an explanatory model to help educators better understand the barriers to parental involvement. Because parental involvement have been considered as one of the most important factors of education, the authors explored the gaps between the rhetoric on parental involvement and the typical parental involvement practices found in all schools. From the results, Hornby and Lafaele discovered that teachers wanted the level of parental involvement to be increased, and parents wanted more involvement in their child's education.

In an earlier study, Hornby (2000) combined several models to create a framework that explained hierarchies of parental involvement. The models included Epstein (2002) eight types of parental involvement: communication, liaison, education, support, information, collaboration, resource, and policy. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) used the areas of family, school, and community to describe the functioning of both schools and families. The explanatory model was used to clarify and explain the barriers in the four areas. Individual parent and family barriers focused on parents' beliefs, current life contexts, perception of involvement, class, ethnicity, and

gender. The child factor addressed age, learning difficulties and disabilities, gifts and talents, and behavior problems. Next, parent-teacher factors focused on different agendas, attitudes, and language. Lastly, societal factors elaborated on historical, demographical, political, and economic issues (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) concluded that the model provided an explanation for the gap between parental involvement rhetoric and parental involvement reality. The research also suggested that parental involvement was shaped and limited by a range of barriers related to parents, children, and societal issues. Furthermore, the model contributed to the development and enhancement of parental involvement by: (a) helping educators understand and encourage effective parental involvement overall; (b) generating ideas for further research on parents' beliefs and perceptions of parental involvement; (c) utilizing pre-service and in-service training for educational professionals (e.g., teachers, counselors, social workers, and educational psychologists (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011, p. 44).

For years, researchers have explored barriers that hindered the educational process Turney& Kao (2009), Hornby & Lafaele (2011). Teasley, Gourdine, and Canfield (2010) used a mixed method research study to better understand the barriers to school social work practices. The authors described factors such as collaboration with other school-based professionals, an understanding of school politics, identification of informal power brokers, use of expert knowledge, and practice wisdom (p. 93) as barriers to school-based professionals like social workers.

According to Teasley et al. (2010), cultural competence barriers included racial and ethnic stereotypes, discrimination, exclusion or isolation because of sexual orientation, gender inequalities, school personnel and attitudes, biased curriculum and pedagogical practices,

resource inadequacies, cross-cultural incompetence, and a lack of understanding and strategic planning for students' development or physical challenge in the classroom (p. 91). Although the barriers mentioned above hindered practice interventions, the knowledge of successful intervention advocacy, efficacy for school social workers were important for student success (Teasley et al., 2010). The authors indicated that good community and family relations were essential when establishing preventive and problem-solving measures in collaboration and consultation with local community leaders, businesses, and institutions (Teasley et al., 2010).

On the other hand, parent attitudes and perspectives were interpreted as rich and relevant for children's education. The research explained the differences, with ethnic-cultural background usually predicting the types and levels of involvement. Denessen, Bakker, and Grieveld (2007), described the barriers that prevent minority parents from being involved: (a) Parents lack language skills to communicate with the schools; (b) Parents hold schools fully responsible for their child's education; (c) Parents do not seem to be interested in school matters. Like Farrell and Collier (2010), Denessen et al. (2007) described parent perceptions as a "traditional culture in which power, distance, and role divisions were clear: Parents were responsible at home; teachers were responsible at school" (p. 30). Griffin and Galassi (2010) also described other types of involvement such as parents giving encouragement, sharing values, and sharing home involvement.

Solutions

Like, Gordon and Louis (2009) and Jeynes (2007), Stewart (2008) emphasized that school and school related activities played a pivotal role in the socialization of children. Stewart incorporated school-level factors in the research to show how it affected student academic outcome. The research explored how school structural characteristics like school size, school

poverty, school location, school social problem, school cohesion, school attachment, school motivation, school involvement, peer attachment, and parent involvement, determined students outcome (Stewart, 2008).

First, Stewart (2008) used the individual-level characteristics to show the efforts and commitment of the student. Student efforts have a significant positive effect on academic achievement especially math gains and how students feel about their school is positively related to academic achievement. The more a student was involved and felt apart in school related activities the more likely to have better success. Furthermore, Stewart indicated that positive peer relationships promoted psychological and life skills for children and maybe related to academic achievement and motivation.

Similar to Hawley (2007), Cotton and Wikelund, (2008), and Jesse(2010), Stewart (2008) described parental involvement as a positive and integral part of student achievement. Like Gary (2007) and Luneburg and Ornstein (2008), Stewart explained that parental involvement included a partnership between the parents and school community. When parents were able to have influence on the school academic policies, it demonstrated active involvement, which positively impacted and influenced student achievement. Next, Stewart research focused on school structural characteristics and student achievement. Stewart indicated that schools influence the academic and social development of students through their structure, staffing, organization, resources, and climate. The research focused on three aspects of school climate: school culture, school organizational structure, and school milieu.

The last aspect of school climate was the school milieu of the school. This aspect referred to the background characteristics of the school environment. Factors such as ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, teachers experience and training were shaping student values, beliefs,

attitudes, and behavior regarding educational achievement. In addition the school location was also associated with student achievement. According to Stewart (2008), students in large urban schools was subject to conditions of violence, high dropout rates, vandalism, inadequate equipment and facilities, greater numbers of inexperienced teachers, student and teacher alienation, and academic failure. Furthermore, a schools socioeconomic status affected the levels of human, physical, and fiscal resources available to educate students. The same was true for rural students.

Home and school partnership was essential to student achievement and increased levels of parental involvement. Bartel (2010) described home and school factors that impacted parental involvement in a Title 1 elementary school, like the targeted schools. The research focused on specific factors such as: helping with homework, attending school events, and talking with the teacher about homework. Bartel explained that factors influencing involvement at home were the same for Title 1 parents as they were with parents from a higher socioeconomic status.

Like Gary (2007), Bartel (2010) discussed the importance of helping parents know and understand their role in their child's education. On the other hand, the research pointed out factors that negatively influenced involvement such as parents not understanding their role, parents not knowing how to help, and parents letting their own negative school experience interfere with supporting the education of their own children.

Bartel (2010) shared strategies that were used to increase parental involvement like parent education and adult education classes. Furthermore, the research indicated that securing and maintaining parental involvement was not always easy, even though the ultimate goal of parental involvement was to increase student achievement and close the gaps in student performance. Bartel used the framework from Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, and Van

Voorhis (2002) to organize a teacher staff survey. The questions were based on how often or frequently school personnel performed the following actions:

1. Parenting- helping families establish a home environment conducive to support children.
2. Communicating- designing effective forms of school-to-home communications about school programs and student progress.
3. Volunteering- getting parents' help and support and organizing them.
4. Learning at home- helping parents understand how to help their children at home.
5. Decision making- developing parent leaders.
6. Collaborating- using resources from the community to strengthen their school's programs and practices (Bartel, 2010, pp. 214-216).

Through the years researchers and educators suggested several ways to improve the partnership between parents and schools. Long, (2012) described six of the most common communication challenges within the school learning environment. In addition, the author gave field-tested solutions to solving the challenges below:

1. Challenge 1: Teachers do not have an understanding of parent's concerns.
Solution: Listening and providing opportunities for parents to get familiar with the school through meetings, visits, and tours (Long 2012). For example, establishing programs formed by parents, teachers, students, and community partners who meet to build bridges between families and schools
2. Challenge 2: Teachers concern was parent misunderstanding of their children's challenges.
Solution: Teaching parents to use the data.

Long (2012) indicated that the best way for parents to gauge and guide the progress of their children is by monitoring grades, homework, and school attendance. The author suggested that schools develop programs to train parents on how to access and interpret their children's data.

3. Challenge 3: Parents do not feel like they are a part of the collaborative process.
Solution: Establishing programs that will include most parents in the collaborative process. Long, (2012) suggested extending these programs to all nationalities so that every child will receive academic support.
4. Challenge 4: Only fifty-four percent of teachers felt that parents do their part at home to ensure that children get the most out of classroom learning.
Solution: Holding team meetings with parents and teachers to collaborate on student achievement. At the team meetings, the teacher models activities that the parents can do at home with their children and then parents practice those activities with each other in small groups. Parents also shared tips and tricks to overcome homework or subject challenges with their kids (Long 2012, p. 41).
5. Challenge 5: Only seventeen percent of teachers felt that their opinions were taken seriously by parents.
Solution: Supporting student achievement by agreeing on core values from parents and teachers.

Long (2012) emphasized three core values that were important for the success of the collaborative relationship between parents and teachers: (a) families and teachers were equally important co-educators; the family was the expert on the child and the teacher on the curriculum; (b) a positive communication between teachers and parents

was crucial in order to effectively share information about academic status and address communication barriers; (c) teachers must visit all students and families to break to cycle of mistrust.

6. Challenge 6: Less than half of the parents felt teachers hold enough conferences or meetings with them.

Solutions: Reaching out to all families to build the learning community and create trust among the learning community.

Long (2012) noted that families rely on the schools to reach out to them. Furthermore, the author stressed the importance of working together to help build better relationships within the learning community.

Summary

The characteristics of rural schools differed and tend to affect students on a negative or positive level based on location, size, technology resources, and preparedness of the staff, parental involvement and the socioeconomic status of the parents making up the community. Rural schools were generally small compared to urban schools, but despite this fact, most researchers agreed that in order for the students to thrive socially and academically, there were factors that must be accounted for in the formula for success. First on the list are strong school community relations. This was a fact that has been upheld by numerous researchers (Bakker, et al. 2007; Causey, 2009). When a school system have strong parental involvement, student outcomes were positive and lifelong (Hinkle, 2011) .

Secondly, there also have to be a positive school climate. This was driven by the perceptions of the administrators and teachers. It must also be interwoven with parental involvement (Aguilar, 2010) in rural communities, a positive school climate was absolutely

necessary for parents to feel as if they were equal stakeholders and not spectators to the educational progress of their children. Therefore, this study included all three levels of stakeholders; parents, teachers and administrators.

Technology resources were also important. When the Common Core Standards replaced the current standardized tests for the state, students were required to complete their tests online. This required computer skills for both parents and students. Parents have to assist their children in preparing for the test and the school will need good technology resources for students who were taking the test and for communication with parents concerning the test readiness activities (Sheehy, 2011). However, because of the urgency to close the digital gap for community families, a lot of rural internet providers were selling lower computer setups to rural families at greatly discounted rates.

Therefore, the literature advocated for schools to expend resources to better train parents on how to help their children, on building bridges of communication with parents in the community, factoring in the unique characteristics of the community being served and assessing the skills of the staff hired to drive student outcomes.

Section 3 provided a description of the research methods. This section included: the research design and approach, setting and sample, treatment and questions, data collection, data analysis and validity, and protection of participant's rights. Section 4 provided the results of the study and Section 5 provided the interpretation of the results and recommendations for future studies.

Section 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to explore the experiences of parents, teachers, and administrators about parental involvement in a rural elementary school setting at the fifth grade level. The research also sought to offer solutions to overcoming barriers that prevented effective parental involvement. The researcher used surveys to obtain quantitative data that reflected the opinion, trends, and perceptions of all parties' involved and qualitative data to provide support to the study.

Research Design and Approach

This study was based upon the education beliefs and practice of parents, teachers, and administrators in a rural setting. A mixed-methods design was selected because it gave me greater insight into the minds and actions of the research participants. The data analysis uncovered the real reasons why certain parents were or were not involved at their child's school. Using both approaches in conjunction with each other increased the overall strength and accuracy of the study (Creswell, 2012). From the data collected concurrently during the 2013-14 school year at each elementary school the study reflected the level of parental involvement in each school and it provided pertinent information that strengthened or established parental involvement programs within the learning community.

Settings and Sample

The population for this research study consisted of parents, teachers, and administrators from five rural elementary schools located within a western Tennessee school district. The research study was projected to be small because the research only involved approximately 275 fifth grade parents, 15 teachers, and five administrators at each school. Because families were

represented by multiple caregivers like grandparents, aunts, and foster parents, the research study sought to include a response from the primary caregiver. The eligibility criteria for participation was that the administrators and the teachers work at one of the five schools listed in the research and that the teachers were assigned to the fifth grade level. The parent respondents were eligible if they were guardians or biological parents of the fifth grade students in the western Tennessee district. There were also different socioeconomic levels represented in the individual families.

The United States Census (2010) reported that the per capita income for Hope County was \$26, 834. All of the targeted schools were classified as Title I schools. This designation meant that at least 40% of the enrolled students qualify for free or reduced lunch. The school district served 4,347 students in pre-k-12, and it spent an average of \$7,813 per pupil yearly. Of this amount, 63% was spent on instruction, 30% on support services, and 7% on other elementary and secondary expenditures. The school district has an average of 14 students for every full-time teacher. The county also served 13% special needs children and 1% English language learners. The demographic data were arranged from the largest to the smallest schools (Hope County Public Schools,2012) and are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

School Enrollment of Five Rural Elementary Schools in Western Tennessee

Elementary School	Enrollment	Ethnicity	% Free/Reduced Lunch
Whitehall White (29%) Hispanic (2%) Other (1%)	928	Black(69%)	95
Middlegate White (88%) Hispanic (1%) Other (2%)	458	Black (8%)	77
Autumnwood White (13%) Hispanic (1%) Other (2%)	362	Black (86%)	97
Germanwood White (74%) Hispanic (1%) Other (2%)	274	Black (24%)	65
Hornlake White (93%) Hispanic (13%) Other (1%)	175	Black (5%)	47

Note. Source: Hope County Public Schools.

Treatment

This mixed methods strategy utilized both types of research methods, quantitative and qualitative. A social science theoretical perspective was aimed at exploring the phenomenon of parental involvement in the rural education setting. The data collection phase began concurrently

with a School and Family Partnership survey, which examined the trends, attitudes, and opinions of administrators, parents, and teachers (Creswell, 2009; Epstein& Salinas, 1993).

The study was designed to address the following research questions:

Quantitative:

1. What are the reported experiences of parents, teachers, and administrators with parental involvement efforts at their schools?
2. What are the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators about current parental involvement efforts at their schools?

Qualitative:

3. What are the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators about the effects of parental involvement?
4. What are the suggestions of parents, teachers, and administrators for improving parental involvement?

