AN EXAMINATION OF THE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT FACTOR ON

READING ACHIEVEMENT SCORES IN AN INNER-CITY SCHOOL

by

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Abstract

The focal point of this study was between two different groups of students enrolled at an inner-city school implementing components of the Reading First Program. The study was designed to look at the parental involvement facet of the Reading First Program, developed under the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act using the nationally recognized strategies set forth by the National Reading Panel. This study determined the various levels of parental involvement influence, if any, on K–3 student reading achievement. The selected research methodologies selected for this study included causal-comparative research with a mixed methods approach using qualitative and quantitative techniques. This study will provide educational leadership and teachers with the opportunity to receive the results of the examination of this aspect of a research-based instructional program. The results will further contribute to stakeholders' ability to potentially apply and expand on appropriate strategies that will further enhance the potential success of program implementation by providing continuous parental involvement designed to increase student academic performance. This study may also help identify other barriers to successful program implementation and possibly provide solutions to address these identified barriers.

Dedication

To, first and foremost, God for providing me with the strength, courage, patience, and wisdom to complete this task in the midst of trials and tribulations that surfaced along the way.

To my loving, supportive, and encouraging parents, Charlie and Fayron Campbell.

To all of my family members who continued to motivate me along the way.

Last but not least, to my beautiful daughter, Jade Imani Smith. Jade, always remember the impossible is possible!

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Research supports that visible, active, and productive parents contribute to students being actively involved in the classroom with higher morale, positive attitudes, and a higher literacy rate and understanding (Elam, Lowell, & Gallup, 1994). Given the positive research data about improving and increasing student achievement academically being partially credited to continuous parental involvement (Schaffer, Grafius, Dominik, & Castilo, 2003), several obstacles continue to prohibit parents in economically challenged environments from staying abreast of important and necessary school issues and contributing to the academic development of their children. Therefore, this study focused on the parental involvement factor and the contributions to increasing successful literacy outcomes in the school.

It is important to recognize the obstacles that contribute to inner-city schools' inability to have a strong presence of continuous and consistent parental backing. According to research conducted by Snow, Hemphill, Wendy, Goodman, and Chandler (2004), lack of transportation, inability to secure a job, low-wage jobs, excessive work hours, homelessness, illiteracy, violent domestic disputes, single-family homes, gang involvement, and incarceration are all barriers that contribute to insecurity, instability, and inadequate academic knowledge in and out of the home (Snow et al.). Further

research conducted by Collins, Cooper, and Whitmore (1995) identified other noteworthy barriers to include (a) a contrast among ideas, parents, and teachers in regards to what constitutes involvement; (b) a less than welcoming atmosphere toward visitors in schools and classrooms; (c) negative or neutral communication from schools; (d) time pressure; and (e) language barriers.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) has provided inner-city schools with opportunities to be a part of a major early literacy development initiative, known as the Reading First program. The Reading First program was designed to ensure students are given proven, scientifically based reading strategies and materials aimed toward securing the ability that every child can read fluently by the end of the third grade (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Involvement with reading activities and early literature exposure at home have a positive influence on language comprehension and expressive language skills while increasing interest in reading and contributing to overall successful reading achievement (Gest, Freeman, Domitrovich, & Welsh, 2004).

Despite obstacles contributing to continuous parental involvement in inner-city schools, school administrators are still obligated to communicate and provide ample opportunities that allow parents to play an active role in the development of their child's academic career (Cotton, 2001). Research further suggests that of all school subjects, reading has been found to be the most sensitive to parental influences (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). Senechal and LeFevre further stated early home literacy experiences and exposure contribute to an increased fluent reader by the end of third grade despite the social and cognitive development indifferences. Therefore, this study evaluated two groups of students in Grades K–3 who actively implement nationally recognized

strategies of the Reading First program, to determine the influence, if any, parental

involvement roles play on student reading scores, through analysis of district- and state-

provided assessments.

Background of the Study

Family Support America stated the following about defining the parameters of

parental involvement:

> There is no universal definition of what parental involvement entails. Some
> definitions include greater participation in the life of a school, while others focus
> on increased contributions to an individual child's learning process. Still others
> incorporate the family into the learning process through adult education, parenting
> and after school activities. Some leading schools engage families in the
> governance and planning processes and in building broad ownership of student
> achievement goals. Nonetheless, parental involvement occurs when parents
> actively, critically, resourcefully and responsibly contribute to promoting and
> developing the well being of their communities. (2001, p. 2)

Flouri and Buchanan (2004) suggested that parental involvement in a child's literacy

practices is a more dominant force than any other family background variable, such as

social class, level of parental education, and family size. Wade and Moore (2000) pointed

out that despite the positive findings promoting high levels of parental involvement,

inner-city schools still struggle with inconsistent parental involvement in the schools.

This inconsistency of parental involvement contributes to the adverse effect of student

academic reading achievement (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002).

Parental involvement entails building and maintaining a productive relationship

with school officials, administrators, teachers, and, most importantly, students to achieve

desired academic success. According to Lee (2003), building and maintaining positive

collaboration among all interested parties aid in involvement leading to influence,

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advocacy, and promotion of educational policy and law. Lee further elaborated by stating parental engagement becomes complicated and sacrificed in most inner-city areas due to insufficient economic resources, thus contributing to social and academic predictable and unpredictable obstacles that, in most cases, continue to surface regularly.

Research suggests the importance of parents becoming actively engaged in their child's literacy activities (Cotton, 2001). Studies also indicate that the earlier parents become involved in their children's reading practices, the more profound the results, thus providing for longer-lasting educational effects (Mullis, Mullis, Cornille, Ritchson, & Sullender, 2004). These findings have contributed to the development of bridging the parental involvement gap in schools through the assistance of implementing, on a state and district level, the required federal parental involvement component of the No Child Left Behind Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). This act provides a framework that allows families, educators, and communities to work together to improve the overall teaching and learning experience.

Provisions within the NCLB stress shared accountability between schools and parents for high student achievement, including expanded public school choice and supplemental educational services for eligible children in low-performing schools, local development of parental involvement plans with sufficient flexibility to address local needs, and building parents' capacity for using effective practices to improve their own children's academic achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The accountability factor of building and maintaining collaborative working relationships between schools and parents ultimately carries over into the local school's efforts of the proper implementation of the Reading First program established under the NCLB.

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The No Child Left Behind Act signed into law by President Bush established the Reading First initiative, "a new high-quality evidence-based reading program for the students of America, based on the findings of years of scientific research, which, at the request of Congress, were compiled by the National Reading Panel" (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 2). The Reading First program grants schools the opportunity to take advantage of academic assistance by placing highly qualified, scientifically based reading programs in the school for K–3 students to build and develop early literacy skills and be able to read proficiently by the end of third grade (National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000; U.S. Department of Education). This program also provides ample professional development opportunities for educators to increase their instructional skills in regards to implementing the program effectively. Reading First further demands the screening, use of various diagnostic tools, analysis of these tools, and reading assessments to measure progress to determine the success of student reading achievement (NRP).

According to Baker and Schere (2002), equipping Title I inner-city schools with this powerful program allows more positive, proven avenues of reaching out and possibly maintaining parental understanding of the importance of continuous literature exposure. Cotton and Wikelund (2002) further suggested it may also contribute to parents' willingness to go above and beyond, to establish a sense of urgency to play an active, engaging role in the education of their children. Therefore, it is important that parents and school officials be aware of the significant contribution they can make to their children's learning experience by providing a stimulating environment around language, reading, and writing, and supporting at home the school's literacy agenda (Baker & Schere).

The selected school of study, referred to as Colts Elementary (a fictional name used to protect confidentiality), is an inner-city, Title I school that has been a part of the Reading First program for the past 3 years. Being classified as a Title I school automatically requires school officials to have parameters in place to promote the importance of parents playing an integral role in assisting and maximizing their children's learning experience, encourage parents to be actively involved in their children's education at school, consider parents as full-time partners in their children's education, and to ensure parents are included in various decision-making opportunities and serve on advisory committees to assist in the education of their children (Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA], 2001). Colts Elementary is devoted and committed to establishing the level of academic reading success through explicit methodologies presented by Reading First further enhanced by continuous involvement and engagement of parents (Memphis City Schools, 2006).

Statement of the Problem

It is not known how and to what degree continuous parental involvement influences a child's reading achievement in Grades K–3 under the Reading First program. Reading First provides the opportunity for school administrators and teachers to saturate the classroom with researched-based instructional strategies, materials, and interventions that have proven to yield a systematic and explicit approach to achieving needed reading skills. Furthermore, components of the NCLB legislation require school administrators to develop a solid, positive working relationship with parents, despite the economic status of

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a school, thus providing and creating an environment that is rich in generating a thriving academic community and unity.

It is clear and evident through educational literature that parental involvement will enhance a child's overall educational experience. Parental involvement contributes to higher academic achievement, increased problem-solving skills, greater cognitive competency, and an increased desire to attend and enjoy school (Melhuish, Sylva, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2001). Despite the given research, inner-city schools still struggle with maintaining consistency in parental participation, suggesting parents further possibly lack understanding in regards to incessant literature exposure and implementing appropriate and needed strategies in the home that will ultimately yield positive academic contributions.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant to educational leaders and classroom teachers who are responsible for helping students achieve an appropriate level of reading proficiency by the end of their third-grade school year. The study will provide information to administrative and teacher leaders about the significance that parental involvement plays in the effort to continually increase reading achievement for K–3 students in a particular participating Reading First school. Information obtained may be used in a positive way to (a) increase the awareness and success of providing continuous parental involvement and collaborative units within the school and community; (b) engage in active, open, and continuous discussion on decreasing the lack of parents not actively engaged in school and home life; and (c) empower and equip parents with the essential knowledge, skills,

and motivation necessary to aid in increasing student literacy performance on a long-term basis.

In addition, this study revealed a variety of shared concerns and barriers to successful parental involvement. In turn, the evaluation resulted in providing an innovative, practical, and creative mixture of solutions to address the negative issues of inconsistent parental activity in and out of the school. Considering that early and active family engagement embarks on securing students with a head start in school and advantage to be successful academically throughout primary and secondary years (Wade & Moore, 2000), these findings will be beneficial on a long-term basis overall for the preparation of students to be successful, literate, functional citizens in our communities.

Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the influence of parental involvement on student reading achievement in an inner-city school. This evaluation was based on student achievement data gathered by state and district assessments for participating students. This study shows a clear connection between reading achievement and the degree to which parents are involved in their children's educational development during both school and home time. Students in Grades K–3, enrolled in inner-city schools, participating in the Reading First program were the focal point for this study. Participating students were grouped and compared based on the determination of establishing students who received continuous parental involvement and additional academic exposure within the home and school versus those students who did not receive this type of parental involvement in relation to constant exposure to aspects of reading.

The study established administrators', teachers', and parents' perspectives and understanding of the overall effects of parental involvement influence on reading achievement measurable through district- and state-provided Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) test scores, surveys, and interviews.

Upon establishing potential parental involvement influences, if any, information obtained from the DIBELS benchmark and progress monitoring assessments were further analyzed and compared to survey and interview data obtained to determine to what extent parents are involved, further pinpointing specifically the parental involvement actions, such as reading to children outside of the home, presence in the classroom, and exposure to background-building opportunities outside of the school, that played a possible role in increasing reading achievement for students. The findings will equip school administrators and teachers with the necessary tools and a better understanding as to what extent the actual specific parental involvement actions play within the classroom, thus contributing to a potential positive influence of reading achievement for K–3 students. This will allow for a working discussion to develop and possibly spark a desire to further expand beyond the scope of the original intentions of the study.

Rationale

Inner-city schools are often plagued with exposure to a variety of negative environmental factors, such as economic challenges, excessive exposure to violence, limited resources, and low literacy rates within the community (Eggen & Kauchak, 2002), which in turn adversely affect the levels of parental involvement within and outside of the school. Evidence further indicates, through ailing test scores in some

economically disadvantaged areas, inconsistencies of lack of continuous, consistent, and influential parental support. This lack of acceptable, excelling literacy achievement contributed to the development of the Reading First program.

The Reading First program equips participating inner-city schools with access to additional funding and research-based instructional strategies for both teachers and parents, and provides the opportunity for closer, collaborative, and easier to understand school content to foster an influential literacy learning community. This study has the potential to establish the extent to which parents should be involved and provide continuous literacy exposure, which will possibly positively influence and increase reading achievement.