Context and Strategies

In this study, the researcher examined the low levels of parental involvement and the experiences and ideas of parents, teachers, and administrators related to parental involvement. A mixed methods study was utilized to build and provide support through a parental involvement program. Creswell (2009) also noted that this type of concurrent design was typically used to explore a specific theoretical perspective. Thus, the data were collected in one phase. Fifth grade parents received a letter of Invitation/Consent Form (hard copy), which informed the parents of the purpose of the research, the nature of the study, and role of the participants. The Invitation/Consent Form provided parents with contact information and implied consent was used, thus no signatures were required. At the same time, fifth grade teachers received the same

letter of Invitation/Consent Form through their email, which was obtained through the school district website. The letter informed teachers of the purpose of the research, the nature of the study, and role of the participants, and contact information. Implied consent was used for teachers, thus no signatures were required. Finally, the five elementary administrators also received the same Letter of Invitation/Consent Form through their email, which was also obtained through the school district website. Administrators were informed of the purpose of the research, the nature of the study, role of the participants, and contact information. The administrators also used implied consent and no signatures were required.

Quantitative Sequence

The quantitative instrument used in this study was Family and Community Partnership Survey (Epstein & Salinas, 1993) that were purchased from Johns Hopkins University and they were developed specifically for parents, teachers, and administrators (see Appendix B, Appendix D, & Appendix F). The researcher was given permission to modify the instrument (Appendix G). The concepts measured by this instrument were the reported experiences and perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators regarding parental involvement in a western Tennessee school district. Furthermore, the survey would allow the participants to give suggestions for improving parental involvement.

From the parent, teacher, and administrator surveys, two categories of questions were selected to determine the participant's parental involvement and perception concerns. The parents' quantitative survey examined how they viewed the teachers and administrators at their child's school and how these perceptions impacted their level of involvement (Table 2). The teacher quantitative survey addressed the experiences and perceptions of teachers in relation to how they viewed parental involvement at their school (Table 3). Administrator quantitative

survey focused on the experiences and perceptions of administrators in relation to how their perceptions impacted their interaction with parents and teachers (Table 4).

The scoring method for participants responses were based upon a 4-point rating scale (e.g., from (*strongly disagree = 1 pt.*) to (*strongly agree = 4pt.*). Scores were tabulated by counting the number of points for the parental involvement question and then counting the number of points for the perception question. From the parent quantitative survey, Question 3 was selected for parental involvement experiences and Question 1 for parents' perceptions. From the teachers' quantitative survey, the researcher selected questions that were based on teachers' parental involvement in their school and perceptions ideas. Question 6 was selected for parental involvement and Question 8 was selected for the teachers' perceptions. As for the administrators, Question 3 addressed parental involvement experiences and Questions 1, 2, 4, and 5 focused on the administrators' perceptions. The researcher counted the number response for each question to get a total for each category.

Validity is the degree to which a study accurately reflects what the research is attempting to measure. The purpose of the research study was to explore the experiences and ideas of parents, teachers, and administrators regarding parental involvement. Therefore, a mixed methods design was used, which includes quantitative and qualitative instruments. Using both approaches in conjunction with each other increased the overall strength and accuracy of the study (Creswell, 2012). The quantitative instrument, Epstein and Salinas School and Family Partnership Survey was used for the quantitative data collection for parents and teachers (Appendix B and Appendix D). The parents' survey focused on ideas and practices of parent involvement, which included attitudes, opinions, and self-assessment of their involvement at their child's school. As for teachers, the survey questions asked for ideas and possible practices

to improve educator and family partnerships (Epstein & Salinas, 1993). The administrators' quantitative survey (Appendix F) consisted of questions from the parents and teacher survey, but the questions/subsequent comments addressed administrators' perceptions for getting parents and teachers more involved in promoting student achievement. The participants personal assessment was based upon a 4-point rating scale (e.g., from (*strongly disagree = 1 pt.*) to (*strongly agree = 4pt.*)). The survey statistics were developed by Johns Hopkins University, but modified for agreement by the researcher.

Through the results of the survey, I was able to gather information that measured the attitudes of parents and their involvement; teachers' assessments of family engagement and teachers' concerns about the level of parental involvement, and administrators' perceptions about working with parents and teachers. Henrichsen, Smith, and Baker (2008) noted that validity in data collection means that the findings represent the phenomenon that the research was claiming to measure. Epstein's parental involvement survey questions explored the experiences and ideas of parents, teachers, and administrators regarding parental involvement. Furthermore, Epstein's parental involvement model served as the theoretical framework for the research study.

After receiving IRB approval # 03-07-14-0078236, the researcher personally distributed the research packets to the five elementary schools. The teachers gave the research packets to fifth grade students and they gave them to their parents. The Letter of Invitation/Consent Form informed parents that participation was on a volunteer basis and Implied Consent was used, thus no signatures were required. The multistage or clustering procedures was used because it identified the groups or organizations. Creswell (2009) described clustering as the procedure, where the researcher first identifies clusters, obtains names of individuals within those clusters, and then samples within them. To assure quality, make the initial contact, and initiate more

parental involvement, the researcher distributed 275 research packets to each of the five elementary schools. The research packet consisted of the following: a letter of invitation/consent form, quantitative and qualitative surveys, and a different color self-addressed envelope with the school's address to mail back the completed surveys. The purpose of the different color self-addressed envelope was for the school office to be able to distinguish completed surveys (gold envelope) from uncompleted surveys (white envelope).

The parent research packets were distributed personally to fifth grade teachers. The teachers gave the research packets to fifth grade students and they gave them to their parents. The Letter of Invitation/Consent Form informed parents that participation was on a volunteer basis and Implied Consent was used, thus no signatures were required. Upon completing the quantitative survey (Appendix B), the parents mailed the surveys back to the school in a gold envelope labeled completed survey with the school's address. The completed surveys were mailed back to the school or given to the fifth grade teachers, who then returned them to the school's office un-opened and the researcher, picked up the unopened survey packets weekly. Of the 275 parents' survey packets, 67 completed and returned the quantitative survey. The data collection took 6 weeks.

At the same time, 14 teachers received an email from the researcher containing a Letter of Invitation/Consent Form informing teachers that participation was on a volunteer basis and Implied Consent was used, thus no signatures were required. Quantitative survey(Appendix D) was to be completed online, but with a link to complete the online survey using SurveyMonkey. The quantitative survey questions were entered into SurveyMonkey by the researcher. From the 14 teachers, four completed the online survey and it was scored and analyzed using

SurveyMonkey. This information was kept secure through password access. The data collection took 6 weeks.

Five administrators also received an email from the researcher and it contained a Letter of Invitation/Consent Form informing administrators that participation was on a volunteer basis and Implied Consent was used and no signatures were required. Quantitative survey(Appendix F) was to be completed online, but with a link to complete the online survey using SurveyMonkey. The quantitative survey questions were entered into SurveyMonkey by the researcher. Only three of the five administrators completed the online surveys. The administrators' online survey was scored and analyzed using SurveyMonkey as well and this information was kept secure through password access. The data collection took 6 weeks.

Qualitative Sequence

The qualitative data was collected by using tally sheets/marks, which were researcher-completed instruments. The surveys were designed determine the ideas, opinion, and perceptions of the participants regarding parental involvement. From different qualitative surveys, the participants expressed their ideas, opinions, and perceptions on parental involvement, which show validity. From the responses, themes and categories were established within the data. For example, the parents' qualitative survey three categories were established: communication, relationships, and teacher/school inadequacy. Next, for teachers, three categories were established: communication, education for parents and participation in school activities. The administrators' three categories were: communication, parental involvement, and making contact from the school learning community. All groups of participants agreed that communication was

an important factor in projecting student outcomes and future relationships within the learning community.

The qualitative survey was included within the survey packets that were distributed to parent participants and emailed to teachers and administrators through a Letter of Invitation/Consent Form, which specified that the surveys were anonymous and participation was on a volunteer basis. To assure quality, make the initial contact, and initiate more parental involvement, the researcher personally distributed 275 research packets to each of the five elementary schools. The research packet consisted of the following: a letter of invitation/consent form, quantitative survey, qualitative survey, and a different color self-addressed envelope with the school's address to mail back the completed surveys. The purpose of the different color self-addressed envelope was for the school office to be able to distinguish completed surveys (gold envelope) from uncompleted surveys (white envelope).

The parents' qualitative survey (Appendix I) was included in the research packets and distributed personally to fifth grade teachers. The teachers gave the research packets to fifth grade students and they gave them to their parents. The Letter of Invitation/Consent Form informed parents that participation was on a volunteer basis and Implied Consent was used, thus no signatures were required. Upon completing the qualitative survey, the parents mailed the surveys back to the school in a gold envelope labeled completed survey with the school's address. The completed surveys were mailed back to the school or given to the fifth grade teachers, who then returned them to the school's office un-opened and the researcher, picked up the unopened survey packets weekly. Of the 275 parents' survey packets, 37 completed and returned the qualitative survey. The data collection took 6 weeks.

At the same time, 14 teachers received an email from the researcher that included a Letter of Invitation/Consent Form informing teachers that participation was on a volunteer basis and Implied Consent was used. Qualitative survey(Appendix J) was to be completed online, but with a link to complete the online survey using SurveyMonkey. The qualitative survey questions were entered into SurveyMonkey by the researcher. From the 14 teachers, four completed the online survey and it was scored and analyzed using SurveyMonkey. This information was kept secure through password access.

Administrators also received an email from the researcher and it contained a Letter of Invitation/Consent Form informing administrators that participation was on a volunteer basis and Implied Consent was used. Qualitative survey(Appendix K) was to be completed online, but with a link to complete the online survey using SurveyMonkey. The qualitative survey questions were entered into SurveyMonkey by the researcher. Only three of the five administrators completed the online surveys. The administrators' online survey was scored and analyzed using SurveyMonkey as well and this information was kept secure through password access.

As an educator, I have become familiar with the aspects of rural living such as: socioeconomic status, poverty, and lack of job opportunities, which impacted parental involvement in rural education. From these experiences, I am still learning how to address the issues of rural education and parental involvement. Exploring the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators helped to promote the goals of the research study, which was to increase and enhance parental involvement in a rural school setting.

To assure reliability, the researcher collected quantitative and qualitative data as a means of triangulation. Therefore, the qualitative data were embedded with the quantitative data and

provided support for the research study. The qualitative data were used as a tool to follow up on issues, patterns, or opinions noted in the quantitative results. The qualitative data were collected by utilizing a survey that consisted of five questions, which were geared to provide a supporting role in the study. The surveys were analyzed for themes and categories, which addressed the perceptions and parental involvement concerns from all groups of participants (Appendices I, J, and K).

Data Analysis and Validation

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences and ideas of rural parents, teachers, and administrators as they relate to parental involvement and student achievement. The quantitative data were collected by using prepared surveys purchased from John Hopkins University whereas; the qualitative data were compiled from a survey designed for each group of participants. The qualitative data were embedded into the quantitative data, which provided support. Janesick (2004) reported that qualitative research was the ability to use all the senses to undertake the research act such as: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste must be used to collect data.

Quantitative Analysis

For the quantitative analysis of the study, two categories of questions were selected to determine the participant's parental involvement and perceptions concerns. For the responding participants, the scores were tabulated by counting the number of points for the parental involvement question and then for the perception question. All participants used a 4-point rating scale highest level to describe the response (e.g., from (*strongly disagree* = 1 pt.) to (*strongly agree* = 4 pt.). The researcher counted the number responses for each question to get a total for each participant (e.g., parent, teacher, and administrator). The surveys were validated by

reviewing data on past use of the instruments, including the validity and reliability of scores obtained from previous use of the surveys by other organizations.

The data collected from parents addressed the research questions according to their perceptions. This parent survey was designed to address the experiences and perceptions of the parent group in relation to how they viewed the teachers and administrators at their child's school and how these perceptions impacted their level of involvement and student outcomes. The type of data that was collected from this instrument was that of individual attitude. The survey began with how the parents perceived the school's responsibility to communicate with them on a consistent basis, but then it asked parents to self-assess their own involvement. This survey also allowed the researcher to collect data on individual behavior by probing parent interactions with other parents (Appendix B).

There were 275 parent surveys (hard copy) distributed to fifth grade parents and 67 parents completed the quantitative survey. For the analysis, the researcher went through each returned envelope for completed documents: quantitative surveys and qualitative surveys, which were included in the survey packets together. After examining the quantitative surveys, the researcher selected two categories of questions: perceptions and parental involvement (Questions 1 and 3). For each question, the researcher added the responses to get a final score for each participating parent. Their answers were based on a 4-point rating scale (e.g. strongly agree =3 pts, disagree = 1 pt). Next, the answers were matched with a number such as, (strongly agree = 3 pts) and then, added the points from all of the responses to get a final score for the participating parents. The descriptive analysis results are showed in Table 2 of Section 4.

The data collected from teachers addressed the research questions and it was completed online using SurveyMonkey. This teacher survey was designed to address the experiences and

perceptions of teachers in relation to how they viewed parental involvement at their school. The type of data that was collected from this instrument was that of their professional judgment about parental involvement. The survey began with how the teacher communicated with and involved the parents. This survey also allowed the teacher to rate activities that was used to assist students and families in the future and gave the researcher the ability to collect data on the teachers' opinions of how parents should assist their children at home (Appendix D).

For the teachers' survey, I entered the quantitative survey questions from the hard copy survey that was sent from John Hopkins University (for teachers) into the SurveyMonkey program. Once the teachers connected to the link that was sent through email, they were able to complete the survey. For the analysis, the researcher selected two categories of questions: parental involvement and perception (Questions 6 and 8). Four of the 14 teachers answers appeared on a report entitled: SurveyMonkey Analyze-Parental Involvement-Teachers 5th grade. Their answers were based on a 4-point rating scale (e.g. strongly agree =3 pts, disagree = 1 pt). The researcher used this report to get the answers for teachers (Question 6 and 8). Next, the answers were matched with a number such as, (strongly agree = 3 pts) and then, added the points from all of the responses to get a final score for the participating teachers. Although there were other reports generated from the responses such as, question summaries and data trends, the researcher selected individual responses report to show the participants answers to the parental involvement and perception questions that was selected by the researcher. After obtaining scores for the teachers, the researcher used Table 3 to show the parental involvement and the perception score for each participating teacher.

The last set of quantitative data was collected from administrators and it was also completed and analyzed online using SurveyMonkey. This survey was designed to address the

experiences and perceptions of administrators in relation to how their perceptions impacted their interaction with parents and teachers. The type of data that was collected from this instrument was that of individual perceptions on ways to involve parents and promote involvement of families while providing support for teachers. This survey also allowed the researcher to collect data on individual behavior by measuring administrator interactions with parents and assessing what they felt was done to involve parents as active stakeholders in the educational process (Appendix F).