Theoretical Framework

This study investigated the effects of parental engagement on reading achievement scores for students in Grades K–3 who are a part of the Reading First program. Evaluative comparisons were made with an emphasis placed on students who received continuous assistance in and out of the school from parents and those who did not. For the purpose of this study, *parental involvement* is defined as parents taking the initiative to be present in the school academically and socially. It also involves parents providing ample, rich opportunities for literature exposure outside of the school. The relationships of parental involvement actions were examined to provide a possible understanding of the expected effect—a positive increase in reading achievement—through the collection of qualitative and quantitative data.

Research Questions

In an effort to establish the level of influence, if any, on student reading academic achievement, the following research inquiries were addressed:

1. How and to what extent does parental involvement influence a child's reading achievement?

2. How and to what degree does continuous parental involvement enhance a child's reading achievement level?

3. How and to what extent does limited parental involvement impact a child's reading achievement?

Student reading academic achievement was measured by utilizing appropriate district-approved literacy assessments for K–3 students. Continuous, active, and engaging parental involvement, or lack thereof, possibly contributes to potential positive influential measures, or adversely interferes with increasing reading academic achievement. Therefore, the independent variable for this research study was parental involvement: whether the parent is involved or not. The dependent variable for this research study was academic reading achievement.

Definition of Terms

The following terminology is utilized throughout the course of this research study:

Barrier. An intangible or tangible block or person that prevents or hinders movement or action (Merriam-Webster, 2006).

Continuous. Uninterrupted extension of time (Merriam-Webster, 2006).

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). As defined by Good

and Kaminiski (2005), DIBELS are a set of standardized, individually administered

measures of early literacy development, through the measures of assessing student

development of phonological awareness, alphabetic understanding, accuracy and fluency

of reading connected text, vocabulary, and comprehension. Upon administering the

DIBELS assessment, the following instructional recommendations are concluded:

> *Benchmark:* Student is performing at or above grade level literacy levels.

> *Strategic:* Evidence of literacy struggle student performing slightly to moderately
> below grade level.

> *Intensive:* Student at risk for reading difficulties and performing significantly
> below grade level.

> *Parent.* NCLB (2001) refers to the term *parent* as a natural parent, legal guardian,

or other person standing in loco parentis, for instance, a grandparent, stepparent with

whom the child lives, or a person legally responsible for the child's welfare.

> *Parental involvement.* In accordance with the U.S. Department of Education Title

I, provisions of parental involvement are as follows:

> The parental involvement provisions in Title I, Part A of the ESEA reflect these
> principles. Specifically, these provisions stress shared accountability between
> schools and parents for high student achievement, including expanded public
> school choice and supplemental educational services for eligible children in low-
> performing schools, local development of parental involvement plans with
> sufficient flexibility to address local needs, and building parents' capacity for
> using effective practices to improve their own children's academic achievement.
> (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 7)

> *Stakeholders.* Members of the school community (board members, administrators,

teachers, parents, and students) and business community in an educational setting.

Teachers. Certified professionals in specific educational areas, and in some cases are classified as "highly qualified" based on meeting and exceeding specific certification and assessment requirements in accordance with the NCLB federal mandates of professional qualified teachers**.**

Title I school. The U.S. Department of Education (2006) defined a Title I school as a program that provides financial assistance through Local Educational Agencies to schools with high percentages of economically disadvantaged children, to ensure that all children meet mandated state academic standards.

Nature of the Study

This study used a mixed methodology, causal-comparative approach, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Data were collected in the form of surveys, interviews, and formal district-administered DIBELS test scores. Data from developed surveys, interviews, and DIBELS assessments were collected electronically, by mail, in meetings, or by phone throughout the 6-month study—June through December 2007.

The demographic status of the selected school includes the school meeting the following criteria: (a) the school is an inner-city school; (b) the school meets and is classified as a Title I school as outlined by the U.S. Department of Education; (c) the school is implementing the appropriate Reading First program; (d) the school has been incorporating components of Reading First for at least 3 years; and (e) the school heavily promotes parental involvement in a variety of ways, through conferences, workshops, seminars—in other words, makes parental involvement a priority despite the socioeconomic status of the area.

The sample size for this study consisted of analyzing 315 K–3 students' reading achievement data in one participating school in the Reading First program. Surveys and interviews were conducted to further elaborate on the research questions to a population size of 17 teachers, 2 administrators, and at least 315 parents.

Assumptions and Limitations

The following assumptions were made for this research study:

1.   The selected school studied is a Title I school and is required to have parents sign school compacts, which detail what parental involvement consists of and their significance in abiding by the compact.

2.   School officials and teachers are aware of the importance of promoting, encouraging, and providing continuous parental involvement, communication, and collaboration opportunities.

3.   The participating school has provided ample training and exposure in regards to required components of the Reading First program. It is also assumed teachers pass these instructional findings on to parents via written and oral communication on a constant basis, and instructional strategies are in place in the classroom on a daily, consistent basis.

4.   The DIBELS assessment scores are as accurate as possible and administered by highly trained and qualified individuals.

5.   Responses to requested data for the sake of this study are responded to honestly, accurately, and not in a subjective manner.

6.   School administrators, teachers, and parents are acclimated to the basic use of the Internet, basic Word document software, and e-mail.

The following limitations were expected within this research study:

1.   Any information and data collected and analyzed only pertain to the selected, voluntarily participating school at that particular time.

2.   Generalizations cannot be made on behalf of the school district and/or other elementary schools for Grades K–3 and only pertain to the intended year of study.

3.   Considering the inner-city economic status of the area of this study, parents may have limited or no access to computers/Internet within the home.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of literature relating to the parental involvement and effects on academic achievement. A historical perspective, definition of parental involvement, barriers contributing to lack of parental involvement, and current literature on the evolution and, in some cases, demise of parental involvement are included. This chapter further examines the components of building and fostering literature-rich environments away from school, explores optional methods to increase strengthening school-home relationships, and analyzes assistance put forth by Reading First to promote continuous parental engagement to increase the effectiveness of literate students.

Chapter 3 provides the researcher's philosophy, followed by the theoretical framework for this study. The research design strategy details selected mixed research methodologies used to contribute to the success of this study. It details the various instruments and materials used and provides a thorough analysis of the data collected, demographic/population information, and analysis of data outcome measures. Ethical considerations for the study are also addressed.

Chapter 4 provides an in-depth synthesis addressing the proposed research questions. The elements of observations, survey instruments, and interviews used throughout the course of the study are detailed here. This chapter provides a presentation of the interpretation, evaluation, and analysis of all data collected.

The content of chapter 5 will provide a summary of the research study, conclusions, solutions, and recommendations in regards to the levels of influence of parental involvement on reading achievement scores. This chapter also details any additional discoveries throughout the course of data collection from selected survey instruments. Any additional discoveries will contribute to the solutions and recommendations based on data results.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Research indicates that one of the most powerful factors related to school

performance is socioeconomic status (SES), defined by Eggen and Kauchak as "the

combination of parents' incomes, occupations and levels of education" (2001, p. 137).

Macionis (1997) further stated SES is a consistent predictor of standardized achievement

scores, intelligence, grades, truancy, and dropout and suspension rates. These factors

serve as indicators of influence and challenges relating to parental involvement on

student academic and social achievement.

Inner-city schools are faced with multiple economic, social, and academic

challenges that potentially contribute to hindering or limiting the complete success of

educating disadvantaged children without appropriate effective leadership methods in

place (Leithwood, 2005). For instance, Cox (1998) identified specific obstacles inner-city

schools face: large numbers of impoverished students, limited effective administrative

and teacher leaders, insufficient funding, limited access to resources, lack of parental

engagement, exposure to violence, and the presence of drugs. Ross (1995) further

suggested effective school leadership in inner-city schools is a critical factor that possibly

aids in reducing daily challenges present in these areas, thus contributing to the school's

overall success. In addition to effective school leadership, parental involvement serves a

critical role and is directly related to the development of reading skills (Senechal &

LeFevre, 2002).

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2002), education reform

initiatives have taken place dating back to 1965, beginning with the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act. The purpose of the education reform was to create policy that

influences the academic improvement of American schools. Therefore, Congress has

since then attempted to create hundreds of academic-related programs to address the

failure factors in the current education system, such as increasing basic reading and math

levels as well as attempting to close the achievement gap between different races and

socioeconomic classes.

Bush (2001) shared that despite spending billions of dollars on improving

education, reforms for achieving academic excellence goals still have not been met, thus

leading to the amended development and reauthorized education provisions of ESEA in

1965 to what is currently known today as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The

National Reading Panel Report (National Institute of Child Health and Human

Development [NICHD], 2000) summarized and incorporated critical areas of reading

instruction to ensure children can accurately read with fluency and comprehend by the

end of the third grade, through effective instruction in (a) phonemic awareness, (b)

phonics, (c) fluency, (d) vocabulary, and (e) comprehension. This contributed to the

development of a critical program component under the NCLB, known as the Reading

First initiative.

This literature review further explores the academic and social challenges of

inner-city schools, influence of SES on student learning, and parental influences on

student achievement. An in-depth exploration of the designated state/federal Reading

First components and measurements used by approved participating schools will aid in

establishing a further understanding of the reading instructional focus and the importance

of influential parental relationships on reading achievement. Also explored is the analysis

of the critical key areas of Reading First that highlight teachers' required focus of

systematic and explicit instruction in the classroom in these areas.

Influence of Socioeconomic Status in
Inner-City Schools on Student Learning

It is vital to understand and take into consideration the role of socioeconomic

status on school performance in any school system. The SES is a blend of parents'

incomes, careers, and education levels (Eggen & Kauchak, 2001). Macionis (1997)

maintained the SES consistently predicts intelligence, achievement test scores, grades,

truancy, and dropout and suspension rates.

The all-encompassing influence of SES on learning is evident by the following

conclusion reached in a review of this critical area: "The relationship between test scores

and SES is one of the most widely replicated findings in the social sciences"

(Konstantopoulos, 1997, p. 5).

In relation to dropout rates, for instance, students from the poorest families in the

United States exceed 50% (Levine & Nediffer, 1996). In comparison to students whose

families are in the highest income quartile, Young and Smith (1999) indicated students in

the lowest quartile are 2½ times less likely to enroll in college and 8 times less likely to

graduate.

Researchers have identified mechanisms in three areas in which SES plays a role on the influence of learning: (a) basic needs and experiences, (b) parental involvement, and (c) parental attitudes and values (Eggen & Kauchak, 2001). These three areas are further explored in the following section, providing more insight on the relationship between SES and family influence on academic achievement.

Basic Needs and Experiences

The level of a family's SES contributes to the influence of learning in the area of being able to meet life's basic needs and experiences for children. McLoyd (1998) proposed that economic problems can lead to family and marital conflicts, in return resulting in a less stable and less nurturing home environment. Eggen and Kauchak further elaborated by stating, "children of poverty may come to school without a sense of security, so they are less equipped to tackle school-related tasks" (2001, p. 138). In addition to a safe and nurturing environment, other basic needs that are sometimes lacking in lower-income homes are adequate medical care, nourishment, and shelter (Miller, 1995). Homes for Homelessness (1999) attributed homelessness to be a major socioeconomic problem, with experts estimating that families account for nearly 40% of all homeless, thus contributing to the number of homeless children to be higher than any time since the Great Depression.

Additionally, children of poverty also relocate more than their counterparts (Kerbow, 1996). Kerbow found in a study of one urban school system that only 38% of sixth graders attended the same school throughout their elementary years. It was further determined that the average elementary school in the system had a 50% turnover rate

every 3 years (Kerbow). Fisher and Matthews (1999) concluded that frequent moves are a source of stress for students and contribute to teachers' inability to foster a nurturing, stable, caring relationship with the students and parents.

According to the National Reading Panel (2000), a major component of building reading comprehension is background building on prior experiences. SES is an influential factor on children's background experiences (Eggen & Kauchak, 2001; McLoyd, 1998). Parents in higher SES environments are more likely to expose their children to an abundance of educational activities outside of the school, such as visits to museums, travel, dance classes, sports, concerts, and other exploratory institutions (Eggen & Kauchak). Senechal and LeFevre (2002) found that upper-middle-class parents were consistent with continuous exposure of literature and writing pertinent to the development and acquisition of early literacy skills, thus contributing an increased reading development for their children. It is also very likely that higher SES households are more equipped with a variety of literature and learning materials, such as magazines, computers, Internet access, encyclopedias, and music (McLoyd). Peng and Lee stated, "these activities complement classroom learning by providing an experiential base for school activities" (1992, p. 12). Bloom (1981) advised early exposure to experience is essential for intellectual development since it is estimated that 80% of human potential for intelligence is developed by age 8.

Parental Involvement

Literature persistently shows the impact of parental involvement on academic and social aspects of the lives of children. Desforges and Abouchaar identified various forms of parental involvement by stating

> Parental involvement takes many forms that include good parenting in the home, including the provision of a secure and stable environment, intellectual stimulation, parent-child discussion, good models of constructive social and educational values and high aspirations relating to personal fulfillment and good citizenship; contact with schools to share information, participation in school events, participation in the work of the school and participation in school governance. (2003, p. 7)

In addition to the various forms of parental environment, Desforges and Abouchaar further added the extent and form of parental involvement are strongly influenced by family social class, maternal level of education, lack of basic materialistic needs, maternal psychosocial health, single-parent status, and, to a certain degree, family ethnicity.

The parental involvement factor can be influenced by the environmental, social, and economic factors, which have powerful, lasting effects on student academic and social performance (Ballen & Moles, 1994). Elam et al. (1994) indicated the following negative factors contribute to putting student achievement in jeopardy: growing up in poverty, inadequate learning opportunities, exposure to drugs and/or violence at home or school, lack of after-school care, dysfunctional families, inadequate health care, dilapidated schools, neighborhood distress, few role models, and poor nutrition. Ballen and Moles also noted that although parents may not be able to change these factors, continuous parental involvement can still have a significant positive influence over many of these challenges, thus parents working with schools and the community are a vital

source to improving schools and neighborhoods and curtailing the academic and social underachievement of children.

Reading and vocabulary development are critical components of the NCLB (2001) Reading First initiative. Parental involvement within the home plays a critical role in the development of various reading skills in the classroom, such as oral language, background building, vocabulary development, comprehension, and reading fluently (NICHD, 2000). Hess and McDevitt (1984) proposed SES influences learning through parental involvement based on active, engaging parent-child interaction patterns. For instance, Peng and Lee (1992) indicated higher-SES parents are more apt to be involved in their children's extracurricular activities, which provides a focal point for the parent-child interactions suggested by Hess and McDevitt. Senechal and LeFevre (2002) presented a longitudinal study exploring the pathway from children's early knowledge and experiences to fluent reading, finding that parental involvement is related to the development of reading skills, and discovered middle- and upper-middle-class families provided more home literacy experiences on a continuous basis.

Eggen and Kauchak further insinuated that high-SES parents talk to their children more and on a higher level than low-SES parents, thus exposing their children to a wider word-use base and vocabulary range needed to function in the normal instructional classroom:

> High-SES parents explain the causes of events and provide reasons for rules, their language is more elaborate, their directions are clearer and they are more likely to encourage problem solving. In addition, high-SES parents are more likely to ask "wh" questions (who, what, when, where and why). (2001, p. 140)

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This in turn contributes to promoting oral language development and verbal interactions on different levels.

Parental Attitudes and Values

Parental attitudes and values and their portrayal outside of the school plays a role on the effects of learning for students as well. Ballantine (1989) provided the example that families in a higher SES bracket have a greater tendency to emphasize autonomy, individual responsibility, and self-control, whereas low-SES parents place a greater emphasis on obedience and conforming to culture norms. Marks (1995) added that high-SES parents are more likely to monitor their children's academic progress and communicate consistently with the schools for information relating to student achievement and involvement within the school. This is an indicator of elevated expectations held and maintained by high-SES parents, evident through documented communication and student advancement in higher academic programs, thus achieving more than children of parents with lower ambitions (Trusty & Pirtle, 1998).

Many parents encounter challenging barriers that contribute to a dimensioning outlook on collaborative parent-school relationships about their child's education (Collins et al., 1995). Attitude barriers emerged from the following findings: differing ideas among parents and teachers on what constitutes involvement, a less welcoming atmosphere toward visitors in schools and classrooms, negative communication from schools, lack of training for teachers on how to reach both parents, lack of parental education and parenting skills, time restraints, job pressures, and language barriers (Collins et al.). Interestingly, Becher cautioned "that a number of problems regarding

parent involvement have been reported and that there is a disparity between commitment and practice" (1994, p. 25). Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) noted further that the differences between parents' levels of involvement are associated with social class, poverty, health, their perceptions of their role, and their level of confidence in fulfilling these parenting responsibilities.

Ballen and Moles (1994) stated that economically disadvantaged parents face further difficulties when attempting to become involved in their children's education. Ballen and Moles provided an example: Some economically disadvantaged parents with low-wage jobs face losing their jobs if time is required to take off work to attend a school function or meeting. The National Institute for Literacy further added

> In addition, parents who are not well-educated themselves may find it difficult to help their children with homework. Helping low-literate adults improve their basic skills will have a direct and measurable impact on children's education, and on the quality of their lives. (1998, p. 7)

The National Institute for Literacy also noted that children of parents who need and participate in literacy programs improve the quality of parental involvement, recorded formal and informal performance in school as well as reading skills.

Parental Influences on Student Reading Achievement

Over 3 decades of substantial research has linked parental involvement to successful student academic and social achievement. Research suggests that "the more intensively parents are involved in their children's learning, the more beneficial are the achievement effects" (Cotton & Wikelund, 2002, p. 2). Parental involvement from both high and low SES is a key factor to help establish the success of a child in any

educational setting. Research supports that visible, active, and productive parents

contribute to students being actively involved in the classroom with higher morale,

positive attitudes, and academic achievements (Elam et al., 1994).

With the increasing dynamic demands of today's schools, there is not a particular

universal definition of parental involvement (Cotton, 2001). Family Support America

provided a broad definition of *parental involvement* or *continuous family engagement*:

> The participation in the life of a school, while others focus on increased
> contributions to an individual child's learning process. Still others incorporate the
> family into the learning process through adult education, parenting and after
> school activities. Some leading schools engage families in the governance and
> planning processes and in building broad ownership of student achievement goals.
> Nonetheless, parental involvement occurs when parents actively, critically,
> resourcefully and responsibly contribute to promoting and developing the well
> being of their communities. (2001, p. 1)

Cotton contributed that parental involvement further entails parents helping their children

improve their schoolwork by providing positive reinforcement, encouragement, allowing

and enforcing adequate study time, modeling academic behavior such as reading for

enjoyment, monitoring homework, and actively tutoring the child at home.

Lack of parental involvement for economically disadvantaged students stems

from a variety of life challenges that continually surface in inner-city schools (Cotton &

Wikelund, 2002). For instance, researchers discovered that low-income parents fail to

become actively engaged in their children's school due to (a) demands of work and being

unable to take time off to attend communication efforts and school functions, (b)

embarrassment about low educational levels or linguistic abilities, (c) lack of

transportation, (d) inability to understand home-school communication channels/efforts,

and (e) lack of welcome or automatic teacher and administrator assumptions of parents'

lackadaisical attitudes about active involvement in the school (Cotton, 2001; Family

Support America, 2004).

Despite the obstacles researchers discovered that prevent low-income parents

from becoming fully and actively engaged in their children's schooling, studies have

proven these obstacles can be overcome through simple actions that can take place in the

home. A study conducted by Henderson and Mapp (2002) examined various factors that

influence low-income parental involvement. The study results found that based on

parents' own previous experiences and prior history, "parents' own educational

experiences in school and their beliefs about family involvement shaped by cultural

norms and values, and the burden of their additional responsibilities" (p. 141) played a

role on the influence of their participation. The study further established that when school

officials engage in building and maintaining a caring, trustful, positive relationship,

recognizing parents as partners in the development of academic development, the

parents' desire to be involved was highly influenced and increased.

Cotton (2001) added that regardless of the parents' low economic status, positive

contributions to student achievement in schools can still be rendered if schools provide

appropriate, continuous, adequate training, encouragement, and effective communication.

Furthermore, Cotton stressed the importance of building a genuine, working partnership

with effective communication for disadvantaged parents, teachers, administrators, and the

school board, and steering clear of the automatic assumption that parents have little to

offer based on the school and community location. The Parent Institute for Quality

Education showed that after participation in parent information classes, parents indicated

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that they could initiate contact with their children's school and did not have to wait for the teacher or school to extend an invitation (as cited in Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

The Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP, 2006) has delivered research evidence and information to a national audience of researchers, practitioners, and policymakers assisting in shaping effective educational policies and practices for disadvantaged children and youth for over 20 years, and evaluated a Chicago Child-Parenting Center (CPC) with the sole purpose of serving low-income preschoolers through third graders, promoting parent involvement by way of home visits, classroom volunteer opportunities, workshops and courses, and parent-teacher meetings. The study found that low-income children who participated in the CPC program were more prepared for kindergarten and less likely to be referred for special education services. HFRP further determined that family engagement in the CPC program during the early years contributed to a greater increase in parental involvement in the elementary school years, thus yielding further positive student outcomes by testing higher in eighth-grade reading and being more likely to complete high school (HFRP).

Literacy research has indicated that parents who are actively involved and committed to helping children read yield the following: (a) children whose parents read to them at home have the ability to recognize letters of the alphabet and write their names sooner than those whose parents who do not, (b) children whose parents teach them how to write words are able to correctly identify letters and relate the connection of appropriate speech sounds, and (c) children with family members using complex sentences in everyday language tend to achieve higher scores on literacy-related tasks beginning in kindergarten (HFRP, 2006). These conclusions were reached after a

thorough evaluation of the Raising a Reader program, which provides literature for children from birth through the age of 5. HFRP indicated parents were strongly encouraged to read to their children every day, establishing a reading routine with their children, which in turn provides building necessary oral language and vocabulary development. HFRP further reported, "Raising a Reader program improves reading behavior and kindergarten readiness, especially for low-income, non-English speaking families" (p. 2). This program originated in California and is now available in 24 U.S. states and three other countries.

Although the Reading First program does not have a parental involvement piece, federal initiatives of the NCLB umbrella do (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The School Parental Involvement Policy under Title III of the NCLB specifies school districts receiving funds are responsible for implementing programs, activities, and procedures that include and promote parental involvement (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2004). Schools are allowed to use NCLB-earmarked funding for parent training on understanding communications and assessments sent home by schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

No Child Left Behind: Reading First Program

Reading First is a federal scientifically based reading research academic intervention initiative authorized by the NCLB, with the sole purpose of ensuring that all children can successfully and fluently read by the end of third grade (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). This goal was established based on the need to produce proficient readers, because children who are not proficient by the end of fourth grade are not likely

to ever be proficient readers. The U.S. Department of Education further elaborated it is more sensible to ensure that students are equipped with the proper knowledge to read in the primary grades than to wait until their last chance may have passed, resulting in being required to provide remedial reading instruction that may not work. The federal government provides Reading First grants to states. States awarded the grant then provide subgrants to qualifying school districts through the submission of approved proposals detailing how scientifically based reading research will be used to improve reading instruction and student achievement.

In addition to the Reading First program solidifying a scientifically based reading platform for qualified districts, further projects are funded that assist in ensuring the reading success of participating schools for students enrolled in kindergarten through third grade in poverty-stricken areas. The U.S. Department of Education provides funds that support Reading First initiatives that contribute to increased professional development to ensure that all teachers have the skills needed to teach approved reading programs effectively. The Reading First program further offers support and use of appropriate screening, progress monitoring and diagnostic tools, and classroom-based instructional reading assessments to measure how well students are reading and to monitor student reading achievement progress.

According to the terms of the Reading First initiative, scientifically based reading research (SBRR) uses rigorous, systematic, objective procedures to acquire knowledge about reading development, instruction, and reading difficulties of kindergarten through third-grade students (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). The NCLB allows for SBRR for the Reading First program to be used to implement a clear and specific plan to

accelerate and monitor the progress of students reading below grade level. The

implementation of thorough researched reading strategies has proved to enable students

to reach or exceed grade-level reading proficiency (NRP, 2000; U.S. Department of

Education). In an effective SBRR classroom, a teacher uses scientific research to drive

instruction, adjusting appropriately as needed to maximize the reading achievement for

all learners (NRP, 2002). The important factor is the Reading First teacher implements

intensive systematic, explicit change and instruction based solely on research, not on

ideology and philosophy, for all students, including English language learners and

students with special needs (U.S. Department of Education).