The administrators' survey questions were selected from the parents and teachers survey, but were modified to address administrators' perceptions. For example, teacher survey questions/subsequent comment (a) Parent Involvement is important for a good school. Administrator survey question/subsequent comment (a) Parental involvement is important for a good elementary school. The survey questions were also entered into the SurveyMonkey program. Once the administrators connected to the link that was sent through email, they were able to complete the survey. For the analysis, the researcher selected two categories of questions: parental involvement and perceptions (Questions 3 and 1, 2, 4, & 5). Three of the five administrator answers appeared on a report entitled: SurveyMonkey Analyze-Parental Involvement-Administrators. Their answers were based on a 4-point rating scale (e.g. strongly agree =3 pts, disagree = 1 pt). The researcher used this report to get the answers for administrators. Next, the answers were matched with a number such as, (strongly agree = 3 pts) and then, added the points from all of the responses to get a final score for the participating administrators. There were other reports generated from the responses such as, question summaries and data trends, the researcher selected individual responses report to show the participants answers to the parental involvement and perception questions that were selected by

the researcher. After obtaining scores for the administrators, the researcher used Table 4 to show the parental involvement and the perception score for each participating administrator.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data analysis consisted of counting frequencies to determine themes or categories in the data. Each group of participants had a separate survey to answer regarding the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators about the effects of parental involvement. From the responding participants, tally marks were used to show frequencies in the data, which formulated into categories. The content analysis of the qualitative survey determined common themes and patterns among participants.

For the qualitative analysis, the researcher used open coding to break down the data into themes or categories. For example, if the parent responses focused on lack of communication, each time a parent mentioned a lack of communication, or something related to a lack of communication the researcher would use tally marks to show the consistency for the same response. Thus, lack of communication would become a category. This procedure was used for each of the five qualitative survey questions. After analyzing all parent surveys, the researcher transferred this information into Table 6, which showed the total of responses for the each category that was established from the data. From the parents' data, three categories were established: communication, relationships, and teacher/school inadequacy. The parents of the rural school district voiced through survey questions that communication was the key to building a positive relationship.

For the teacher qualitative survey analysis, the researcher also used open coding to break down the data into themes or categories. For example, if the teacher responses focused on communication with parents, each time a teacher mentioned communication with parents, or

something related to communication with parents the researcher would use tally marks to show the consistency for the same response. Thus, communication with parents would become a category. This procedure was used for each of the five qualitative survey questions. After analyzing the teachers' surveys, the researcher transferred this information into Table 7, which showed the total of responses for the each category that was obtained from the data. The teachers of the rural school district also indicated through survey questions that communication was the key to building a positive and collaborative partnership between the parents and the school learning community. From teachers' responses, three categories were established: communication, parental involvement, and making contact from the school learning community.

For the qualitative analysis, the researcher used open coding to break down the data into themes or categories. For example, if the administrator responses focused on getting parents involved, each time an administrator mentioned getting parents involved, or something related to getting parents involved the researcher would use tally marks to show the consistency for the same response. Thus, getting parents involved would become a category. This procedure was used for each of the five qualitative survey questions. After analyzing the administrators' surveys, the researcher transferred this information into Table 8, which showed the total of responses for the each category that was obtained from the data.

The administrators' survey focused on three categories such as, communication, education for parents and participation in school activities. Their aim was to provide support for parents and teachers. The participants agreed that communication was an important factor in projecting student outcomes and future relationships within the learning community. Along with communication, parental involvement was recognized as being the link that connected all participants in the learning community.

The qualitative data reflected participant's ideas about parental involvement that supported the research study by offering suggestions on how to improve parental involvement. The accuracy of the findings from the qualitative data was validated by triangulation of the quantitative data, which confirmed the response of the concurrent transformative design and participants. Due to the mixing of data types or methodologies of both the quantitative and qualitative types, the results enhanced the parameters and validity of the study. The data became one large database used to serve a purpose of advocating for marginalized groups such as parents of rural communities. The data from both approaches were integrated during the analysis and interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2009).

Protection of Participants' Rights

The researcher obtained consent from the director of schools to collect current and pertinent information for this research study (see Appendix H). All participants received a Letter of Invitation/Consent Form, which will explain the purpose, nature of the study, role of all participants, and provide contact information. There were ethical issues that were considered in any study that collected data from people and about people. During the recruitment process, all potential subjects were given written objectives of the study; told how the information or data will be collected and used; and ultimately what effect the study would have on their lives. All targeted subjects were given the right to refuse to participate and those who agreed to join the study will be given the right to withdraw at any time with or without explanation. Participants were informed that all surveys were anonymous. The research results will be kept for a minimum of 5 years at the researcher's home office. All participants will receive a copy of the results of the study.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is employed by the western Tennessee school district as an assistant principal and instructional facilitator. As the instructional facilitator, I am very familiar with the learning community. Prior to becoming an assistant principal and instructional facilitator for the western Tennessee school district, I was a teacher at one of the local feeder middle/high schools for 9 years. I taught the older brother and sisters of the students at the elementary school, maybe even the parents of these students. Researching the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators was very intriguing and helped to promote the goals of the research study, which was to increase and enhance parental involvement in a rural school setting.

As an educator in the school system, I have had the opportunity to work in a rural school setting for the past 18 years (18 years as school bus driver, 9 years as a middle school teacher, 1 year as elementary school teacher/assistant principal, and 8 years as an assistant principal/instructional facilitator). During my time in education, I have become familiar with the aspects of rural living such as: socioeconomic status, poverty, and lack of job opportunities, which impacted parental involvement in rural education. From these experiences, I am still learning how to address the issues of rural education and parental involvement. Although the barriers within a rural education were challenging, I am optimistic about working with parents to increase the level of parental involvement. I am aware of the Hawthorne Effect in research experiments. When human subjects were used, they may modify their behavior because they were being observed or studied. This was practically an unavoidable bias that had to be taken into account and factored into the design when the results were analyzed (Shuttleworth, 2009).

Summary

Section 3 described the mixed methods research design used in this study. The quantitative survey questions focused on showing the relationship between parental involvement and student outcomes. These questions explored how the perceptions of rural parents, teachers, and administrators affected parental involvement and student outcomes. The study also examined the perceived barriers of rural parents, teachers, and administrators through qualitative survey questions. This section explained the sample of each school in detail and gave important facts about this school district. The data analysis and validation procedures established support for the study by thoroughly checking the validity of both quantitative and qualitative findings. Section 4 will provide the results of the study and Section 5 will provide the interpretation of the results and recommendations for future studies.

Section 4: Results

Introduction

The school learning community consists of parents, teachers, and administrators, all of whom are essential in promoting parental involvement within the school community and learning environment. Therefore, the purpose of this study, using a mixed-methods design was to explore the perceptions of rural parents, teachers, and administrators about parental involvement and to establish a parental involvement model that enhanced student success. The three groups of participants, the parents of fifth grade children, fifth grade teachers, and five elementary administrators generated quantitative and qualitative perceptions about parental involvement. The two categories of questions for the study to that categorized respondents' perceptions, which asked the following research questions:

Quantitative:

1. What are the reported experiences of parents, teachers, and administrators with parental involvement efforts at their schools?
2. What are the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators about current parental involvement efforts at their schools?

Qualitative:

3. What are the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators about the effects of parental involvement?
4. What are the suggestions of parents, teachers, and administrators for improving parental involvement?

This section presents the findings from the quantitative and qualitative surveys (Creswell, 2009). The demographics of parent respondents are included in the survey results;

however, the questions were not used as one of the designated categories for the final scores of parent perceptions and parental involvement. Descriptive analysis of the survey data described key survey items and content analysis of the survey determined common themes. The final sections offer the evidence of quality and a summary of the findings.

Systems for Keeping Track of Data

The completed parent packets were mailed back to each of the five elementary schools. Completed surveys with their respective school names and addresses were kept in the school's office in a secure place unopened until the scheduled weekly pick-up date and the researcher picked up the completed surveys weekly over a six week period. Parents' completed hardcopy surveys were taken to the researcher's home for analysis by the researcher. Teachers' and administrators' online surveys were scored and analyzed using SurveyMonkey and this information was kept secure through password access. The data collection took 6 weeks.

Procedure

The School and Family Partnerships Survey of Parents and Teachers (Epstein & Salinas, 1993), a hard-copy survey was used to generate quantitative data from the parents. The teachers' responses came from the same survey (Epstein & Salinas, 1993), and these surveys were completed online using SurveyMonkey. The administrators' survey consisted of questions from the parents' and teachers' surveys that addressed an administrators' view on parental involvement and their perceptions, and these surveys were completed online using SurveyMonkey as well. The SurveyMonkey online program analyzed an average score for the teachers' and administrators' responses. For this study, the researcher added the scores of the participants' responses to get a final score for participating parents, teachers, and administrators. The survey scoring scales were modified with the approval of the originator of the instrument,

John Hopkins, for consistency in the level of agreement for the participants. All participants used a 4-point rating scale to describe the response (e.g., from (*strongly disagree* = 1 pt.) to (*strongly agree* = 4 pt)).

Findings

Quantitative Results

The purpose of the mixed methods design was to explore the experiences and ideas of parents, teachers, and administrators related to parental involvement. The School and Family Partnership Survey of Parents and Teachers (Epstein & Salinas, 1993) was used to obtain responses from parents and teachers (Appendices B & D). The administrators' survey (Appendix F) consisted of questions selected from the parents' and teachers' surveys. The researcher changed the wording to address the administrators' perspective (e.g. Parental involvement is important for a good elementary school). The teacher and administrator surveys were completed online using SurveyMonkey. For this mixed methods study, two categories of questions were selected to determine each participant's perceptions and parent involvement concerns. For the parental involvement questions, parent's survey Question 3, teachers' survey Question 6, and administrators' survey Question 3 were selected. For the perception questions, parents' survey Question 1, teachers' survey Question 8, and administrators' survey perception Questions 1, 2, 4, and 5 were selected.

The responses from the parent surveys were obtained from the participating parents of the five elementary schools (67 parents). The researcher counted the number of responses for each question or subsequent comment about perception and parental involvement to get a total of how many parents answered each item based on a 4-point rating scale (e.g., from (*strongly disagree* = 1 pt.) to (*strongly agree* = 4 pt)). The scores from each participating parent of the five elementary

schools were added to get a final total of parents who answered each item. For the perception question, 67 parents responded to items a-m and 58 parents responded to item i. For the parental involvement question, 67 parents responded to items: a, e, f, g, h, and i. Parents scores varied from 55-65 for the remaining items (e.g., e, g, b, c, d, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q). Although the survey contained similar questions, the researcher selected the questions that addressed the group's perceptions and parental involvement.

The following question and subsequent comments addressed parents' perceptions. The researcher selected the Question 1 and 3 from the survey these question/subsequent comments addressed the group's perceptions and parental involvement best.

1. How well has your child's teacher or someone at school done the following this school year?
 - Helps me understand my child's stage of development.
 - Tells me how my child is doing in school.
 - Asks me to volunteer at the school.
 - Explains how to check my child's homework.
 - Sends home news about things happening at school.
 - Provides information on community services that I may want to use with my family.
 - Invites me to PTA/PTO meetings.
 - Assigns homework that requires my child to talk with me about things learned in class.
 - Invites me to a program at the school.
 - Asks me to help with fund raising.
 - Has a parent-teacher conference with me.

- Includes parents on school committees, such as curriculum, budget, or improvement committees.
- Provides information on community events that I may want to attend with my child.

The following question and subsequent comments addressed parents' involvement:

3. Families are involved in different ways at school and at home. How often do you do the following activities?

- Read with your child.
- Volunteer in the classroom or at home.
- Work with your child on science homework.
- Review and discuss the school work your child brings home.
- Help your child with math.
- Visit your child's school
- Go over spelling or vocabulary with your child
- Ask your child what he/she is learning in science.
- Talk to your child's teacher.
- Ask your child what he/she is learning in math.
- Help your child with reading/language art homework.
- Help your child understand what he/she is learning in science.
- Help your child prepare for math test.
- Ask your child how well he/she is doing in school.
- Ask your child to read something he/she wrote.
- Go to school event (e.g., sports, music, and drama) or meetings
- Check to see if your child finished his/her homework.

The figures in this table represent responses from each participating parent. Perception score for question #1 = 23 pts. This means that Parent 1 gave points for personal agreement to the 13 perception questions based upon the school's contact with the parent. Parental involvement scores for question #3 = 60 pts. This means Parent 1 personal agreement to the 17 parental involvement question addressed how families are involved at school and at home. The questions are listed above and the scores reflect the parents' personal ideas and opinions related to parental involvement (e.g., from (*strongly disagree* = 1 pt.) to (*strongly agree* = 4 pt.)

Table 2

Parent Perception and Parental Involvement Scores ($N = 67$)

Parent	Perception Score	Parental Involvement
	#1	#3
1	23	60
2	44	46
3	41	58
4	35	38
5	36	59
6	45	65
7	34	63
8	39	51
9	49	55
10	36	56
11	51	68
12	34	47
13	40	51
14	26	61
15	33	58
16	36	49
17	49	68
18	33	48
19	45	47

20	47	59
21	33	50
22	42	51
23	42	51
24	31	59
25	52	66
26	48	68
27	37	40
28	38	50
29	24	47
30	28	64
31	48	29
32	30	65
33	29	65
34	42	51
35	47	62
36	45	64
37	33	44
38	36	50
39	27	24
40	38	62
41	40	55
42	48	67

43	52	68
44	40	61
45	52	62
46	44	60
47	14	16
48	39	63
49	40	55
50	39	58
51	35	59
52	41	51
53	48	51
54	46	64
55	32	64
56	48	61
57	35	53
58	39	51
59	32	50
60	44	67
61	38	52
62	29	49
63	34	60
64	34	44
65	52	68

66	37	49
67	43	61

The following selected statements ask for teachers opinions about school activities. The researcher selected the Question 8 and 6 from the survey these question/subsequent comment addressed the group's perceptions and parental involvement best.

8. The next statement asks for your opinion about the activities that you think should be conducted by the parents of the children you teach. Select the choice that describes the importance of these activities at your grade level.

PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Send children to school ready to learn.
- Teach children to behave well.
- Set up a quiet place and time for studying at home.
- Encourage children to volunteer in class.
- Know what children are expected to learn each year.
- Check daily that homework is done.
- Talk to children about what they are learning at school.
- Ask teachers for specific ideas on how to help children at home with class work.
- Talk to children about problems children are facing at home.
- Attend PTA/PTO meetings.
- Serve as a volunteer in the school or classroom.
- Attend assemblies and other special events at the school.
- Take children to special places or events in the community.

- Talk to children about the importance of school.

The following selected comments ask for teachers' level of importance:

6. Teachers choose among many activities to assist their students and families. Select one choice to tell how important each of these is for you to conduct at your grade level?