      The U.S. Department of Education (2002) acknowledged this type of reading

research involves controlled experiments with data and a thorough peer-review process.

Congress designated the National Research Panel (NRP), which is composed of some of

the nation's leading reading research experts, to review the mounting body of reading

research. The following guidelines are used by members of the NRP to determine which

studies were appropriate and met the scientific standard for evidence:

> First, research must address achievement in one or more skills in reading. Second,
> it must be generalizable to the larger population of students. Third, the research
> needs to examine the effectiveness of an approach by comparison with other types
> of instruction. Finally, other scholars from the field must review the research and
> consider it high quality. (U.S. Department of Education, p. 1)

This precise and meticulous method contributes to preventing the use of unreliable and

untested strategies and methods that could possibly stifle academic progress (NRP,

2002).

      In an effort to increase and ensure all children can read accurately, fluently, and

with comprehension by the end of the third grade, Reading First focuses on five critical

instructional components determined by the NRP: (a) phonemic awareness, (b) phonics, (c) fluency, (d) vocabulary, and (e) comprehension (NICHD, 2000). Reading First provides strategic approaches to teaching these essential components effectively in the classroom through proven scientifically based reading research with a focus on providing continuous and effective systematic and explicit instruction. Again, all suggested SBRR stems from conclusions of the NRP based on a synthesis of a variety of research studies that met established criteria of SBRR (NICHD, 2000). This allows for educators and parents to rely on rigorously tested instructional practices and materials, thus providing a sound basis for instructional decisions and deemed as the guiding principle of the NCLB.

The first critical element of the Reading First program—phonemic awareness—focuses on the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate sounds in spoken words. The U.S. Department of Education (2002) further elaborated by sharing that phonemic awareness is the understanding of individual sounds of spoken language or phonemes that work together to make words. The implementation of this component requires students to learn that (a) spoken words consist of individual sounds, (b) words can be segmented into sounds and these sounds can be blended and manipulated, and (c) phonemic awareness skills are used to blend sounds to read words and to segment sounds to spell words (U.S. Department of Education).

The NRP (2002) provided key research findings for the phonemic awareness component: Phonemic awareness can be strategically taught and learned by all students; systematic phonemic awareness instruction helps children learn to read and spell; and phonemic awareness instruction is most effective when children are taught to manipulate

phonemes by using the letters of the alphabet and when this type of instruction focuses on only one or two types of phoneme manipulation versus several types.

The second critical area of the Reading First program is phonics. According to the U.S. Department of Education, "Phonics is the understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes—the sounds of spoken language—and graphemes—the letters and spelling that represent those sounds in written language" (2002, p. 3). This element allows readers to become fluent in utilizing these established relationships to recognize familiar words accurately and automatically, further allowing to decode unfamiliar words in the process (U.S. Department of Education). To be successful in this area, students should learn (a) accurate and quick identification of the letters of the alphabet, (b) the alphabetic principle, (c) phonics fundamentals, and (d) the application of the phonics essentials related to reading and writing (NRP, 2002; U.S. Department of Education).

Key research findings established by the NRP report (2002) support that this approach is more effective than nonsystematic or no phonics instruction. Phonics drastically advances kindergarten and first-grade children's word identification and spelling and significantly improves reading comprehension, especially when introduced early (NRP). According to research, successful phonics instruction is effective for children from various social and economic levels and especially beneficial for children who are having difficulty learning to read and are at risk for developing future reading problems (NRP; U.S. Department of Education, 2002). A key research finding noteworthy of mentioning as established by NRP is that phonics should not be deemed as an entire reading program for beginning readers.

The third component of Reading First is vocabulary. The NRP defined this component as "the development of stored information about the meanings and pronunciation of words necessary for communication" (2002, p. 5). The U.S. Department of Education (2002) further added that vocabulary can be developed both formally and informally through daily experiences as well as systematic and explicit instruction in the classroom. In order for students to glean this critical reading skill, the U.S. Department of Education requires students to learn (a) the meanings for most of the words in a text to gain an understanding of what is read, (b) to apply a variety of strategies to learn word meanings, (c) to make connections between actual words and concepts, and (d) to use newly acquired words accurately in both oral and written language. Key research elements of vocabulary include children learning the meanings of most words indirectly, through the use of oral and written language based on everyday experiences, and some vocabulary must be taught directly (NRP).

Fluency is another significant area of Reading First identified by the NRP (2002). The NRP report stated, "fluency is the ability to read text accurately and quickly. Fluency provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Fluent readers recognize words and comprehend at the same time" (p. 6). The U.S. Department of Education (2002) expected students to learn (a) how to decode words in isolation and in connected text, (b) to automatically and quickly recognize words, and (c) to increase the reading rate while maintaining accuracy. The NRP stated that key research findings indicate that repeated and monitored oral reading improves reading fluency and reading achievement. The NRP further noted, "no research evidence is available currently to confirm that instructional time spent on silent, independent reading with minimal

guidance and feedback improves reading fluency and overall reading achievement" (p. 6).

The last critical element of Reading First is reading comprehension. Reading comprehension, as defined by the U.S. Department of Education, consists of "strategies for understanding, remembering and communicating with others about what has been read. Comprehension strategies are sets of steps that purposeful, active readers use to make sense of text" (2002, p. 5). Students should be able to use elements of reading comprehension strategies that include any one and/or a combination of summarizing, questioning, story maps, graphic organizers, cooperative learning opportunities, prior knowledge, background building, and visualization. To be successful at applying any one of the reading comprehension strategies, the U.S. Department of Education stated students should learn (a) to read both narrative and expository texts, (b) to remember and understand what was read, (c) have the ability to relate their own personal experiences and knowledge to text, and (d) to use a culmination of comprehension strategies to improve their comprehension. Key research findings by the NRP indicate that students can be taught to use comprehension strategies through a systematic instructional approach, and text comprehension can be improved by instruction that helps readers use definitive comprehension strategies (NRP, 2002).

Academic Challenges for NCLB Inner-City Schools

Obstacles inner-city schools encounter consist of low socioeconomic status, large racial/ethnic gaps, language/cultural barriers, lack of retention of highly qualified teachers, lack of parental involvement, transfer students, lack of prior education before

entering primary grades, utilizing high-stakes testing results, as well as more severe

student learning disabilities (Hardy, 2006; Stern, 2004; Toch, 2005). Inner-city schools

are plagued with seeking and facing appropriate measures to overcome these challenges

that may interfere with the overall proper education of students as required by the

provisions of the NCLB (Toch). These challenges were present beforehand and in many

cases continue to serve as a hindrance for achieving federally identified academic goals.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2003), the federal government

allows states to establish standards that are appropriately measurable and in compliance

with provisions of the NCLB. Despite inner-city schools' struggles with issues that are

currently present, as noted previously, inner-city school administrators must still set,

meet, and maintain academic achievement goals since they are still held to the same

rigorous and stringent NCLB provisions as any other school. Therefore, administrators

must be willing to create and incorporate creative, innovative intervention techniques that

will contribute to the overall success and academic improvement of that school. The

question that continues to surface in regards to challenges within inner-city schools is, Is

it feasible and reasonable to believe socioeconomically disadvantaged schools can tackle

and eliminate these rising issues (Hardy, 2006)?

Toch (2005) presented a perfect situation that allows an analysis and comparison

of state expectations versus federal expectations. Toch focused on an inner-city Dallas,

Texas, school: Herbert Marcus Elementary—a dilapidated and overcrowded school on

the edge of a dismal industrial zone. Virtually all students at Marcus live in poverty and

two thirds are unable to utilize English as their first language. Some even have parents

with an average of a seventh-grade education, and have minimal parental involvement

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(Toch). In an effort to tackle such grim obstacles, the principal introduced a variety of appropriate reforms that targeted curtailing or alleviating some of the issues. These reforms consisted of requiring students to wear uniforms, seeking weekly progress reports from teachers in all subject areas for all students, positive teacher-attendance incentives, an expanded prekindergarten program, added additional tutoring initiatives, and even expanded parental involvement in the Parent Teacher Association and volunteers within the classroom (Toch).

The administrative changes implemented at Marcus Elementary caused the school to reap numerous benefits. It was able to produce an additional six more months of learning in a single school year. According to the Dallas system of rating, test results for students in reading and math placed Herbert Marcus Elementary 19th out of 206 Dallas schools in recognition of significant accomplishments despite the complex demographics (Toch, 2005). Despite the local city's ratings, the state of Texas unfortunately reads the scores in accordance with the federally mandated requirements of the NCLB. This means that although Marcus Elementary has an outstanding improved rating with the city of Dallas, the state of Texas rating yielded much different results. The state numbers now classified Marcus Elementary as only 76th in the city of Dallas, a middling acceptable score, causing the school to be one step away from being labeled "failing" under the classifications of the NCLB (Toch). Other schools also suffered from the NCLB rankings; for instance, "Schools ranked 2nd, 5th, 8th and 16th under the city's ratings were now ranked 94th, 77th, 83rd and 107th in the Texas NCLB regime" (Toch, p. 2).

Hardy (2006) suggested the unfair differences in ratings on local and state levels contribute to administrators facing the possibility of staff members becoming

demoralized. Hardy also came to the conclusion that children are being shortchanged

from learning, with teachers having to focus more instructional minutes on the teaching

of those federally rated subjects: reading and math only. Toch (2005) further stated that

the frustration teachers tend to experience contributes to causing dedicated teachers to

migrate toward more financially sound suburban school districts in which it is believed

their achievements would be more fairly recognized. The Center on Education Policy

(2003) also identified that elements from the NCLB tend to impose specific

methodologies on teachers, thus limiting their ability to incorporate creative and

innovative instruction within the classroom. It has been established that the difference

between the federally required state and local ratings must deal with the definition of

student performance on both levels.

Spellings (2005) acknowledged and even recognized this potentially unfair rating

issue that school administrators face. Spellings responded to this concern by attempting

to loosen some of the criteria by which schools are labeled as "failing," so fewer would

be, though it was a short-term political relief (Toch, 2005). Stern (2004) added that the

NCLB presents more critical additional obstacles for inner-city schools: inaccuracy of

measuring school improvement, which is the overall root of the problem. An excellent

approach discovered to help curtail the unfairness in rating is utilizing a value-added

school rating, which Toch defined as "measuring only the amount of knowledge that the

school itself is responsible for imparting" (p. 3). The state of Tennessee has been able to

put this particular value-added system to good use, thus being able provide a more

accurate and true view of student improvement.

The U.S. Department of Education argues and assures struggling schools, namely inner-city schools, that this policy is and has been created to be beneficial to all. Paige and Hickok (2004) attempted to dispel what has been classified as a myth, even in the midst of the continuous and still recent identified issues inner-city school administrators face about the NCLB being a one-size-fits-all approach to schools, not accounting for the uniqueness of each state and local district. The components listed in the NCLB do provide ample flexible opportunities for schools to further enhance learning, build academic proficiency, and remain in compliance with the law by having access to an abundance of supple funds as far as allocation of materials, additional intervention programs, academic resources, and even supplementary options for schools still struggling to meet standards set forth by states that normally would not possibly be available (Spellings, 2005). Mizell (2003) added that although these materials and resources are available, administrators eventually tend to become so focused on NCLB compliance issues that, as a result, they lower their expectations of their own roles by inadvertently becoming de facto compliance officers, forfeiting their roles as education leaders.

The NCLB was set up to provide appropriate federal funding to schools in an effort to maintain and surpass academic goals. Unfortunately, school administrators feel that there is a lack of adequate funding to support continuous changes and requirements set forth by the NCLB, thus contributing to school systems' lack of properly equipping each classroom with needed textbooks, resource materials, and teachers (Mizell, 2003). School administrators have expressed a need for "significantly more funding for the

NCLB to effectively educate all students and to remain in compliance with the

parameters of the law" (Mizell, p. 3).