- Have a conference with each of my students' parents at least once a year.
- Attend evening meeting, performance, and workshops at school.
- Contact parents about their children's problems or failures.
- Inform parents when their children do something well or improve.
- Involve some parents as volunteers in my classroom.
- Involve parents of the skill their children must pass in each subject I teach.
- Inform parents how reports card grades are earned in class.
- Provide ideas for discussing TV shows.
- Assign homework that requires children to interact with parents.
- Suggest ways to practice spelling or other skills at home before a test.
- Ask parents to listen to their children read.
- Ask parents to listen to a story or paragraph that their children write.
- Work with other teachers to develop parent involvement activities and materials.
- Work with community members to arrange learning opportunities in my class.
- Work with area business for volunteers to improve programs for my students.
- Request information from parents on their children's talents, interests, or needs.
- Serve on a PTO/PTA or other school committee.

The figures in this table represent responses from each participating teacher. Perception score for question #8 = 41 pts. This means that Teacher 1 gave points for personal agreement to

the 14 perception question that asked teachers for their opinion about activities that should be conducted by the parents of the children they teach. Parental involvement scores for question #6 = 60 pts. This means Teacher 1 personal agreement to the 18 parental involvement question that asked teachers to choose activities to assist students and families. The questions are listed above and the scores reflect the parents' personal ideas and opinions related to parental involvement (e.g., from (*strongly disagree* = 1 pt.) to (*strongly agree* = 4 pt.). The researcher counted the responses to get a total for that participating teacher.

Table 3

Teacher Perception and Parental Involvement Scores ($N = 4$)

Teacher	Perception Score #8	Parental Involvement #6
1	41	42
2	35	37
3	42	54
4	21	18

The following statements addressed administrators' perceptions. The researcher selected the Question 1, 2, 4, and 5 from the survey these question/subsequent comments addressed the group's perceptions and Question 3 addressed parental involvement best.

1. This question asks for your professional judgment about parental involvement.
 - Parent involvement is important for a good elementary school.
 - Elementary schools should have an active parent organization (e.g., PTA/PAC or PTO).

- Every family has some strength that could be tapped to increase their child's success in elementary school.
- Parent involvement can increase teacher effectiveness.
- Elementary school teachers need in-service education to implement effective parent involvement practices.
- This school views parents as important partners in education.
- The community values education for all students.
- The community supports this elementary school.
- It is not necessary for parents of elementary school students to be involved in their child's education.
- All parents could learn ways to assist their child with schoolwork at home, if shown how.

2. Elementary school serves diverse populations of families with different needs and skills.

The following statements ask for your judgment about specific ways to involve families of elementary school students.

- Communication from the school to the home that all families can understand and use.
- Communication about report cards so that parents understand their child's progress and needs.
- Parent-teacher conferences with all families.
- Parent and other volunteers at the school.
- Participants by families in PTA/PAC/PTA, other committees, and decision making roles.

4. This question asks for your professional opinion about activities that you think

- should be conducted by the parents of elementary school students.
- Attend assemblies and other special events at the school.
 - Volunteer to help the school.
 - Join a parent organization or school committee and attend meetings regularly.
 - Attend parent-teacher conferences.
5. This question asks how you perceive others' support of parental involvement in your school.
- You, a school administrator.
 - Teachers in my elementary school.
 - Counselors.
 - Parents.
 - The community.
 - School board members.
 - Superintendent.
3. The following statements addressed administrators' parental involvement:
- Administrators make many decisions to promote parent involvement and parent relations.
 - Include students in conferences with parents
 - Provide evening meetings and performances to showcase students at the school.
 - Contact parents when their child has problems or failures.
 - Inform parents when their child does something well or improve.
 - Involve parents as volunteers.
 - Work with teachers to develop parent involvement activities and materials.

- Work on school policy committees with parents

The figures in this table represent responses from each participating administrator.

Perception score for questions #1, 2, 4, 5 = 74 pts. This means that Administrator 1 gave points for personal agreement to the 27 perception question that were based upon the administrators' professional judgment about parental involvement, support from others, and a professional opinion about the activities that you think should be conducted by the parents. Parental involvement scores for question #3 = 19 pts. This means Administrator 1 personal agreement to the 7 parental involvement questions helped administrators identify the activities that promoted parent involvement and parent relations. The questions are listed above and the scores reflect the parents' personal ideas and opinions related to parental involvement (e.g., from (*strongly disagree* = 1 pt.) to (*strongly agree* = 4 pt.)). The researcher selected the Question 1, 2, 4, and 5 from the survey these addressed the group's perceptions and parental involvement best.

Table 4

Administrator Perception and Parental Involvement Scores ($N = 3$)

Administrator	Perception Score #1.2.4.5	Parental Involvement #3
1	74	19
2	61	17
3	74	21

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to explore the experiences and ideas of parents, teachers, and administrators related to parental involvement. For this mixed methods study, two categories of questions were selected to determine each participant's perceptions and

parent involvement concerns. Parents' perception questions were based upon the school's contact with the parent and parental involvement questions addressed how families are involved at school and at home. Teacher survey questions allowed teachers to express their opinion about activities that should be conducted by the parents of the children they teach. Teachers also shared activities to promote parental involvement to assist students and families. Last, the administrators shared their professional judgment about parental involvement, support from others, and a professional opinion about the activities that you think should be conducted by the parents. The parental involvement questions helped administrators identify the activities that promoted parent involvement and parent relations. Overall, the responses gave information that would promote and enhance parental involvement in the school learning environment.

Qualitative Results

In this mixed methods study, the qualitative data are being presented in this subsection. The analysis and interpretation combined the two forms of data to seek similarities (Creswell, 2009). To assure quality, make the initial contact, and initiate more parental involvement, the researcher personally distributed packets to each of the five elementary schools. The survey packets were distributed to 275 parent participants and at the same time, 14 teachers and 5 administrators received an e-mail containing the same information, but with a link to complete the online survey using SurveyMonkey.

The figures in this table represent the number of surveys distributed to participants and the number of surveys that were returned by parents, teachers, and administrators from each school. For example, at Whitehall, 127 surveys were distributed to fifth grade parents and only 20 parents' responded (127:20). At Whitehall, there were six fifth grade teachers and only two responded (6:2) and the administrator for Whitehall completed the survey (1:1).

Table 5

Qualitative Survey Return Rate

survey School	Fifth gr. parents' survey distributed/returned	Fifth gr. teachers' survey distributed/returned	Administrators' distributed/returned
Whitehall	127:20	6:2	1:1
Middlegate	63:6	3:1	1:1
Autumnwood	33:4	2:0	1:0
Germanwood	29:5	2:1	1:0
Hornlake	22:2	1:1	1:1

All participants had an opportunity to answer a separate survey: Parents' qualitative survey (Appendices I), teachers' qualitative survey (Appendix J), and administrators' qualitative survey (Appendix K). The participants' surveys focused on communicating ideas & opinions that would improve and enhance the partnership among the learning community. The surveys allowed the participants to express their concerns about parental involvement. The qualitative data analysis consisted of counting frequencies to determine themes or categories in the data. The qualitative survey was examined in the following order: parents, teachers, and administrators. First, the descriptive narrative of the surveys for each group of participants was presented. Next, the descriptive analysis was presented in tables. Finally, a summary described the themes or categories that were generated from the qualitative surveys for each group of participants.

Parent Survey Data

The parent's qualitative data were completed through a hard-copy survey. The five open-ended questions were answered by 37 of the 275 fifth grade parents. The questions from the

survey are listed below and the frequencies of responses were counted for specific themes or categories. The survey allowed the researcher to show the connection between quantitative and qualitative methods, which explored the experiences and ideas of parents, teachers, and administrators related to parental involvement. The descriptive statistics of frequencies are reflected in Table 6.

Question 1: How does the relationship between parents, teachers, and administrators in this school system affect your child's education in the current school? Parents pointed out in the responses that the relationship between parents, teachers, and administrators in the school system was important. They also alluded that a lack of communication affected the school system and school environment. A few parents expressed negative comments in regards to the teacher or school. For example, "I don't like the school because they will not communicate with me". From the explanation on the surveys, a poor relationship had developed between the parents and teachers.

Question 2: What negative memories of your school experience prevent you from becoming involved with your child's current school? Once again, parents noted that a lack of communication existed within the school system among parents, teachers, and administrators. Eleven parents expressed that they have had no negative experiences at their child's current school.

Question 3: How much does the school not communicating well with people from your culture prevent you from becoming involved with your child's current school? From parents' responses, communication or a lack thereof was established as a category. Six parents responded that educators communicated and that the relationship was positive. On the other hand, nine parents referenced that there was a lack of communication at their child's school. The parents'

responses indicated that there was a lack of communication, and they commented on the school inadequacies.

Question 4: What are your perceptions of parental involvement in your child's current school? Why? Parents' responses indicated that it is the parent's responsibility. Six parents stated that when parents are involved, it will have a positive impact on students' achievement. In addition, responses from 10 parent surveys suggested that they have a good perception of their child's current school. Other factors related to their perception of the school involved matters such as money and the need for teachers to communicate.

Question 5: What changes would you recommend to improve the parental involvement program at your child's school? Parents voiced through the surveys that in order to improve parental involvement in the school system, communication must be present. The responses mentioned that the educators need to ask parents to get involved other than doing fund-raising events.

The figures in this table represent the total of responding parents and the number of frequencies for each category. For example, Question #1 asks: *What is the most successful practice to involve parents that you have used or that you have heard about?* For the category of communication: 37 parents responded with three frequencies for communication (37:3). For relationship importance: 37 responded and 26 frequencies for this category (37:26), and for Teacher/School Inadequacies 37 responded and three frequencies this category (37:3). This means from the responding parents that relationship importance is at the top and the other two categories are equal in parents' opinion. Parents in this rural area agreed that parental involvement is necessary for student success.

Table 6

Parent Survey: Qualitative Questions

Question	Communication/ No-communication	Communication/ importance	Relationship inadequacies. NA	Teacher/School
1	37:3		37:26	37:3
2	37:6		37:0	37:11
3	37:15		37:0	37:18
4	37:10		37:6	37:8
5	37:7		37:8	37:17

From the data, three categories were established: communication, relationships, and teacher/school inadequacy. The parents of the rural school district voiced through surveys that communication was the key to building a positive relationship. The discrepancies in teacher/school inadequacy responses were due to parents' dissatisfaction with the teacher/school.

Teacher Survey Data

The teacher's quantitative survey was completed online using SurveyMonkey. The teachers' survey was answered by five of the 14 fifth grade teachers and one teacher completed only portions of the survey. Only one teacher responded to each of the five questions. This survey allowed the researcher to show the connection between quantitative and qualitative methods, which explored the experiences and ideas of parents, teachers, and administrators related to parental involvement. The questions from the survey are listed below and the frequencies of responses were counted for specific themes or categories. The descriptive statistics of frequencies is reflected in Table 7.

Question 1: What is the most successful practice to involve parents that you have used or that you have heard about? From SurveyMonkey responses, only one teacher answered the

question. The teacher shared events that involved parents and promoted parental involvement. During the school year, the school holds Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings that get parents involved. In addition, events like Harvest Festival were implemented to get the parents and the school community involved.

Question 2: In what ways could better partnership with families help you as a teacher?

According to one teacher's suggestions, contacting families more was a way to improve partnerships with families.

Questions 3: In what ways could better partnership with the community help you as a teacher? One teacher mentioned that attending more events at the school built and strengthened the partnership with the community and in the meantime improved teacher effectiveness.

Question 4: What do you think are the most important issues that need to be addressed in this school concerning parental involvement and student achievement? One teacher suggested creating and implementing parent classes that teach parents how to teach different subject areas.

Question 5: What changes would you recommend to improve the parental involvement program at the school where you are employed? The teacher's response indicated that there was no recommendation.

The figures in this table represent the number of teachers and the number of frequencies for each category. For example, Question #1 asks: *What is the most successful practice to involve parents that you have used or heard about?* For the category of communication/contact: no teacher response (14:0). For education for parents: no teacher response (14:0), and for participation in school activities: one teachers responded (14:1). This table reflects overall that teachers' participation was low. The participating teachers voiced that parents participation in school activities were important.

Table 7

Teacher Survey: Qualitative Questions

Question Contact	Communication/ for parents	Education school activities	Participation in
1	14:0	14:0	14:1
2	14:1	14:0	14:0
3	14:0	14:0	14:1
4	14:0	14:0	14:0
5	14:0	14:0	14:0

From the data, three categories were established: communication, education for parents and participation in school activities. The teachers of the rural school district indicated through questionnaires that communication was the key to building a positive and collaborative partnership between the parents and the school learning community. Furthermore, responding teachers believed that educating and involving parents in educational programs for their personal academic growth impacted students' success and achievement. The last category pertained to parents' participation in school activities. Teachers agreed that parents' active involvement influenced positive behavior toward learning.

Administrator Survey Data

The administrator's qualitative survey was also completed online using SurveyMonkey. The administrator survey was answered by three of the five administrators. For each of the five open ended questions, there were two administrators' responses to each question. This survey allowed the researcher to show the connection between quantitative and qualitative methods, which explored the experiences and ideas of parents, teachers, and administrators related to parental involvement. The questions from the survey are listed below and the frequencies of

responses are counted for specific themes or categories. The descriptive statistics of frequencies are reflected in Table 8.

Question 1: As an elementary school administrator, what do you believe is your role in promoting positive parental involvement? The two administrators voiced through the survey that their role was very important in promoting parental involvement. One administrator noted that making parents welcome and being available were steps toward promoting parental involvement. The other administrator indicated that it was a vital part of an administrator's job.

Question 2: What should be the role of the parent(s) in their student's education at the elementary school level? Two principals shared their views on the role of parents. The administrators believed that parents should be involved in every aspect of their child's education. Parent involvement activities such as checking planners, supporting teachers, and volunteering were encouraged to promote a parental involvement program.

Question 3: What is the most successful practice to involve parents of elementary school students that you have used or heard about? Two of the three administrators agreed that getting families involved was a successful practice. During the school year, parents have an opportunity to visit the school for different types of meetings. One administrator suggested providing food and allowing students to perform during meetings such as PTO/PTA. Also, having parents and grandparents to assist in reading activities was mentioned.

Question 4: What changes would you recommend to improve the parental involvement program at the school where you are an administrator? The two administrators' responses suggested ways to improve their parental involvement program. The suggestions included: (a) having parents to pick up report cards in the first 9 weeks, (b) offering more contact between teacher and parents, and (c) including parents and teachers in decision making about the school.

Question 5: How would you get parents and teachers to work together to improve the partnership toward helping students to achieve? The administrators agreed that contact was a major part of connecting with parents. Positive phone calls home was one way to build a relationship with parents. The other administrator suggested making frequent contacts and asking parents to help in educating their child.

The figures in Table 8 represent the number of administrators and the number of frequencies for each category. For example, Question 2 asks: *What should be the role of the parent(s) in their student's education at the elementary school level?* For the category of communication with parents: one administrator responded (5:1). For parental involvement: one response (5:1), and for making contact: no response (5:0). This means that to administrators communications is an essential tool for parents and teachers. Parents' involvement is important to growth and student academic success.

Table 8

Administrator Survey: Qualitative Questions

Question with parents	Communication/ involvement	Parental Making contact	
1	5:2	5:0	5:0
2	5:1	5:1	5:0
3	5:0	5:2	5:0
4	5:0	5:1	5:1
5	5:1	5:0	5:1

From the data, three categories were established: communication, parental involvement, and making contact from the school learning community. The three elementary administrators of the rural school district recognized that communication between the parents, teachers, and the

administration was important in building a trusting partnership. Also, the administrators noted that active parental involvement was perhaps one of the most important factors regarding student success. The last category involved being actively engaged by making contact with all parties of the school learning community.

From the responses, parents agreed that the perceptions from all groups of participants affected student outcomes. The participants agreed that communication was an important factor in projecting student outcomes and future relationships within the learning community. Along with communication, parental involvement was recognized as being the link that connected all participants in the learning community.

Responses from Quantitative Research Questions

The results are according to each research questions.

1. What are the reported experiences of parents, teachers, and administrators with parental involvement efforts at their schools?

The data from the surveys indicated that the reported experiences of parents, teachers, and administrator were based on active involvement in the learning community. The survey began with how the parents perceived the educators responsibility to communicate with them on a consistent basis, but then it asked parents to self-assess their own involvement. Also, communicating with other parents was considered important. The teacher survey was designed to address the perception of teachers in relation to how they viewed parental involvement at their school. The type of data that were collected from this instrument was that of their professional judgment about parental involvement. The survey addressed how the teacher communicated with and involved the parents. This survey also allowed the teacher to rate activities that was used to assist students and families in the future.

The last set of quantitative data was collected from administrators. This survey was designed to address the perception of administrators in relation to how their perceptions impacted their interaction with parents and teachers. The data collected was that of individual perceptions on ways to involve parents and promote involvement of families while providing support for teachers. The efforts from all participants will be important in the growth and development of children.

2. What are the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators about current parental involvement efforts at their schools?

According to the survey data, the parents' perception is important and it contributes to the level of consistent parental involvement that is required to increase or improve students' outcomes. Parents express ideas and opinions on the importance for the school to communicate with parents in all situations. The results from the teachers' surveys revealed that active involvement from parents is vital in student's academic success. Furthermore, teachers' responses identified activities that would support each grade and subject area. The administrators' perception questions were based upon the administrators' professional judgment about parental involvement, support from others, and a professional opinion about the activities that would support parents and teachers. Overall, the participants' perceptions influenced the level of parental involvement efforts at their child's school and their child's academic success.

Responses from Qualitative Research Questions

3. What are the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators about the effects of parental involvement?

According to the survey responses, the relationship between parents, teachers, and administrators does affect student outcome. Parents pointed out in the responses that the

relationship between parents, teachers, and administrators in the school system was important. They noted that a lack of communication affected the school system and school environment. Teachers suggested contacting families more would be a way to improve partnerships with families, which will affect student outcomes. When parents know that educators are concerned about their child, a trusting relationship is established in the school community. Furthermore, administrators voiced that their role and perception was very important in promoting parental involvement. Administrators noted that making parents welcome and being available were steps toward promoting parental involvement and promoting student outcome and success.

4. What are the suggestions of parents, teachers, and administrators for improving parental involvement?

The parents' responses indicated that it was the parents' responsibility to be involved in their child's education. Parents also stated that when parents are involved, it has a positive impact on students' achievement. Overall responses from parents' survey suggested that they have a good perception of their child's current school. To concur, teachers mentioned that attending more events at the school built and strengthened the partnership with the community and in the meantime, improved teacher effectiveness and overall perception. Also, teachers suggested creating and implementing parent classes that teach parents how to teach different subject areas. When parents felt as though they were a part of the educational process, the perception of the school community was positive. Administrators agreed that getting families involved was a successful practice. During different types of meetings, parents got involved and this impacted their perceptions. Administrators also indicated that it was a vital part of an administrator's job to assure that the relationship in the learning community was strong, which promoted a positive perception.

Evidence of Quality

This mixed methods study, while a challenge, used research techniques to assure the quality of the quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Mixing of data types or methodologies of both the quantitative and qualitative types, the results enhanced the parameters and validity of the study. According to Creswell (2009), the mixed-method model shared features with the triangulation and embedded approaches, which means one research method embedded in the other so that participants are given a voice in the change process of an organization. All participants received a letter of invitation/consent form, which promoted anonymity. Although the data collection process was costly, it allowed the highest level of anonymity. Implied consent was utilized, whereas no signatures were collected. Participants' completion and return of the surveys indicated that they chose to participate.

To assure quality, make the initial contact, and initiate more parental involvement, the researcher distributed 275 research packets to each of the five elementary schools personally. The research packet consisted of the following: a letter of invitation/consent form, quantitative survey, qualitative survey, and a different color self-addressed envelope with the school's address to which the completed surveys should be mailed. Parent surveys were distributed, collected, and returned to the school's office unopened by the fifth grade teachers, and the researcher picked up the surveys weekly. At the same time, 14 teachers and five administrators received an e-mail containing the same information, but with a link to complete the online survey using SurveyMonkey.

To track the completed research data, the completed parent packets were mailed back to each of the five elementary schools. Completed Survey with their school names and addresses

were kept in the schools' office in a secure place unopened until the weekly scheduled pickup date by the researcher. The parents' completed surveys were exported to the researcher's home for analysis by the researcher. The process of SurveyMonkey verified the accuracy of the data.

Summary

From the research, there is a greater understanding of quantitative and qualitative research. The mixed methods design presented information that showed similarities, differences, and comparisons that supported the purpose, which was to explore the experiences and ideas of parents, teachers, and administrators related to parental involvement. The School and Family Partnership Survey of Parents and Teachers (Epstein & Salinas, 1993) examined the perceptions and parental involvement concerns in five elementary schools within a rural school district. The data from the surveys indicated that the reported experiences of parents, teachers, and administrator were based on active involvement in the learning community. Parents, teachers, and administrators voiced that communications was the key element in nurturing and strengthening the learning community. From the research, the participants were able to share and voice their opinion or ideas about things that would support parental involvement. Furthermore, the participants' perceptions contributed to the level of parental involvement and student academic success. Parents noted that communicating with the school and other parents was important in building a strong relationship. Teachers were able to share activities that involve parents and promoted involvement of families while providing support for teachers. From the surveys administrators were able to express their professional judgment about parental involvement, support from others, and a professional opinion about the activities that would support parents and teachers.

Although there were some discrepancies in communication, all groups expressed that communication was essential for the learning community and that overall parents want to be involved in their child's education.

From separate surveys, the participants were able to share their ideas, opinions, and beliefs about parental involvement. Overall responses from parent surveys suggested that they have a good perception of their child's current school. To concur, teachers mentioned that attending more events at the school built and strengthened the partnership with the community and in the meantime, improved teacher effectiveness and overall perception. Also, teachers suggested creating and implementing parent classes that teach parents how to teach different subject areas. When parents felt as though they were a part of the educational process, the perception of the school community was positive. Administrators agreed that getting families involved was a successful practice. Administrators also indicated that it was a vital part of an administrator's job to assure that the relationship in the learning community was strong, which promoted a positive perception.

Along with communication, parental involvement was recognized as being the link that connects all participants in the learning community. Section 5 will provide an overview of the research questions along with the following: (a) interpretation of the findings, (b) implications of social change, (c) recommendations for action, and (d) recommendations for further study.

Section 5: Overview, Recommendations, and Conclusions

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to explore the experiences and ideas of parents, teachers, and administrators related to parental involvement. The study provided strategies that allowed parents to become active participants in their child's education. These strategies also helped to build and strengthen the partnership within the learning community, which includes parents, teachers, and administrators. Through educators and researchers, it has been proven that parental involvement improves overall student success (Gary, 2007; J.S. Lee & Bowen, 2006; Smith, 2006; Townsend, 2010).

The research questions addressed by this study were as follows:

Quantitative:

1. What are the reported experiences of parents, teachers, and administrators with parental involvement efforts at their schools?
2. What are the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators about current parental involvement efforts at their schools?

Qualitative:

3. What are the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators about the effects of parental involvement?
4. What are the suggestions of parents, teachers, and administrators for improving parental involvement?

This section explained the findings from the current study. From the quantitative and qualitative responses, parents, teachers, and administrators expressed and revealed opinions, trends, and beliefs about parental involvement. For example, the participants agreed that

communication was an important factor in projecting student outcomes and future relationships within the learning community. Along with communication, parental involvement was recognized as being the link that connected all participants in the learning community.

This section interprets the findings of each research question. The interpretations are presented according to each research question which shows the triangulation and the connection of the data from the research methods that were used concurrently. The other topics in the section are the interpretation of the findings, implications for social change, recommendations for action, recommendations for further study, and conclusion.

Interpretation of Findings

Quantitative Findings

The interpretation of the findings is presented according to research question.

1. What are the reported experiences of parents, teachers, and administrators with parental involvement efforts at their schools?

When parents were involved, higher expectations were placed on student. The data from parents' quantitative and qualitative surveys indicated that parents considered their role important. In the Review of Literature, Barley and Wegner (2010) described three key characteristics of successful (SES) supplemental educational services: a positive approach from district and school personnel, working closely with service providers, and informing and supporting parents in their roles. This strategy supported the purpose of getting parents involved, which also supported student success and achievement. The research also indicated that when teachers were empowered and motivated with knowledge of quality teaching, it led to academic success. Gordon and Louis (2009) described the partnership as shared leadership between principals and teachers that made them more likely to collaborate with parents and the

community. Furthermore, Gordon and Louis suggested that the more experience principals have with community interactions, the more likely they were to be open to more parental influence and the daily practice in their building.

2. What are the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators about current parental involvement efforts at their schools?

According to the survey data from Section 4, the parents' perception is important and it contributes to the level of consistent parental involvement that is required to increase or improve students' outcomes. Parents express ideas and opinions on the importance for the school to communicate with parents in all situations. The results from the teachers' surveys revealed that active involvement from parents is vital in student's academic success. Furthermore, teachers' responses identified activities that would support each grade and subject area. The administrators' perception questions were based upon the administrators' professional judgment about parental involvement, support from others, and a professional opinion about the activities that would support parents and teachers. Overall, the participants' perception has a great bearing on the level of parental involvement efforts at their child's school and their child's academic success.

Qualitative Findings

3. What are the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators about the effects of parental involvement?

According to the qualitative survey responses from Section 4, the relationship between parents, teachers, and administrators does affect student outcome. Parents pointed out in the responses that the relationship between parents, teachers, and administrators in the school system was important. They noted that a lack of communication affected the school system and school

environment. Teachers suggested contacting families more as a way to improve partnerships with families, which will affect student outcomes. When parents know that the school is concerned about their child, it establishes a trusting relationship in the school community. Oullette and Wilkerson (2008) focused on the use of technology to increase parental involvement. For example, the research noted a pilot project that incorporated the use of technology to deal with logistical barriers of recruitment and retention for parents involved in parent management training programs. The aim of the project was to provide parents with technological support as a way to connect to the school environment. Because technology is essential in our global economy, preparation and readiness are essential for our students. Furthermore, administrators voiced that their roles and perceptions were very important in promoting parental involvement. The literature suggested that principals perceive greater levels of parental involvement influence in the lower grades, which was consistent with the literature (Cotton & Wiklund, 2008; Gordon & Louis, 2009). Administrators also noted that making parents' welcome and being available were steps toward promoting parental involvement and promoting student outcome and success. Richardson (2009) suggested that as the school leader, principals should assure parental involvement in the development of annual goals and policies that reflect strategies for continuous effective involvement, which promoted student success.

4. What are the suggestions of parents, teachers, and administrators for improving parental involvement?

The parents' survey responses indicated that it was the parent's responsibility to be involved in their child's education. Parents also stated that when parents were involved, it led to a positive impact on students' achievement. Kim (2009) and Green et al. (2007) classified it as having different domains, parental involvement at home and parental involvement in the school. From

this viewpoint, parents have different perceptions about their role in their child's academic success. Kim (2009) alluded that when parents were active in their children's school lives by volunteering in school, participating in school activities, and attending teacher-parent conferences, the children achieved more in school. According to Kim's research, parental involvement has highlighted the visibility of the parents in the school as an important factor in the academic success of the child.

Overall, responses from parent surveys suggested that they have a good perception of their child's current school. From the qualitative data, teachers suggested that attending more events at the school will build and strengthen the partnership with the community and in the meantime improve teacher effectiveness and overall perception. Also, teachers suggested creating and implementing parent classes that teach parents how to teach different subject areas. When parents feel as though they were a part of the educational process, the perception of the school community will be positive. From the qualitative data, administrators agreed that getting families involved was a successful practice. During different types of meetings, parent's involvement impacted their perception. Administrators also indicated that it was a vital part of an administrator's job to assure that the relationship in the learning community was strong, which promoted a positive perception.

According to Richardson (2009), school personnel under the leadership of the principal can strengthen parents' appreciation of their role by providing positive feedback at every opportunity. These actions were supported by Epstein's theoretical framework. Epstein and Salina's (1993) theoretical framework introduced effective strategies to increase parental involvement. The strategies included the six practices that allowed parents to become active participants in their child's education:

1. Parenting assisted in understanding and building confidence about parenting, child and adolescence development, and changes in home conditions for learning as children through school (Epstein & Salinas, 1993, p. 4).
2. Communication promoted interactions with teachers and ease of communication with school and teachers (Epstein & Salinas, 1993, p. 6).
3. Volunteering created awareness that families were welcomed and valued at school (Epstein & Salinas, 1993, p.3).
4. Learning at home provided an understanding of instructional programs each year, and what child was learning in each subject (Epstein & Salinas, 1993, p. 7).
5. Decision making promoted shared experiences and connections with other families (Epstein & Salinas, 1993, p. 8).
6. Collaborating with community brought an awareness of school role in the community, and community support and contributions to the school (Epstein & Salinas, 1993, p. 10).

According to the research, a practical application of the findings included a research-based framework for a parental involvement model such as Epstein and Salina's (1993) theoretical framework, which is discussed in details above. The findings from the research revealed that the research participants' perceptions and parental involvement concerns were similar to those challenges that were discussed in Long's (2012) most common communication challenges. The practical application of the findings involved implementing similar strategies that were also found in Long's field-tested solutions. Here is an example of his solutions.