Parental Involvement Framework

Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University developed a framework that

thoroughly defines six important different types of parental involvement. The National

Parent Teacher Association (NPTA, 2004) deemed parental and family involvement as a

significant factor that is the basis for all other education reforms, warranting the same

attention and consideration for the development of national standards. Based on the

conclusions of several noted theoretical studies, the following standards and guidelines

were proposed by Epstein and the NPTA for the purposes of evaluating the effectiveness

and quality of programs, which aid in modifying as needed based on the framework

outcomes:

Communicating

The NPTA (2004) encouraged consistent ongoing communication between home

and school. The communication must be meaningful, beneficial, and two-way. Hopkings

(2004) and Hopkins (2002) elaborated by offering that schools should have an open-door

policy that includes communication through various outlets, such as newsletters, e-mail,

memos, and phone calls. Hopkings further added that the communication should include

information about the current weekly curriculum, methods of reinforcing current

curriculum, schedules, news, programs, and services. Hopkins noted that schools should

design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about

children's progress through minimum annual parent-teacher conferences. McReynolds

further stated that to increase the effectiveness of enhancing communication efforts

between home and school, schools "must include parents in all aspects of a child's

education. Parents must be involved as teachers, learners, supporters and advocates for

their children" (2004, p. 7). Cotton (2001) emphasized communicating to parents should

entail acknowledging their involvement and support as making a great deal of difference

in their children's school performance. Cotton further added that parents should be

reminded repeatedly of the importance of this in addition to reiterate despite the

education level, income amount or cultural background, any and all positive involvement

is valued and beneficial.

Parenting

Parenting skills are promoted and supported through district-/community-

provided and school-wide programs, training, and seminars (NPTA, 2004). Schools

should be able to assist families in providing appropriate home environments to support

their students as academic and social beings, by way of parent education courses such as

GED, family literacy, college credits, providing assistance in the area of health and

nutrition care, and encouraging home visits from school officials throughout various

transition points from preschool, elementary, middle, and high school (Hopkins, 2002).

Student Learning

Studies have proven parents play an integral role in providing and maximizing

learning experiences within the home for students (NPTA, 2004). In an effort to increase,

maintain, and capitalize on student learning outside of the school, Hopkins (2002)

recommended assistance should be provided to parents regarding relaying information

and ideas to help their children with homework, extracurricular and curriculum activities,

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decision making, and planning. This can be accomplished by providing parents with information about skills required for student subjects in each grade, setting family goals annually regarding academics by planning appropriate steps to take to prepare for higher-level institutions, as well as providing data on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss school work at home (Hopkins). Cotton (2001) stressed the importance of teaching parents appropriate at-home activities that model needed reading behaviors that will increase a child's willingness to read and value leisure reading in the home.

Volunteering

Traditionally, parental involvement focused only on the areas of helping with homework and fundraisers usually established by the parent organization of a school (Ballen & Moles, 1994). The involvement of parents in a child's schooling has since evolved and expanded to include not only overseeing the child's homework but helping in the classroom, providing support and ideas for educators on essential leadership programs, becoming members of school leadership committees, and assisting in establishing school policy, curriculum, and governance of the school (Ballen & Moles). Collins et al. further stated

> Children's education may be indirectly influenced as parents become a familiar presence in the school by volunteering to help in the library, the school cafeteria, monitoring in the halls, selling tickets and chaperoning parties and field trips. As parent's faces become familiar in the school environment, natural opportunities may arise for communicating with their children's teachers. (1995, p. 3)

Researchers deem parent support as crucial since studies have proven its positive influence on academic achievement. In an effort to maximize this framework component, the NPTA (2004) and Epstein (2004) suggested schools recruit and systematize parent help and support. Methods of having successful volunteer parents within the schools

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consist of school and classroom volunteer programs, developing a family center for volunteer work, providing useful resources for parents, and surveying parents to identify their capabilities related to talent, availability of time, and location identification (Hopkins, 2002; NPTA).

Advocacy and School Decision Making

The emphasis of providing an environment of a home-school relationship with parents as a partnership adds value and success to the overall parental involvement program (Cotton & Wikelund, 2002). Hopkins (2002) suggested ways of increasing school decision making and advocacy through the development of parent leaders by (a) having an active Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), advisory councils, or parent leadership committees; (b) development of independent advocacy groups to serve as lobbyists working for school reform and improvements; and (c) having networks available to link all families with parent representatives.

Collaborating With Community

The NPTA clearly acknowledged the need for schools to "identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices and student learning and development" (2004, p. 3). Hopkins (2002) suggested schools partake in providing needed information for families and students about local community health, social support, recreational, and other supportive services. Hopkins added making available information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents held throughout the year.

This theoretical framework on parental involvement is considered and recognized by the NPTA as appropriate national program standards of parental involvement excellence. This tool is available as a guide for schools to continuously build upon and implement consistently and effectively to tackle challenges and obtain positive results (Epstein, 2004).

Summary

Educational administrative leaders within inner-city schools are bombarded with numerous, complex socioeconomic and academic challenges that tend to create barriers in regards to achieving total school improvement success (Cox, 1998; Kozleski, Ferguson, & Smith, 2005; Leithwood, 2005). These challenges require administrative leaders to be effective in regards to establishing direction and influence, providing support and motivation, and building and maintaining collaborative working relationships among teachers, parents, students, and the community. Disadvantaged educational institutions require a strong, solid foundation to be established, thus promoting a fruitful, productive work environment that promotes building unity and community in an effort to encourage and ensure the success of high academic, instructional, parental involvement and leadership achievement (Smith & Kozleski, 2005).

Although low-SES parents are faced with numerous life challenges such as economic hardships, lack of medical insurance, demanding jobs, and single-family homes (Cotton, 2001; Eggen & Kauchak, 2001) that contribute to minimal parental involvement in the schools, their lack of involvement does not necessarily contribute to their children's permanent removal from the classroom. Studies have proven with educational

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institutions positive, systematic approach to educating and promoting positive

partnerships to flourish, parental involvement in economically disadvantaged school

zones can increase and play a positive influence on academic achievement (Cotton;

Eggen & Kauchak; HFRP, 2006).

Furthermore, the home environment that fosters learning is more important to

student social and academic achievement than the family's income, educational level, or

cultural background, which contributes to the finding that family engagement in

education is twice as predictive of academic learning as family socioeconomic status

(Henderson & Berla, 1994). As further summarized by Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, and

Bloom:

> The socioeconomic level or cultural background of a home need not determine
> how well a child does at school. Parents from a variety of cultural backgrounds
> and with different levels of education, income or occupational status can and do
> provide stimulating home environments that support and encourage the learning
> of their children. It is what parents do in the home rather than their status that is
> important. (1994, p. 145)

NCLB requires schools to become accountable for critical educational

components to be met in regards to documenting and measuring growth of improving

efforts to educate America's children. These provisions require school districts to provide

appropriate data to keep parents and community members abreast of the current academic

status of each school. Annual published results of the success, or lack thereof, in schools

provide parents the opportunity to take advantage of an abundance of available resources,

supplemental services, and transfer options in severe cases of schools' inabilities to meet

required academic improvement guidelines (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). As a

result, the NCLB targeted and solely focused on incorporating solid, valid academic

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programs, such as the Reading First program, that incorporates scientifically based research that is deemed reliable and considered evidence-based to help achieve proven instructional and assessment results within the classroom, increase teacher quality, and provide consistent beneficial empowering tools to parents and the community (Paige, 2002; Spellings, 2005).

Overall, the benefits of active, engaging parental involvement that promotes academic student learning outside of the school naturally increases the student's willingness to learn, increase the ability to increase grades and test scores, have a higher achievement in reading, increase attendance, turn in more homework, promotes higher graduation rates and decrease the chances of negative student behavior to occur, such as alcohol,/drug use, violence and drop out rates (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Wherry (2003) added there are benefits for parents as well as students. Parents build more confidence and trust in their children's school, increase confidence about themselves as parents and their ability to help their children at home, and increase their ability to make contacts and build social networks and even develop working ties to local communities (Wherry).

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Researcher's Philosophy

The researcher's philosophy was to gain valuable insight on the parental involvement factor on reading achievement assessment scores through the use of a mixed methods approach. The selection of a mixed methods approach of research—qualitative and quantitative—maximized the collection and interpretation of an abundance of beneficial data to properly yield answers to the research questions. Continuous positive interaction and communication with school leadership, teachers, parents, and students will contribute to building a level of respect and trust and offer ample opportunities for collection of reliable, valid data.

Theoretical Framework

The primary focus of this study determined if reading achievement increased for students whose parents were actively involved in their schooling in an inner-city school setting. The following inquiries were addressed in an effort to establish the level of parental engagement influence, if any, on student reading academic achievement:

1. To what extent does parental involvement influence a child's reading achievement?

2. To what degree does continuous parental involvement enhance a child's reading achievement level?

3.   To what extent does limited parental involvement impact a child's reading achievement?

To address the inquiries, the methodologies and design of this study entailed using causal-comparative research with a mixed methods approach using both descriptive quantitative and qualitative data that further enhanced and validated data outcomes.

Research Design Strategy

Gay and Airasian (2000) defined the *quantitative approach* as a way to describe current conditions, examine relationships, and study cause-and-effect phenomena. Quantitative data sources used in this study consisted of survey questionnaires utilizing the Likert-scale format as well as data derived from the district-administered DIBELS literacy assessment given to students in Grades K–3. Information derived from the Likert-scale format—a unidimensional scale method used to measure attitudes, preferences, and subjective reactions (Trochim, 2006)—was based on a 5-point scale that generated responses in the categories of *never*, *rarely*, *occasionally*, *frequently*, and *extensively*. Demographic information regarding students' and parents' educational background and income were included in the questionnaires. DIBELS assessment data were analyzed after the administration of the appropriate benchmarks, which occurs three times a year. The DIBELS assessment data analysis portion indicated signs of growth or literacy regression.

In an effort to gather more detailed information about the extent of parental involvement within and outside of the school, a qualitative approach was needed. Gay and Airasian contended that "qualitative research seeks to probe deeply into the research

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setting in order to obtain understandings about the way things are, why they are that way and how the participants in the context perceive them" (2000, p. 16). This approach allowed for appropriate open-ended dialogue through interviews that aided in determining the level of literacy exposure, literacy assistance, and academic and school functioning from the parents' perspective. Interviews were conducted and available through several convenient outlets based on the needs of the parent participant, which included options for in-person, within-the-school and/or home settings, telephone, school communication folders, and e-mail. To aid in further validation of data collected, from a quantitative and qualitative perspective, observations of parental involvement occurred to determine the consistency of academic involvement of the parents and the potential influence on increasing reading achievement in the classroom.

Population and Sampling Design

This study focused on an inner-city school located in the Memphis City Schools (MCS) district. MCS is considered the largest urban school system in Tennessee and classified as the 21st largest school system in the nation. This school district serves more than 119,000 students in 191 schools in Grades K–12. Approximately 90% of the district's students are African American, and more than 70% come from low-income families. Other racial make-ups consist of 8.5% Caucasian students, 4.5% Hispanic students, and about 1% represents other racial groups. Based on family's income levels, approximately 75% of MCS students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. MCS employs over 16,500 people, with 8,000 of those being teachers. At least 55% of the teachers are

classified as a "highly qualified" teacher based on the stipulations set forth by the NCLB initiative. MCS is the second largest employer in the city of Memphis.

For the purpose of this study, one inner-city MCS elementary school was selected based on its being awarded grant money from the state to implement the strategic components of the Reading First program based on the components endorsed by the National Reading Panel. This school, referred to as Colts Elementary, was entering the fourth year of the Reading First grant and had approximately 555 African American students in Grades K–6. Since the Reading First program is primarily for developing early literacy skills in Grades K–3, only those grades were directly involved in the study; therefore, the purposive sampling population consisted of approximately 315 K–3 students and their parents. There are four class sections each for kindergarten, first-, and third-grade classes, with each class averaging 21 students. Second grade has a total of five sections averaging 18 students in each class section. All K–3 teachers were invited to participate in the study to provide further details and professional insight about the extent of parental involvement in individual K–3 classrooms through documentation of office/classroom parenting logs, home-school communication, grades, academic progress, surveys, interviews, and DIBELS testing results.

Measures

The primary role of the researcher was to collect, analyze, and synthesize data derived from appropriate instruments utilized throughout the course of this study. The researcher's sole responsibility was to provide a positive, secure research climate, while developing a working, trusting relationship with participants to maximize the outcomes

of the data collected. Findings from the analyzed data resulted in recommendations and beneficial suggestions to aid in increasing and maintaining effective parental involvement in and outside of the school.