Challenge: Teachers' concern is parent misunderstanding of their children's challenges.

Solution: Teaching parents to use the data.

Long (2012) indicated that the best way for parents to gauge and guide the progress of their children is by monitoring grades, homework, and school attendance. The author suggested that schools develop programs to train parents on how to access and interpret their children's data.

These most common communication challenges and field-tested solutions are also explained in the Recommendations for Action section.

Implications for Social Change

The current study is significant because it contributed to an understanding of the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators. It also brought an awareness of the barriers that were often associated with parental involvement or the lack thereof, such as parents' level of education, teachers' preconceived ideas, and administrator's knowledge of how to bring parents and teachers together to benefit student learning. Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988) stressed that the transformation of human capital occurred when parents were actively involved in the educational growth of their children. Researchers Farrell and Collier (2010), Gordan and Lewis, (2009), Kim (2009) agreed that parental involvement has a positive effect on a child's social and academic success. Griffin and Galassi (2010) also revealed that parental involvement was shown to affect student achievement, reduce problem behaviors, and create a positive sense of self-efficacy, which supported and promoted positive social change.

From the qualitative responses in Section 4, the participants agreed that communication was an important factor in projecting student outcomes and future relationships within the learning community. The participants agreed that collaboration between parents, teachers, and administrators contributed to social change. Smith (2006) suggested that social capital was

obtained through school visits and parent participation. Student success depended upon active involvement from parents in every area of a child's life.

When parents were involved in the learning and learning was considered important in the home, students developed into lifelong learners. This home contribution helped train children to be productive members of society, which affected the community and promoted positive social change. From the qualitative responses in Section 4, it was mentioned that teaching parents how to teach their children was important in the learning process. The teacher respondents expressed the importance of parental involvement and its effect on student involvement. Gary (2007) revealed that parental involvement included educating parents on how important they were to the educational and social growth of their children. In addition, Gordon and Louis (2009), and Jeynes (2007), and Stewart (2008) emphasized that school and school-related activities play a pivotal role in the socialization of children.

Based on the results of this study, other rural schools locally or nationally will benefit from the information and ideas about a comprehensive program that includes six major types of partnership activities (Epstein & Salinas, 1993). The study contributed to positive social change by providing the local district with knowledge that supports parental involvement programs and provides ideas for improvement, which may ultimately improve student outcomes. This study involved and included all stakeholders of the school learning community. Stewart (2008) indicated that schools influenced the academic and social development of students through their structure, staffing, organization, resources, and climate.

Recommendations for Action

To improve the partnership between parents, teachers, and administrators, the research study used Long's (2012) most common communication challenges and field-tested solutions as

the recommendation for action. Similar to Long, the research participants expressed some of the same challenges. Having a successful learning community required that parents, teachers, and administrators be active participants. In Section 1, the significance of the study mentioned barriers that were associated with parental involvement. The barriers noted and matched with Long's common communication challenges and field-tested solutions to solving the challenges.

Barrier: Parents level of education

Challenge 1: Parents do not feel like they are a part of the collaborative process.

Solution: Establishing programs that included most parents' in the collaborative process.

Long (2012) suggested extending these programs to all nationalities so that every child will receive academic support.

Challenge 2: Less than half of the parents feel teachers hold enough conferences or meetings with them.

Solutions: Reaching out to all families to build the learning community and create trust among the learning community.

Long (2012) noted that families relied on the schools to reach out to them.

Furthermore, the author stressed the importance of working together to help build better relationships within the learning community.

Barrier: Teachers' preconceived ideas

Challenge 1: Teachers do not have an understanding of parents' concerns.

Solution: Listening and providing opportunities for parents to get familiar with the school through meetings, visits, and tours (Long, 2012). Examples would be establishing programs formed by parents, teachers, students, and community partners who meet to build bridges between families and schools

Challenge 2: Teachers' concern was parent misunderstanding of their children's challenges.

Solution: Teaching parents to use the data.

Long (2012) indicated that the best way for parents to gauge and guide the progress of their children was by monitoring grades, homework, and school attendance. The author suggested that schools develop programs to train parents on how to access and interpret their children's data.

Barrier: Administrators' lack of knowledge of how to bring parents and teachers together to benefit student learning.

Challenge 1: Only 54% of teachers feel that parents do their part at home to ensure that children get the most out of classroom learning.

Solution: Holding team meetings with parents and teachers to collaborate on student achievement. At the team meetings, the teacher models activities that the parents can do at home with their children and then parents practice those activities with each other in small groups. Parents also shared tips and tricks to overcome homework or subject challenges with their kids (Long, 2012, p. 41).

Challenge 2: Only 17% of teachers feel that their opinions are taken seriously by parents.

Solution: Supporting student achievement by agreeing on core values from parents and teachers.

To conclude, Long (2012) emphasized three core values that were important for the success of the collaborative relationship between parents and teachers: (a) families and teachers were equally important coeducators; the family is the expert on the child and the teacher on the curriculum; (b) a positive communication between teachers and parents was crucial in order to

effectively share information about academic status and address communication barriers; and (c) teachers must visit all students and families to break the cycle of mistrust.

This valuable information will empower the parents, teachers, and administrators of the research study and the rural school district locally and nationwide. Also, the information will provide strategies and solutions that focus on building the learning community. In addition, Epstein and Salinas (1993) and Project Appleseed (2008) introduced effective strategies to increase parental involvement. The strategies included the six practices that allow parents to become active participants in their child's education:

- Parenting will assist in understanding and building confidence about parenting, child and adolescence development, and changes in home conditions for learning as children through school (p. 4).
- Communicating will promote interactions with teachers and ease of communication with school and teachers (p. 6).
- Volunteering will create awareness that families are welcomed and valued at school (p.3).
- Learning at home will provide an understanding of instructional programs each year, and what each child is learning in each subject (p. 7).
- Decision making will promote shared experiences and connections with other families (p. 8).
- Collaborating with community will bring an awareness of school role in the community, and community support and contributions to the school (p. 10).

This involvement often took many forms such as participation in parent-teacher organizations, volunteering at school, checking homework, collaborating with the school on the

child's progress, having a conversation with the child about the school day, or just talking about future education endeavors (Hinkle, 2011).

As recommendation for action, Wanat (2010) explained what satisfied parents practice.

- They were involved in ways that required direct contact with the school.
- Parents communicated often with teachers about their children.
- Parents volunteered regularly.
- Parents served as representatives on committees.
- Parents collaborated on various programs.

After the study was completed, the results were disseminated by letter to the parents, teachers, and administrators of the rural school district. The results of the research remain available to other schools locally, nationally, and worldwide through Walden's database.

Recommendations for Further Study

On the quantitative survey, parents, teachers, and administrators answered the same guiding question: *How do the perceptions of rural parents, teachers, and administrators affect student outcomes and parental involvement?* From this guiding question, the researcher was able to establish recommendations for further study. Because the student outcomes and parental involvement will be ongoing, the researcher sought to seek recommendations for further study from the review of literature. Since the research site involved a rural school district, the research study used a case study completed by Smith (2006) in order to gain further knowledge of parental involvement among low-income families. The case study considered parents in two different ways. First, strategies were used to meet the need of the parents of the low-income neighborhood residents. Next, strategies were created and implemented to enhance the

involvement of parents at Clark Elementary, the research site. Although the case study consisted of interviews, observations, and document reviews, the purpose of the research was similar.

Smith (2006) posed two broad research questions:

1. How did a low-income school create intentional parental involvement strategies?
2. What were the effects of these strategies?

Similar to the current research study, Smith (2006) described the concerns of the parents, teachers, and administrators in regard to parental involvement. Similarly, Green et al., (2007), Ouellette and Wilkerson (2008), and Wanat (2010), along with Smith, identified barriers like job situations (unemployed or underemployed), income level, and limited English skills. Therefore, programs were implemented to address the needs and strengths of the neighborhood residents. Smith's research study helped strengthen the communication between the family and the school. Smith explained that because of the research, teachers were able to develop an understanding of the families and life circumstances of the families that tend to be judged when students are challenged academically. The research also defined parental involvement from a broader perspective. Although the review of literature revealed that parents of Clark Elementary were not involved in the same manner as the counterparts in the current study, participation in any way was considered parental involvement. This study was relevant to the research because it was similar in nature and it gave information considered as a further study. The purpose of this mixed methods design was to explore the perceptions of rural parents, teachers, and administrators about parental involvement and establish a parental involvement model that enhanced student success. Once these strategies and programs have been implemented, follow-up research will be

required to understand how it has impacted students' worth, dignity, and development. The further study will include the involvement of all stakeholders of the school learning community.

Richardson (2009) emphasized the importance of identifying what principals considered as acceptable rules for parental involvement. Future research will be important in order to identify strategies required for principals to facilitate parental involvement because as administrators, they set the standards for parental involvement in their respective schools. LaRocque et al. (2011) suggested that these barriers were significantly improved by providing a schedule or accommodation by offering an alternate time and location for meetings or activities. The authors also explained that parental involvement programs were effective in resolving family, cultural, and economic differences. Finally, the authors described several ways to encourage and enhance the school community:

- School administration facilitated the development of a parental involvement committee.
- Teachers received professional development in communication skills necessary to work with families.
- Colleges of education included the teaching of how educators can successfully include parents in education.
- Support networks provided the forum for parents to motivate each other.
- Students played a role in getting their parents excited about school happenings Wanat (2010).

The research process was a positive and enlightening experience. During the process, I was able to promote the study by communicating with parents and colleagues through technology. Furthermore, being a concerned parent, educator, and administrator, my preconceived idea was

that all participants should want to know about parental involvement. Thus, the research would yield greater participation. Although that may be true, the responses reflected the level of importance during the scheduled research study. As I reflect on the study, the type and amount of questions on the survey may have resulted in improvement of the study and maybe a better data set (e.g., fewer questions). As I researcher, I understand the importance of capturing and maintaining the reader's interest. This will be a recommendation that will bolster further research studies.

Conclusion

The research and literature both supported parental involvement as one of the most important factors in the educational accomplishment of students. LaRocque et al. (2011) suggested that an important missing link in educational equity was consistent parental involvement. The authors emphasized how families, community groups, and educators have an important role to play in the educational success of students. The research examined what parents, teachers, and administrators can do to implement effective parental involvement. The traditional types of involvement were discussed such as volunteering at school, attending school functions, and helping with homework. In addition, researchers such as Epstein and Salinas (1993), Project Appleseed (2008), Wanat (2010), Long (2012), and S. M. Lee, Kushner, and Cho (2007) offered more effective types of participation. The role of parents included a strong partnership between the parents and the school community (Gary, 2007, Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008; Stewart, 2008). This research concluded that parents, teachers, and administrators were essential in the learning community. Communication must be implemented and practiced consistently for all participants to help children be productive citizens. According to the purpose of the research, the goal of education was for every child to receive a high-quality education.

Therefore, the implementation of effective leadership, effective parental involvement, and effective educational reforms will determine the outcome of future success of students.

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Appendix A: Parent Survey Cover Letter

February 2014

Dear Parent,

I am conducting research with a focus on how to develop better school and family partnerships. How should elementary schools try to involve families in their child's education? What are the most useful practices?

The survey questions are designed to learn about the ideas and needs of parents, teachers, and administrators. Through the research, you will obtain knowledge on how to become more involved in your child's education. You will also receive a copy of the results of this research study. Survey information will be anonymous and no one individual will be identified. Of course, your participation is voluntary and you may leave any questions unanswered. The surveys will take approximately 45 minutes or less to complete. Parents will use the envelope labeled completed survey and questionnaire to mail back the survey to the researcher.

If you have additional questions, or would like further clarification regarding this research study, please feel free to contact me at (731) 212-2596, sandra.cheairs@waldenu.edu.

Thank you very much for your help!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Sandra Elaine Cheairs

Walden University Candidate

Appendix B: Parent Survey

A. THE SCHOOL'S CONTACT WITH YOU

<p>Please CIRCLE the one choice for each item that best represents your opinion and experience.</p> <p>1. How well has your child's teacher or someone at school done the following THIS SCHOOL YEAR? My child's teacher or someone at the school....</p>			
1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

a. Helps me understand my child's stage of development.	1	2	3	4
b. Tells me how my child is doing in school.	1	2	3	4
c. Asks me to volunteer at the school.	1	2	3	4
d. Explains how to check my child's homework	1	2	3	4
e. Sends home news about things happening at school.	1	2	3	4

f. Provides information on community services that I may want to use with my family.	1	2	3	4
g. Invites me to PTA/PTO meetings.	1	2	3	4
h. Assigns homework that requires my child to talk with me about things learned in class.	1	2	3	4
i. Invites me to a program at the school.	1	2	3	4
j. Asks me to help with fund raising.	1	2	3	4
k. Has a parent-teacher conference with me.	1	2	3	4
l. Includes parents on school committees, such as curriculum, budget, or improvement committees.	1	2	3	4
m. Provides information on community events that I may want to attend with my child.	1	2	3	4

2. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement about your child's school and teachers?			
1	2	3	4

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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a. This is a very good school.	1	2	3	4
b. I feel welcome at the school.	1	2	3	4
c. I get along well with my child's teacher(s).	1	2	3	4
d. The teachers at this school care about my child.	1	2	3	4

B. YOUR INVOLVEMENT

3. Families are involved in different ways at school and at home. How often do YOU do the following activities? How often do you ...			
1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

a. Read with your child.	1	2	3	4
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b. Volunteer in the classroom or at the school.	1	2	3	4
c. Work with your child on science homework.	1	2	3	4
d. Review and discuss the school work your child brings home.	1	2	3	4
e. Help your child with math.	1	2	3	4
f. Visit your at child school.	1	2	3	4
g. Go over spelling or vocabulary with your child.	1	2	3	4
h. Ask your child about what he/she is learning in science.	1	2	3	4
i. Talk to your child's teacher.	1	2	3	4
j. Ask your child about what he/she is learning in math.	1	2	3	4
k. Help your child with reading/language homework.	1	2	3	4
l. Help your child understand what he/she is learning in science.	1	2	3	4

m. Help your child prepare for math tests.	1	2	3	4
n. Ask your child how well he/she is doing in school	1	2	3	4
o. Ask your child to read something he/she wrote.	1	2	3	4
p. Go to school event (e.g., sports, music, and drama) or meetings.	1	2	3	4
q. Check to see if your child finished his/her homework.	1	2	3	4

C. YOUR IDEAS

4. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement about what parents should do? It is a parent's responsibility to...			
1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

a. Make sure that their child learns at school.	1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---	---

b. Teach their child to value schoolwork.	1	2	3	4
c. Show their child how to use things like a dictionary or encyclopedia.	1	2	3	4
d. Contact the teacher as soon as academic problems arise.	1	2	3	4
e. Test their child on subjects taught in school.	1	2	3	4
f. Keep track of their child's progress in school.	1	2	3	4
g. Contact the teacher if they think their child is struggling in school.	1	2	3	4
h. Show an interest in their child's schoolwork.	1	2	3	4
i. Help their child understand homework.	1	2	3	4
j. Know if their child is having trouble in school.	1	2	3	4

5. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?			
1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

a. I never know if I'm getting through to my child.	1	2	3	4
b. I know how to help my child make good grades in school.	1	2	3	4
c. I can motivate my child to do well in school.	1	2	3	4
d. I feel good about my efforts to help my child learn.	1	2	3	4
e. I don't know how to help my child on schoolwork.	1	2	3	4
f. My efforts to help my child learn are successful.	1	2	3	4
g. I make a difference in my child's school performance.	1	2	3	4

6. How often do you talk with parents who have children at your child's school about the topics listed below? CIRCLE ONE answer on each line to tell if this happens.			
1	2	3	4
Never	A few times a year	Once in a while	Very Often

How often do you and parents at your child's school ...	1	2	3	4
a. Talk about activities at your children's school.	1	2	3	4
b. Talk about your children's teacher.	1	2	3	4
c. Provide each other advice about parenting.	1	2	3	4
d. Share helpful information about your child's reading/language arts, Math? Science?	1	2	3	4
e. Share books or book titles to read with your children.	1	2	3	4
f. Talk about your children's behavior or misbehavior.	1	2	3	4
g. Talk about where to send your children to school.				