DIBELS Formative Assessment Scores

Since this study analyzed educators properly implementing the research-based instructional strategies centered around the five major reading components (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency) of the Reading First program, district-mandated assessment materials were used to maintain consistency. This led to selecting the DIBELS formative assessment since this is an integral portion of measuring the early literacy levels of K–3 students the outcome of the components of the Reading First program. Good and Kaminiski (1997) stated that DIBELS is a set of measures and procedures used to assess the acquisition of early literacy and reading skills.

The DIBELS benchmark assessment is administered three times each school year—in the fall, winter, and spring—to determine if students are acquiring, meeting, and maintaining needed reading skills and goals. Results from benchmark data inform teachers if each student is classified as Benchmark: reading at or above grade level, Strategic: reading slightly below grade level and in need of intervention. or Intensive: reading significantly below grade level and in need of intense intervention. In an effort to make sure students are on the right progressive track, progress-monitoring assessments are administered on a biweekly basis to students categorized in the Intensive and Strategic categories.

Parent-Teacher-School Questionnaire

The questionnaire allowed the researcher to collect appropriate demographic data, provide a checklist to determine the amount of literature and environmental print in the home, detail descriptive questions related to home-school behaviors, and involvement from the parents' point-of-view related to reading based on the Likert-scale method.

Interviews

Interview questions consisted of appropriate specific objectives related to the study that allowed participants further explanations and opportunities to elaborate on open-ended questions. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) suggested interviews should have a written guide that indicates what questions will be asked, question order, and addresses whether prompting and/or probing will be allowed and to what extent. All interviews were conducted in the same manner to obtain standardized and comparable data outcomes (Gay & Airasian, 2000).

Personal interviews were established that aided in providing a more in-depth understanding about the child's home environment and further determining to what extent parents are involved inside and outside the school. For instance, a face-to-face interview can determine what kind of print environment is in the home, how often a child is read to, the types of strategies that occur at home to teach and reinforce needed reading skills, alternative solutions to absentee parents, and the opportunity to provide explanations on lack of involvement or minimal involvement, if any. The interviews also allowed for the discovery of any positive and negative factors that take place in the home to surface that are considered obstacles to providing a positive, nurturing, academic- and social-filled environment.

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Data Collection Procedures

After collecting all informed consent letters, Parent-Teacher-School Questionnaires were issued to all consenting participants in the Reading First K–3 program at Colts Elementary. An explanation of the survey was attached to the actual questionnaire and outlined the purpose, directions, and how the data collected would be used as they relate to reading. Parent-Teacher-School Questionnaires were collected in person, via home-school communication folders, e-mail, or by telephone to maximize the outcome.

Quantifiable DIBELS data were collected from the online University of Oregon DIBELS data system Web site. This site provides standardized formative assessment literacy scores related directly to Colts Elementary for students in Grades K–3. Benchmark assessments and progress monitoring data were updated as frequently as every 2 weeks, thus generating appropriate school-specific reports. Specific tested DIBELS information relating to reading components for Grades K–3 consisted of Nonsense Word Fluency (for Grades K–2), Phoneme Segmentation (for Grades K–1), Letter Naming Fluency (for kindergarten), Oral Reading Fluency (for Grades 1–3), and Word Use Fluency (for Grades K–3).

In addition to quantifiable data collection, qualitative data yielded from interviews and observations were collected and conducted face-to-face, via telephone, home-school communication folder, or e-mail with those willing and consenting participants. Interviews consisted of open-ended questions that allowed for participating subjects to elaborate on explanations as much as possible. Colts Elementary has a computer lab available to parents who chose to participate in the study electronically. Observations

were conducted randomly and frequently to corroborate information reported in interviews and on surveys.

Any information obtained from DIBELS scores, questionnaires, interviews, and observations was dated, put in sequential order regarding observation/field/memo notes, filed in appropriate physical and electronic files, noted, and analyzed initially for any underlying themes that surfaced. Data collection and storage of selected study instruments were conducted anonymously and held in a secured designated area for security reasons.

Procedures

Instruments used throughout this study were administered by either appropriate trained school personnel for district testing or the researcher regarding surveys, questionnaires, and interviews. Data derived from the DIBELS benchmark and progress monitoring data used to measure growth or a decline in growth were obtained from the University of Oregon's official DIBELS Web site. Surveys, questionnaires, and interviews were administered in several convenient ways for consenting study participants: electronically, by phone, home-school communication folders, or in person.

Ethical Consideration

Pertinent research information was disclosed to participants (parents, teachers, and school administrators) that detailed the purpose, reasoning, and benefits of the study about parental influence on student reading achievement in the Reading First program. Participants were also provided an in-depth explanation of the various assessments, data

sources/analysis/collection, and any experimental procedures exercised throughout the study. All participants were properly informed of the option to withdraw from participating in the study at any time for any reason. An informative letter describing the intended research was issued to each participant outlining the study's intentions, procedures, and conditions. Only subjects who willingly consented by signing the informed consent letter participated in this study. Signed letters were retained as a source of documentation and copies issued to the consenting participant for their records as well.

In an effort to secure privacy, confidentiality, and build trust between the researcher and participants, identities and data collection of reading test scores, interviews, and parent-teacher questionnaires were issued and treated anonymously. Research participants were notified about individuals who possibly had access to the anonymous data collected, in this case, school administrators and the researcher. This information was disclosed in the informed consent letter.

Ethical considerations in regards to collecting test data from district-provided early literacy formative assessment tool, DIBELS, is expected to be administered by a trained, qualified DIBELS Assessment team that does not include grade level teachers during the Benchmark periods. Grade level teachers were allowed to administer the biweekly progress monitoring portion of the test. It was further expected that teachers were properly trained about the uses and administering of the DIBELS assessment and, as Kaminiski stated, not "teaching the test and/or artificially raising DIBELS scores without teaching the critical skills" (2004, p. 13). Considering these factors, appropriate ethical measures were taken, thus contributing to the reliability and validity of the data collected.

Data Analysis Procedure

Students' DIBELS benchmark and progress monitoring scores were carefully analyzed to show growth or lack thereof based on teacher instruction and the assistance of additional help outside of the school provided by parents and/or guardians. This information was compared to students who did not have additional assistance at home, based on documented data collected and observed. Questionnaire content was properly organized and analyzed based on appropriate study-related categories, such as demographics, parents' home environment analysis, parental contributions to reading achievement, home-to-school literacy communication, and background-building activities. Interviews and observational data were thoroughly reviewed, categorized, themed, and analyzed for common patterns.

Limitations of Methodology and
Strategies to Minimize Impact

Limitations in methodology could possibly emerge during the collection of interview and survey data electronically. The participating school is located in an impoverished area and students have limited access, if any, to computers outside of the home. Parents are often required to use computers located within the school's computer lab or at the local library when time permits. Due to the lack of exposure to technology, participating parents may have limited computer skills. In the event of this limitation arising, computer support was provided or the paper survey issued to alleviate this problem.

Another issue that may have possibly contributed to limiting effective data outcomes of the selected methodology is the truthfulness of the parents' responses. Certain time ranges in regards to the amount of time spent with children outside of the school were listed on the questionnaire to get a true understanding of the amount of time actually spent with the child on reading-related activities.

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The goal of this study was to examine the impact of parental involvement on kindergarten through third-grade student reading achievement as measured by student performance on the DIBELS assessment. A quantitative, dominant, concurrent triangulation design was used in order to collect, analyze, and interpret quantitative student achievement data, quantitative survey data for parents and educators, and qualitative interview data for parents only. This particular design was chosen in order to conduct all of the data in one phase and so that multiple but complementary data on the same topic could be obtained (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2006).

The goal of this chapter is to present all of the data analysis findings in order to address the following research questions:

1.   How and to what extent does parental involvement influence a child's reading achievement?

2.   How and to what degree does continuous parental involvement enhance a child's reading achievement level?

3.   How and to what extent does limited parental involvement impact a child's reading achievement?

The remainder of this chapter is broken down into four sections. The first section discusses the data preparation and analysis procedures. The second section provides a summary of the demographic characteristics of the parent sample and educator sample

utilized in this study. The third section provides the general results as well as the results for each of the research questions separately. The fourth and final section summarizes all of the data analysis findings from the three research questions.

Data Preparation and Analysis Procedures

All of the quantitative survey data were entered into Excel and uploaded into SPSS, Version 15.0, for coding and analysis. Ordinal demographic variables (i.e., education, number of years, and income) were numerically coded and ranked accordingly. For example, since "some high school coursework" was the lowest level of educational attainment listed on the survey, this category was coded as 1; followed by the next category, "high school diploma or equivalent," which was coded as 2; and so forth. Nominal demographic variables (i.e., gender and race) were given arbitrary numerical codes for analysis purposes, but they were treated as nominal (i.e., categorical nonranked) variables.

The parent survey responses were grouped into five separate categories or domains that corresponded to the sections of the parent survey. The first category reflected the literacy communication from the parent to the school and vice versa. The 12 items that were linked to this domain were averaged to obtain one overall domain score.

The next domain pertained to parental involvement with regard to reading activities. Fifteen items were linked to this domain and averaged to obtain one overall domain score.

The third domain pertained to parental involvement with regard to nonreading activities, such as going to the museum or zoo with child. There were 10 items linked to this domain, which were averaged to obtain an overall domain score.

The fourth domain related to materials that the parent had in the home, such as story books, newspapers, magazines, reference books, and so forth. There were 15 items listed in this category as well as an option for "other." The 16 materials were summed to create one overall domain score that represented the total number of literacy materials that a parent had in the home.

The fifth and final domain pertained to barriers or obstacles that limit parental involvement, such work schedule, time constraints, major life issues, and so forth. There were 10 items or barriers that linked to this domain, which were summed to compute a total number of obstacles that limit a parent's involvement.

Descriptive analyses were conducted for all five of the parent domain scores as well as the individual survey items. Minimum values, maximum values, means, and standard deviations were computed to summarize the parent data. In the case of the simple *yes* or *no* items (i.e., materials in the home and limitations to parental involvement), percentages were computed in order to summarize the parents' responses. For the individual survey items, the mode was also provided due to the categorical nature of the data. In addition, inferential statistics were computed in which continuously involved parents were compared to noninvolved parents with regard to student reading achievement on the DIBELS. Cross-tabulation and chi-square analyses were conducted when analyzing group differences on student DIBELS reading achievement, and an independent samples *t* test was used when comparing group differences based on overall

achievement (i.e., average across all three DIBELS administrations). Statistical significance was determined by an alpha level of 5% or less (i.e., $p \leq .05$).

The teacher survey data consisted of three separate domains including teacher-parent literacy communication, literacy materials sent home, and limitations to parental involvement. The teacher-parent literacy communication domain consisted of 12 items, which were averaged to create an overall domain score. The literacy materials sent home domain consisted of 16 items that were summed to create a total number of materials sent home as well as a separate item indicating the frequency in which the materials were sent home. The third domain contained 11 items or barriers that were listed on the survey that were summed to create a total number of limitations to parental involvement domain score. The teacher survey data were also summarized using descriptive statistics including minimum values, maximum values, means, modes, and standard deviations. The summarized teacher survey data were used to provide an additional source of information in which to compare and contrast with the parent data.

The qualitative parent interview responses were examined for themes and potential patterns linking perceived causes and effects. The analyzed interview responses were then compared to both the parent and teacher survey data in order to provide more in-depth information, and to potentially clarify and verify the quantitative results.

The first research question focused on the extent to which parental involvement influences a child's reading achievement as measured by proficiency levels on the DIBELS. Since this research question focused on parental involvement in general, overall student reading achievement was the dependent variable of interest. Therefore, the two groups of parents were compared with regard to their children's overall reading

achievement in order to determine if statistically significant differences existed. Overall

reading achievement was defined as the average performance across the three testing

administrations. Since an average across the three administrations was computed for

comparison purposes, an independent samples *t* test was utilized. Independent samples *t*

tests are used to compare two independent groups with regard to a scaled level (i.e.,

interval or ratio) dependent variable (Minium, King, & Bear, 1993).

The second research question focused on the effect of continuous parental

involvement and its effect on the enhancement of a child's reading achievement.

Therefore, two comparisons were made between the two groups of parents: (a)

comparison based on the second assessment for those students who did not make

benchmark on the initial assessment, and (b) comparison based on the third and final

assessment for those students who did not make benchmark on the second assessment.

Since the dependent variable in these comparisons was ordinal (i.e., categorical and

ranked), a cross-tabulation with chi-square was used to determine whether or not a

statistically significant difference emerged between the two groups of parents (Minium et

al., 1993).

The third and final research question focused on the extent to which limited

parental involvement impacts a child's reading achievement. Therefore, the same

information that was obtained in research question 2 was used to address this question.

However, the focus was not on the effect of continuous involvement but, rather, limited

involvement.

Sample Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the parent and educator participants are presented in this section. The parent demographic characteristics are presented first, followed by the educator demographic characteristics.

Parent Demographic Characteristics

Figure 1 shows the number of female parents versus male parents who completed the parent survey. Females were more likely to have completed the survey, although 71 men completed the survey.
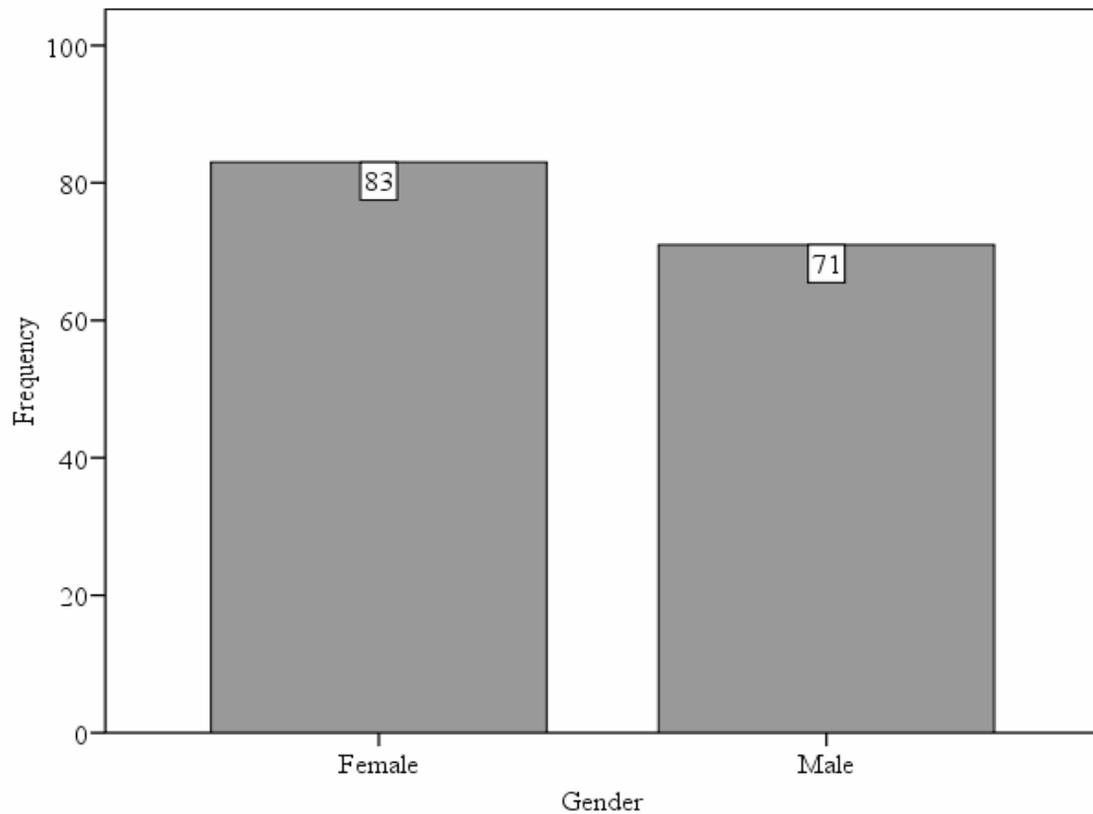
Figure 1. Parent participant gender.

The results in Figure 2 indicate that the overwhelming majority of the parent sample was African American; only 1 participant was Caucasian and 1 was characterized as "other." However, 4 participants did not indicate their race on the survey and, therefore, their race is not indicated in the bar chart.
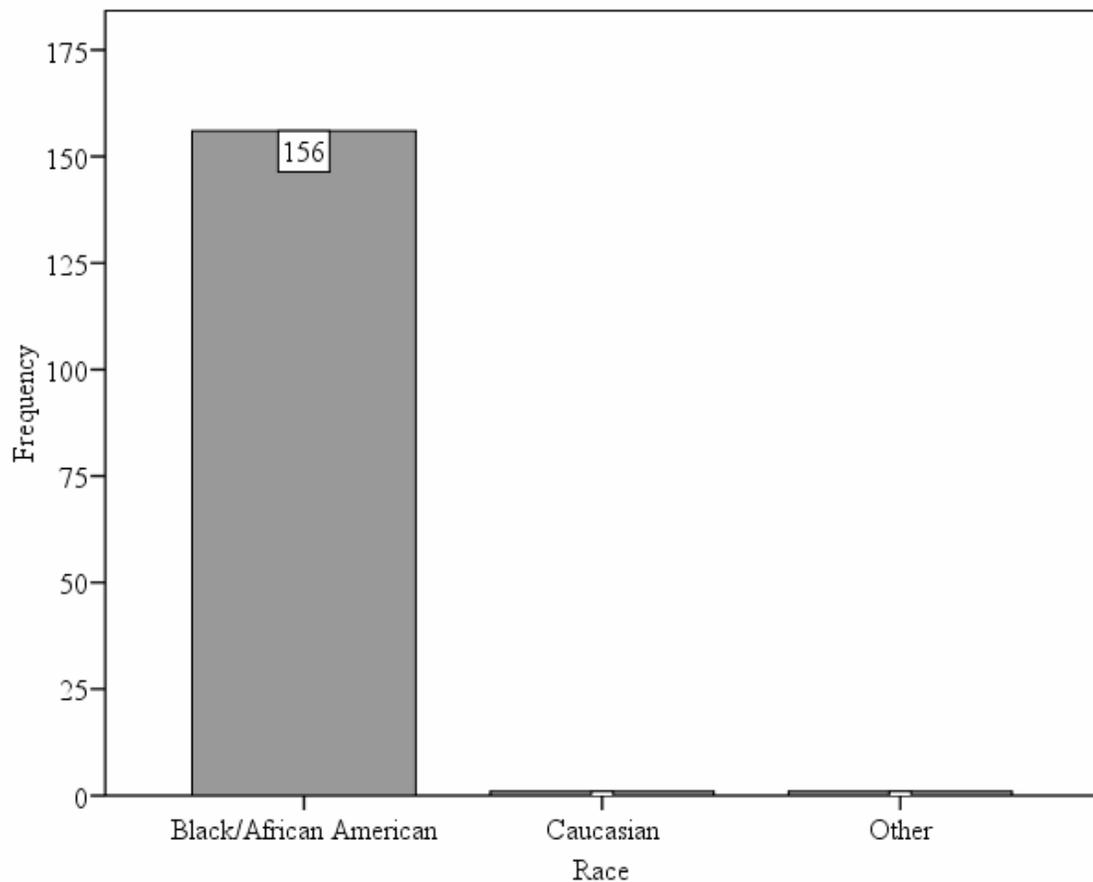
Figure 2. Parent participant race.

The family status results in Figure 3 indicate that the majority of the parents in the sample were from single-parent homes, although many came from two-parent homes as well. One child was from an intermediate single-parent home and two were from

intermediate two-parent homes. However, 6 participants did not respond to the item and, therefore, their family status is unknown.
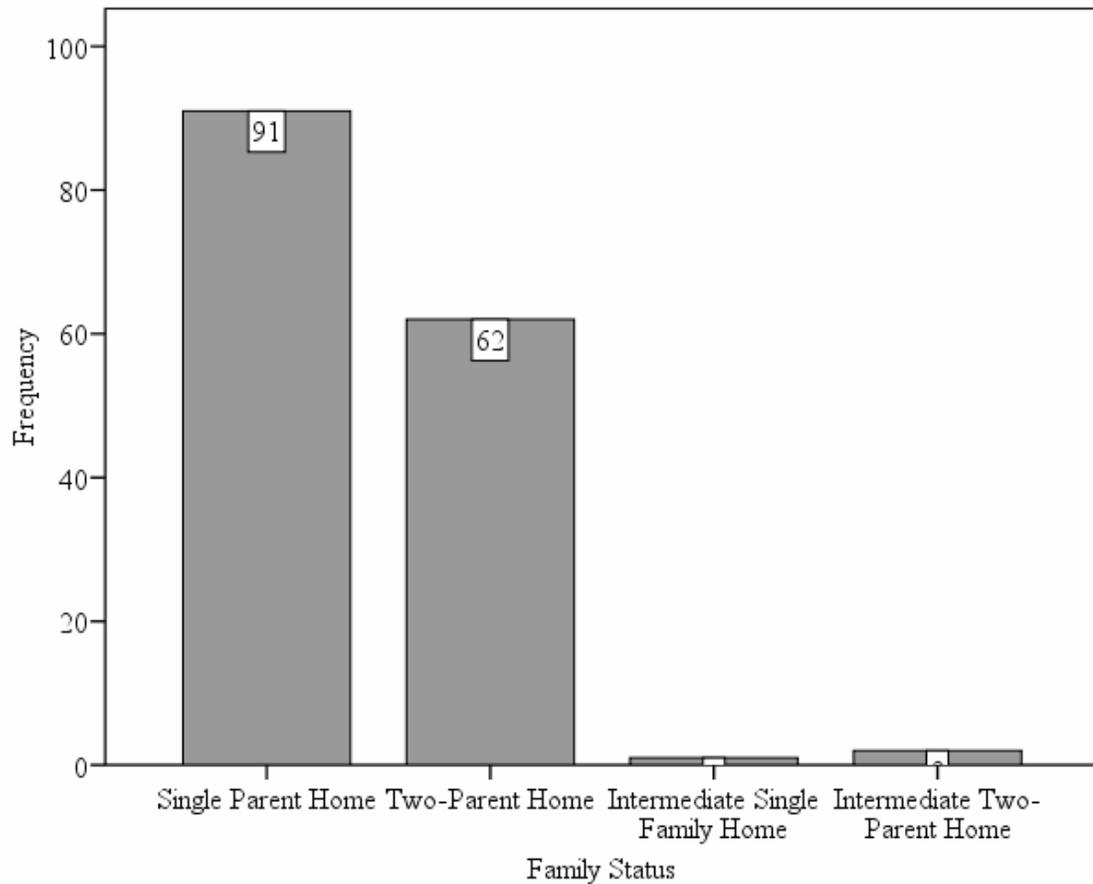
Figure 3. Parent participant family status.