	1	2	3	4
h. Share information about community events (e.g., museum exhibits, library readings, and children's theater).	1	2	3	4
i. Talk about the school's policies and rules.	1	2	3	4
j. Share information about extracurricular activities (e.g., music teachers, arts and crafts, sports/leagues).	1	2	3	4
k. Talk about how to become involved at the school.	1	2	3	4
l. Share games, or the names of games, to play with your children.	1	2	3	4
m. Talk about how your children are changing (e.g., growth spurts, boyfriends/girlfriends, social or emotional changes).	1	2	3	4
n. Provide each other with advice about helping your child with homework.	1	2	3	4
o. Talk about your children's accomplishments in school.	1	2	3	4

7. How have your connections with other parents helped you the most as a parent?

8. Guiding Question:

How do the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators affect student outcome and parental involvement?

D. YOUR FAMILY

9. The following question will help us plan programs and activities to meet your family's needs. Please make an answer for each item.

- a. Is your child at this school a: _____ Girl _____ Boy
 b. When was your child born: _____ Month _____ Year
 c. What is your relationship to the child?

_____ Mother _____ Grandmother _____ Grandfather

_____ Father _____ Stepmother _____ Stepfather

_____ Other (please describe) _____

d. How much formal schooling have you completed?

_____ Some high school

_____ High school diploma

_____ Some college

_____ Vocational school/ Technical College

_____ College degree

_____ Graduate degree or credits

e. How much schooling do you think your child will complete?

- _____ Some high school
- _____ High school diploma
- _____ Some college
- _____ Vocational school/ Technical college
- _____ College degree
- _____ Graduate degree or credits

f. How do you describe yourself?

- _____ Asian-American
- _____ Black or African American
- _____ White or Caucasian
- _____ Hispanic or Latino
- _____ Other (describe) _____

g. What language do you speak at home?

- _____ English
- _____ Spanish
- _____ Hmong
- _____ Other (describe) _____

h. Marital Status:

_____ Married _____ Divorced or separated _____ Never married

i. Are you employed?

_____ Full-time _____ Part-time _____ Not employed

j. If applicable, is your spouse or partner employed?

_____ Full-time _____ Part-time _____ Not employed _____ NA

10. What other suggestions do you have about the school that could help you support your child's education or learning?

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY

Appendix C: Teacher Survey Cover Letter

February 2014

Dear Educator,

I am conducting research with a focus on how to develop better school and family partnerships. How should elementary schools try to involve families in their child's education? What are the most useful practices?

The survey questions are designed to learn about the ideas and needs of parents, teachers, and administrators. Through the research, you will obtain knowledge on how to communicate and involve parents in their child's education. You will also receive a copy of the results of this research study. Survey information will be anonymous and no one individual will be identified. Of course, your participation is voluntary and you may leave any questions unanswered. The survey will take approximately 45 minutes or less to complete. The following hyper link___ will give you access to the survey.

If you have additional questions, or would like further clarification regarding this research study, please feel free to contact me at (731) 212-2596, sandra.cheairs@waldenu.edu.

Thank you very much for your help!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Sandra Elaine Cheairs

Walden University Candidate

Appendix D: Teacher Survey

1. The first question asks for your professional judgment about parental involvement. Please CIRCLE the one choice for each item that best represents your opinion and experience.			
1	2	2	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

a. Parental involvement is important for a good school.	1	2	3	4
b. Most parents know how to help their children on school work at home.	1	2	3	4
c. This school has an active and effective parent organization (e.g., PTA or PTO).	1	2	3	4
d. Every family has some strength that could be tapped to increase student success in school.	1	2	3	4
e. All parents could learn ways to assist their children on schoolwork at home, if shown how.	1	2	3	4

f. Parent involvement can help teachers be more effective with more students.	1	2	3	4
g. Teachers should receive recognition for time spent on parent involvement activities.	1	2	3	4
h. Parents of children at this school want to be involved more than they are now at most grade levels.	1	2	3	4
i. Teachers do not have time to involve parents in very useful ways.	1	2	3	4
j. Teachers need in-service education to implement effective parent involvement practices.	1	2	3	4
k. Parent involvement is important for student success in school.	1	2	3	4
l. This school views parents as important partners.	1	2	3	4
m. The community values education for all students.	1	2	3	4
n. This school is known for trying new and unusual approaches to improve the school.	1	2	3	4
o. Mostly when I contact parents, it's about problems or trouble.	1	2	3	4

p. In this school, teachers play a large part in most decisions.	1	2	3	4
q. The community supports this school.	1	2	3	4
r. Compared to other schools, this school has one of the best school climates for teachers, students, and parents.	1	2	3	4

2. Teachers contact their students' families in different ways. Please estimate the percent of your student families that you are contacted this year in these ways:
CIRCLE the choice for each item that best represents your opinion and experience.

a. Letter memo	NA	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	All
b. Telephone	NA	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	All
c. Scheduled parent-teacher conference	NA	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	All

d. Home visit	NA	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	All
e. Meeting in the community	NA	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	All
f. Report card pick-up	NA	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	All
g. Performance, sports, or other events	NA	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	All

3. Some teachers involve parents (or others) as volunteers at the school building. Please check the ways that you use volunteers in your classroom and in your school THIS YEAR. CHECK all that apply in Columns A and B.

A. In my CLASSROOM, volunteers... B. In our SCHOOL, volunteers

a.	I do not use classroom volunteers	a.	Are NOT USED in the school now
b.	Listen to children read aloud	b.	Monitor halls, cafeteria, or other areas

c.	Read to the children	c.	Work in the library, computer lab, or other area
d.	Grade papers	d.	Teach mini-courses
e.	Help on trips or at parties	f.	Lead clubs or activities
f.	Give talks (e.g., on careers, hobbies, etc.)	f.	Check attendance
g.	Other ways (please specify)	g.	Work in "parent room"
		h.	Other ways (please specify)

THIS YEAR, how many volunteers or aides helped in your classroom or school?

Number of different volunteers who assist me in a typical week = _____

Do you have paid aides in your classroom? ____ NO ____ YES (how many?)

Number of different volunteers who work anywhere in the school in an average week = _____
(approximately)

4. Please estimate the percent of your students' families who did the following THIS YEAR:
CIRCLE the choice for each item that best represents your opinion and experience.

a. Attend workshops regularly at school	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	100%
---	----	----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	------

b. Check daily that child's homework is done	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	100%
c. Practice schoolwork in the summer	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	100%
d. Attend PTA meeting regularly	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	100%
e. Attend parent-teacher conferences with you	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	100%
Understand enough to help their child at home:								
f. reading skills at your grade level	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	100%
g. writing skills at your grade level	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	100%
h. math skills at your grade level	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	100%

5. Schools serve diverse populations of families who have different needs and skills. The next question asks for your judgment about specific ways of involving families at your school. Please CIRCLE one choice to tell whether you think each type of involvement is:			
1	2	3	4

a. Workshops for parents to build in parenting and understanding their children at each grade level.	Not IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
b. Workshops for parents on creating home conditions for learning.	Not IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
c. Communication from the school to the home that all families can understand and use.	Not IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
d. Communications about report cards so that parents understand students' progress and needs.	Not IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
e. Parent-teacher conferences with all families.	Not IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
f. Surveying parents each year for their ideas about school.	Not IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
g. Volunteers in classroom to assist teachers and students.	Not IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
h. Volunteers to help in other (non-classroom) parts of the school.	Not IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
i. Information on how to monitor homework.	Not IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
j. Information for parents on how to help their children with specific skills and subjects.	Not IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG

k. Involvement by families in PTA/PTO leadership, other committees, or other decision-making roles.	Not IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
l. Programs for after-school activities, recreation, and homework help.	Not IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG

6. Teachers choose among many activities to assist their students and families. CIRCLE one choice to tell how important each of these is for you to conduct at your grade level.			
1	2	3	4
A Little Important	Pretty Important	Important	Very Important

a. Have a conference with each of my students' parents at least once a year.	1	2	3	4
b. Attend evening meetings, performances, and workshops at school.	1	2	3	4
c. Contact parents about their children's problems or failures.	1	2	3	4
d. Inform parents when their children do something well or improve.	1	2	3	4
e. Involve some parents as volunteers in my classroom.	1	2	3	4

f. Inform parents of the skills their children must pass in each subject I teach.	1	2	3	4
g. Inform parents how report card grades are earned in class.	1	2	3	4
h. Provide specific activities for children and parents to do to improve students' grades.	1	2	3	4
i. Provide ideas for discussing TV shows.	1	2	3	4
j. Assign homework that requires children to interact with parents.	1	2	3	4
k. Suggest ways to practice spelling or other skills at home before a test.	1	2	3	4
l. Ask parents to listen to a story or paragraph that their children write.	1	2	3	4
m. Work with other teachers to develop parent involvement activities and materials.	1	2	3	4
n. Work with community members to arrange learning opportunities in my class.	1	2	3	4
o. Work with area business for volunteers to improve programs for my students.	1	2	3	4
p. Request information from parents on their children's talents, interests, or needs.	1	2	3	4

q. Serve on a PTA/PTO or other school committee.				
	1	2	3	4

7. The next question asks for your opinion about the activities that you think should be conducted by the parents of the children you teach. CIRCLE the choice that describes the importance of these activities at your grade level.

PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES....

1	2	3	4
Not Important	A Little Important	Pretty Important	Very Important

a. Send children to school ready to learn.				
	1	2	3	4
b. Teach children to behave well.				
	1	2	3	4
c. Set up a quiet place and time for studying at home.				
	1	2	3	4
d. Encourage children to volunteer in class.				
	1	2	3	4
e. Know what children are expected to learn each year.				
	1	2	3	4

f. Check daily that homework is done.	1	2	3	4
g. Talk to children about what they are learning in school.	1	2	3	4
h. Ask teachers for specific ideas on how to help their children at home with class work.	1	2	3	4
i. Talk to children about problems children are facing at home.	1	2	3	4
j. Attend PTA/PTO meetings.	1	2	3	4
k. Serve as a volunteer in the school or classroom.	1	2	3	4
l. Attend assemblies and other special events at the school.	1	2	3	4
m. Take children to special places or events in the community.	1	2	3	4
n. Talk to children about the importance of school.	1	2	3	4

8. The next question asks how you perceive others' support for parent involvement in your school. Please CIRCLE one choice on each line. How much support does each give now to parent involvement?			
1	2	3	4
No Support None	Weak Support Weak	Some Support Some	Strong Support Strong

a. You personally	1	2	3	4
b. Other teachers	1	2	3	4
c. The principal	1	2	3	4
d. Other administrators	1	2	3	4
e. Parents	1	2	3	4
f. Others in community	1	2	3	4
g. The school board	1	2	3	4
h. The district superintendent	1	2	3	4

9. Over the past two years, how much has the school involved parents at school and at home?

- _____ (1) School involved parents less this year than last.
- _____ (2) School involved parents about the same in both years.
- _____ (3) School involved parents more this year than last.
- _____ (4) Don't know, I did not teach at this school last year.

The last questions ask for general information about you, your students, and the class you teach. This will help us understand how new practices can be developed to meet the needs of particular schools, teachers, and students.

10. YOUR STUDENTS AND TEACHING

A. (a) What grades do you teach this year? (CIRCLE all that apply.)

Pre-K K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

(a) If you do not teach, give your position: _____

B. How many different students do you teach each day, on average?

Number of different students I teach on an average day = _____

C. Which best describes your teaching responsibility? (Check One)

- __ 1. I teach several subjects to one self-contained class.
- __ 2. I teach one subject to several different classes of students in a departmentalized programs.
- __ 3. I teach more than one subject to more than one class in a semi-department or other arrangement.
- __ 4. Other (please describe):

D. Check the subject(s) you teach in an average week (Please check all that apply):

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (a) Reading | <input type="checkbox"/> (e) Social Studies | <input type="checkbox"/> (i) Advisory |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (b) LA/English | <input type="checkbox"/> (f) Health | <input type="checkbox"/> (j) PE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (c) Math | <input type="checkbox"/> (g) Art | <input type="checkbox"/> (k) Home Ec |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (d) Science | <input type="checkbox"/> (h) Music | <input type="checkbox"/> (l) Industrial Arts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (m) Other describe) | | |

E. (a) Do you work with other teachers on a formal, interdisciplinary team?

No Yes

(b) If yes, do you have a common planning time with all of the teachers on your team? No Yes

F. (a) On average, how many minutes of homework do you assign in most school days?

None 5-10 25-30 35-45 50-60 over 1 hour

(b) Do you typically assign homework on the weekend?

yes no

G. About how many hours each week, on average, do you spend contacting parents?

_____ (a) None

_____ (b) Less than one hour

_____ (c) One hour

_____ (d) Two hours

_____ (e) three hours or more

H. About what percent of your students are:

_____ % (a) African American

_____ % (b) Asian American

_____ % (c) Hispanic American

_____ % (d) White

_____ % (e) Other _____ 100

I. About how many of your students are in (CIRCLE the estimate that comes closest):

- | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|----|-----|-----|--------|--------|---------|
| (a) Chapter 1 | 0% | 10% | 20% | 30-50% | 60-80% | 90-100% |
| (b) Special education | 0% | 10% | 20% | 30-50% | 60-80% | 90-100% |
| (c) Gifted and talented | 0% | 10% | 20% | 30-50% | 60-80% | 90-100% |
| (d) Free or reduced lunch | 0% | 10% | 20% | 30-50% | 60-80% | 90-100% |
- J. About what percent of your students are: K. About what percent of

your students or notices
from the school:

_____ % (a) above average in achievement

_____ (a) promptly delivers
memos

or notices from the school

_____ % (b) Average in achievement

_____ % (c) Below average in achievement 100%

Guiding Question:

11. How do the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators affect student outcome and parental involvement?

YOUR EXPERIENCE AND BACKGROUND

12. A. What is your experience? B. What is your gender?

_____ (a) Years in teaching or administration _____ (a) Male

_____ (b) Years in this school

_____ (b) Female

C. What is your highest education?

D. How do you describe yourself?

_____ (a) Bachelor's

_____ (a) African American

_____ (b) Bachelor's + credits

_____ (b) Asian American

_____ (c) Master's

_____ (c) Hispanic American

_____ (d) Master's + credits

_____ (d) White

_____ (e) Doctorate

_____ (e) other (describe)

_____ (f) other (describe)

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY

Appendix E: Administrator Survey Cover Letter

February 2014

Dear Educator,

I am conducting research with a focus on how to develop better school and family partnerships. How should elementary schools try to involve families in their child's education? What are the most useful practices?

The survey questions are designed to learn about the ideas and needs of parents, teachers, and administrators. Through the research, you will obtain knowledge on how to communicate and involve parents in their child's education. You will also receive a copy of the results of this research study. Survey information will be anonymous and no one individual will be identified.

Of course, your participation is voluntary and you may leave any questions unanswered. The survey will take approximately 45 minutes or less to complete. The following hyper link ___ will give you access to the survey.

If you have additional questions, or would like further clarification regarding this research study, please feel free to contact me at (731) 212-2596, sandra.cheairs@waldenu.edu.

Thank you very much for your help!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Sandra Elaine Cheairs

Walden University Candidate

Appendix F: Administrator Survey

Please respond to the statements concerning your feelings about your school's efforts to involve its parents in their student's education. There is no right or wrong answers.

<p>1. This question asks for your professional judgment about parental involvement. Place a mark (X) in the column that matches the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.</p>			
1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

a. Parent involvement is important for a good elementary school.	1	2	3	4
b. Elementary schools should have an active parent organization (e.g., PTA, PAC, or PTO).				
c. Every family has some strengths that could be tapped to increase their child's success in elementary school.				
d. Parent involvement can increase teacher effectiveness.				
e. Elementary schools teachers need in-service education to implement effective parent involvement practices.				
f. This school views parents as important partners in education.				
g. The community values education for all students.				
h. The community supports this elementary school.				

i. It is not necessary for parents of elementary school students to be involved in their child's education.				
j. All parents could learn ways to assist their child on schoolwork at home, if shown how.				

2. Elementary school serves diverse populations of families with different needs and skills. The following statements ask for your judgment about specific ways to involve families of elementary school students. Place an (X) in the column that matches the types of involvement with each of the following statements.		
1	Not Important	Means this is not part of your program for parents at your elementary school now, and SHOULD NOT BE .
2	Needs to be Developed	Means this is not part of your elementary school now, but SHOULD BE .
3	Needs to be Improved	Means this is part of your elementary school, but NEEDS TO BE STRENGTHENED .
4	A Strong Program Now	Means this is a STRONG program for most parents at your elementary school.

a. Surveys of parents each year on their ideas about the school.	1	2	3	4
b. Communications from the school to the home that all families can understand and use.				
c. Communications about report cards so that parents understand their child's progress and needs.				
d. Parent-teachers conferences with all families.				
e. Parent and other volunteers at the school.				

<p>3. Administrators make many decisions to promote parent involvement and parent relations. Place a mark (X) in the column that matches how important it is for you to conduct each of the following activities at your school.</p>			
1	2	3	4
Not Important	A Little Important	Pretty Important	Very Important

a. Include students in conferences with parents.	1	2	3	4
b. Provide evening meetings and performances to showcase students at the school.				
c. Contact parents when their child has problems or failures.				
d. Inform parents when their child does something well or improve.				
e. Involve parents as volunteers.				
f. Work with teachers to develop parent involvement activities and materials.				
g. Work on school policy committees with parents.				

<p>4. This question asks for your professional opinions about activities that you think should be conducted by the parents of elementary school students. Place a mark (X) in the column that best describes the importance of these activities for elementary school.</p>			
1	2	3	4
Not Important	A Little Important	Pretty Important	Very Important

a. Attend assemblies and other special events at the school.	1	2	3	4
b. Volunteer to help the school.				

c. Join a parent organization or school committee and attend meetings regularly.				
d. Attend parent-teacher conferences.				

5. This question asks how you perceive others' support of parental involvement in your school. Place a mark (X) in the column that best describes the amount of support each presently gives to parent involvement.			
1	2	3	4
Not Important	A Little Important	Pretty Important	Very Important

a. You, a school administrator	1	2	3	4
b. Teachers in my elementary school				
c. Counselors				
d. Parents				
e. The community				

6. Guiding Question:

How do the perceptions of rural parents, teachers, and administrators affect student outcomes and parental involvement?

Demographic Survey

1. What position do you work in? (a)___ Principal (b)___ Assistant Principal
2. How many years of teaching experience do you have? _____
3. How many years do you have in administration? _____
4. How many years have you worked in your present position? _____
5. How many years have you worked in education overall? _____
6. What is your gender (a)___ Male (b)___ Female
7. What is your ethnicity?
 ___ (a) African American ___ (b) Arab American ___ (c) Asian American
 ___ (d) Hispanic ___ (e) Native American ___ (f) White, Non-Hispanic
 ___ (g) Multicultural ___ (h) Other
8. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
 ___ (a) Bachelor's Degree ___ (e) Ed Specialist Degree
 ___ (b) Master's Degree ___ (f) Doctorate Degree
 ___ (c) Master's Degree + 15 ___ (g) Other
 ___ (d) Master's Degree + 30
9. Are you a graduate of the Hope County Schools? ___ (a) Yes ___ (b) No
10. Do you supervise any extracurricular activities?
 ___ (a) No
 ___ (b) Yes (which ones) _____
11. About how many hours each week, on the average, do you spend contacting parents?

12. _____ (a) None
 _____ (b) Less than one hour
 _____ (c) One hour
 _____ (d) Two hours
 _____ (e) Three hours or more
13. Administrators contact their students' families in different ways. Check with an (X) how often you have made contact with parents at your school. (*Mark all that apply*)

Type of Contact	Annually	Bi- Annually	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
a. Scheduled parent- teacher conference					

b. Home visit					
c. Meeting in the community					
d. Report card pick-up					
e. Performances, sports, or other events					
f. Newsletter					
g. Letter or memo					

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY

Appendix G: Permission to Use Letter



Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships

Johns Hopkins University • 2701 North Charles Street, Suite 300 • Baltimore MD 21218

TEL: 410-516-8800 • FAX: 410-516-8890 • cnps@jhu.edu

December 17, 2012

To: Sandra Cheairs

From: Joyce L. Epstein & Steven B. Sheldon

Re: Permission to use:

- Sheldon, S. B. & Epstein, J. L. (2007). Parent and Student Surveys on Family and Community Involvement in the Elementary and Middle Grades. Baltimore, MD: Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University.
- Epstein, J. L. & Salinas, K. C. (1993). Surveys and Summaries: Questionnaires for Teachers and Parents in the Elementary and Middle Grades. Baltimore, MD: Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University.
- Epstein, J. L., Connors-Tadros, L., & Salinas, K. C. (1993). High School and Family Partnerships: Surveys for Teachers, Parents, and Students in High School. Baltimore, MD: Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University.

This letter grants you permission to use, adapt, or reprint the surveys noted above in your dissertation study.

We ask only that you include appropriate references to the survey and authors in the text and bibliography of your reports and publications.

Best of luck with your project.

Appendix H: Director of School Letter of Cooperation

Director of Schools

Hope County Schools

██████████

February 2014

Dear ██████████

In August of this school year, I received your permission to conduct the study entitled Perceptions of Parental Involvement Among Rural Parents, Teachers, and Administrators within the Hope County School System. I have had to make some changes based on the Institutional Review Board (IRB) ethical feedback. I am notifying you of the following changes:

- The researcher, Sandra Cheairs, will have to collect all research data. A Letter of Invitation/Consent Form will be used and will indicate that the surveys are anonymous and participation will be on a volunteer basis. The research packet will consist of the following: a letter of invitation, consent form, survey, questionnaire, and a different color self addressed envelope with the school's address to which the completed surveys should be mailed. Parent surveys will be distributed, collected, and returned to the office unopened by the fifth grade teachers, and the researcher will pick up the unopened

surveys weekly. At the same time, 14 teachers and 5 administrators will receive an e-mail containing the same information, but with a link to complete the online survey through SurveyMonkey. The teacher & administrator research information will be accessed through Hope County Schools email addresses, which can be located on tennessee.ena.com a district website.

- I will collect data from the five elementary school principals/designee, parents of fifth grade students, and teachers of fifth grade students. My place of employment, Grand Lake Elementary School will be excluded from the research study because of a conflict of interest and authority dynamics.
- Designated personnel will not be used since the Quantitative and Qualitative phase will be anonymous. Implied Consent will be utilized, whereas no signatures will be collected.
- There will be no focus groups.
- Because of the small size of the research population, the surveys will be administered to all members of the population.

Upon IRB approval, the research phases will begin. I have attached a copy of the steps that will be followed throughout this process for your information. I will share the finding with all participants once the study has been completed. Thanks in advance for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

Sandra Cheairs

Walden University Candidate

Appendix I: Parent Qualitative Survey

1. How does the relationship between parents, teachers, and administrators in this school system affect your child's education in the current school?
2. What negative memories of your own school experience prevent you from becoming involved with your child's current school?
3. How much does the school not communicating well with people from your culture prevent you from becoming involved with your child's current school?
4. What are your perceptions of parental involvement in your child's current school? Why?
5. What changes would you recommend to improve the parental involvement program at your child's school?

Appendix J: Teacher Qualitative Survey

1. What is the most successful practice to involve parents that you have used or that you have heard about?
2. In what ways could better partnership with families help you as a teacher?
3. In what ways could better partnership with the community help you as a teacher?
4. What do you think are the most important issues that need to be addressed in this school concerning parental involvement and student achievement?
5. What changes would you recommend to improve the parental involvement program at the school where you are employed?

Appendix K: Administrator Qualitative Survey

1. As an elementary school administrator, what do you believe is your role in promoting positive parental involvement?
2. What should be the role of the parent(s) in their student's education at the elementary school level?
3. What is the most successful practice to involve parents of elementary school students that you have used or heard about?
4. What changes would you recommend to improve the parental involvement program at the school where you are an administrator?
5. How would you get parents and teachers to work together to improve the partnership toward helping students to achieve?

Curriculum Vitae

Contact Information

Name: Sandra Elaine Cheairs

Email: cheairs4@yahoo.com

Employment History

Work History

August 2006-Present Assistant Principal, Grand Junction Elementary School,

Grand Junction, Tenn. 38381

2007-Present Instructional Facilitator, Grand Junction Elementary School

1986-Present Zion Temple Community Church financial administrator (secretary & treasurer)

Professional Educational Training

Tennessee Department of Education-Office of Instructional Leadership-TASL Academy

2006-2007 Framework for Evaluation Training-FE

2007-2008 Assistant Principal Academy- TASL

2008-2009 Assistant Principal Academy- TASL (2)

26th Annual Tenn. Technology Conference- TASL

Performance Assessment-FE

2009-2010 APA Bridge Academy- TASL

2009-2010 Framework for Evaluation-FE

2010-2011 Supervising Struggling Teachers-TASL

2010-2011 TEAM Training-TASL

2010-2011	Battelle for Kids: Formative Instructional Practices for School Leaders
2011-2012	New Teacher Mentoring Program-University of Memphis
2011-2012	Administrative Technology Academy
2005-2012	Participant in Hardeman County Professional Development (15 yrs)
2012-2013	TEAM Training-TASL (June 27-28, 2012)
2012-2013	Common Core Math Training (July 24-26, 2012 -3-8 th gr.)
2012-2013	Common Core Math Training (Dec. 13-14. 2012- K-2 nd gr.)
2012-2013	Common Core Leadership Course: 1/30, 2/13, 3/20, 5/8, 2013
2012-2013	Southwest Tenn. Academic Coach Training: 1/30/13
2013-2014	NIET Team Institute training (4/2/14)
2014-2015	TEAM Training-TASL (July 22-23, 2014)
2014-2015	Spring 2015 Leadership Course (Mar. 10, April, 8)

Education

Includes dates, majors, and details of degrees training and certification

Walden University- Maryland (anticipated completion April 2015)

Ed.D. Degree – Administrative Leadership for Teaching and Learning

Professional Administrator Licensure June 9, 2010

Union University – Jackson, Tenn.

Date: August 2004, Ed.S. Degree – Curriculum and Supervision

Professional Teaching Licensure July 1, 2001

Highly Qualified Status (K-6 all subjects except Art & Music, Mathematics K-8)

Freed-Hardeman University – Henderson, Tenn.

Date: May 2001, Master of Education (M.Ed.) - Administrative and Supervision

Curriculum and Instruction

Licensure as (Beginning Administrator Endorsement – K- 12-June 2001)

GPA: 3:84

Union University – Jackson, Tenn.

Date: May 1997, Bachelor of Science, Elementary Education

GPA: 3.06

Jackson State Community College – Jackson, Tenn.

Date: April 1994, Associates of Science - Accounting

Professional Memberships

Member of local TEA and national NEA

Interests

Leadership: My professional goal is to work in administrations/leadership wherein my efforts and ambition will be enhanced and rewarded to the fullest toward helping others.

Family: I enjoy spending time with my family. It is at this time to enjoy the fruits of my labor and get the opportunity to explore Gods' blessing around me.

Self: I enjoy exercising, walking, reading, and listening to music.

Aptitudes and Skills

Ability to work and communicate with people, work with numbers and concentrate on details. I have knowledge of bookkeeping and business procedures. Computer knowledge (e.g., Microsoft word, excel, Quicken financial program, Renaissance/STAR, Synergy, EasyIEP)