The marital status of the parent sample is summarized in Figure 4. The results in Figure 4 indicate that, again, the majority of the parents were single at the time of the study. As many as 51 participants were married and 15 were divorced. Also, 1 parent was widowed and 1 was separated at the time of the study. Two parents did not indicate their marital status on the survey.
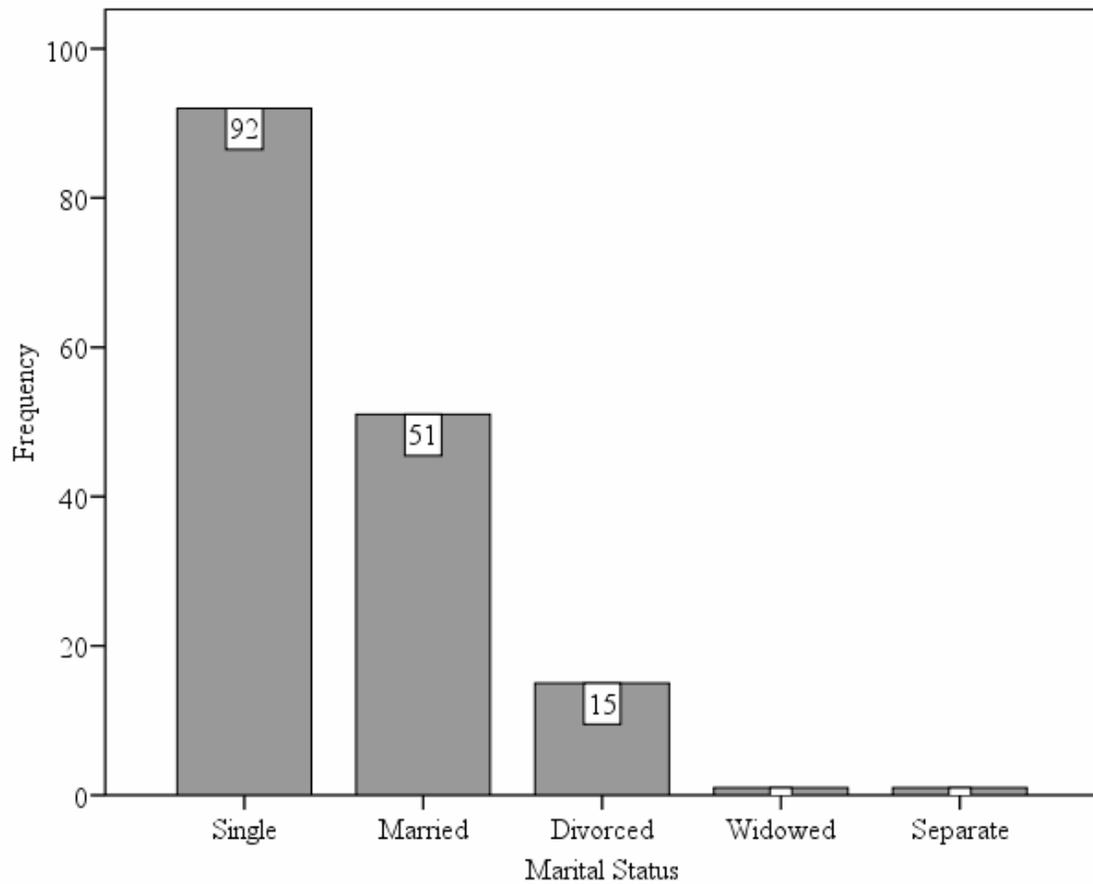
Figure 4. Parent participant marital status.

The employment status of the parent participants is summarized in Figure 5. The results in Figure 5 indicate that the vast majority of the sample was employed at the time of the study. However, as many as 27 parents were unemployed and 7 parents did not indicate their employment status on the survey.
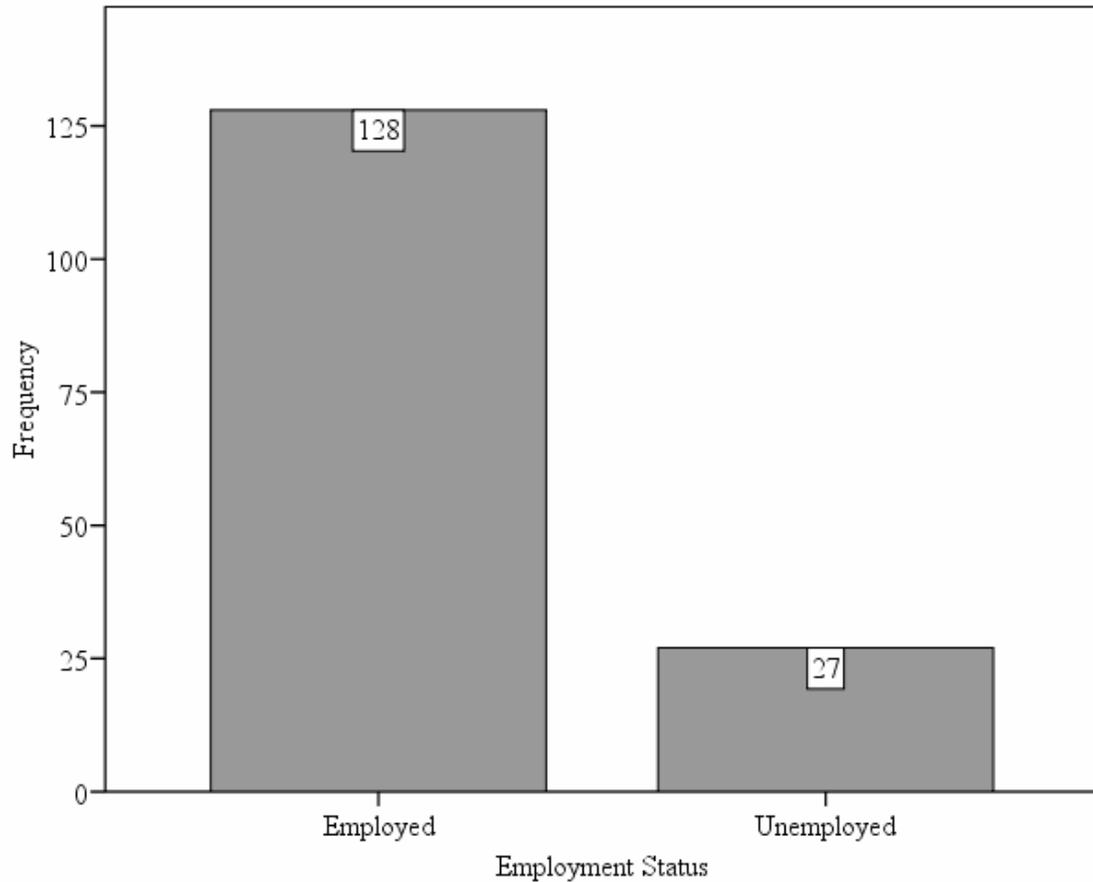
Figure 5. Parent participant employment status.

Figure 6 summarizes the family income level distribution of the parent sample. The results in Figure 6 indicate that the most common income level was between $10,000 and $20,000 a year, followed by $20,000 to $30,000, then $30,000 to $40,000, then $50,000 or more, and, finally, $40,000 to $50,000. However, as many as 24 parents did not respond to the item and, therefore, their income level is unknown. It is possible that they had income levels below $10,000 per year.
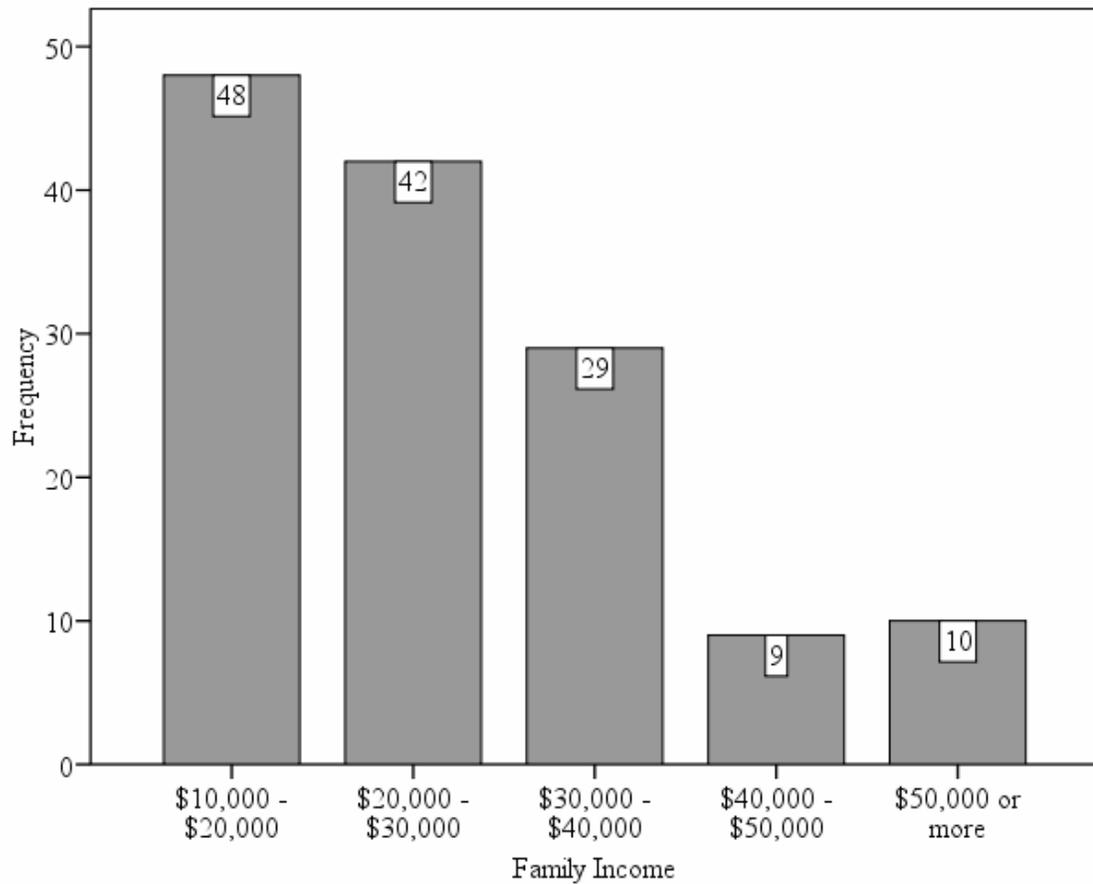
Figure 6. Parent participant family income level.

The mother's educational attainment is summarized in Figure 7. The results in

Figure 7 indicate that the mothers of the children in this study were not likely to be

college-educated or beyond, although some parents had earned graduate degrees up to the

doctorate level. The most common educational level indicated on the survey was "high

school or equivalent."
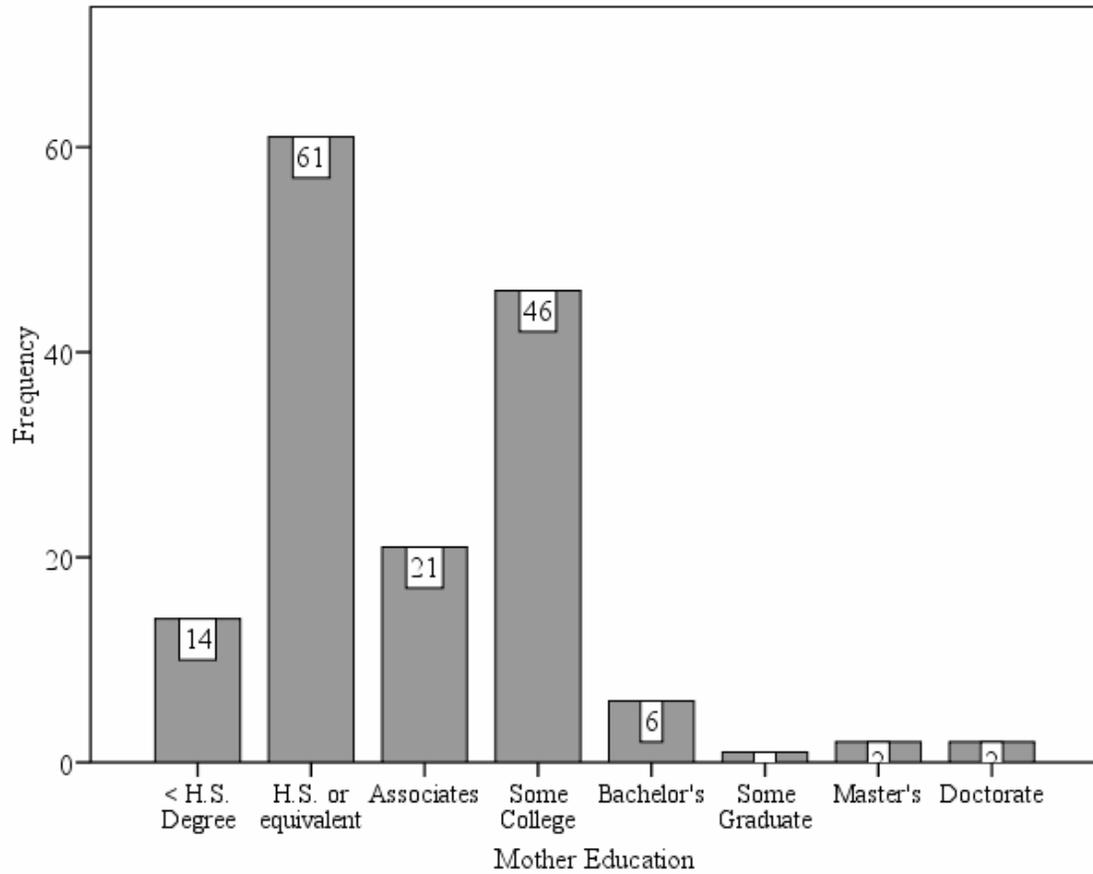
Figure 7. Mother educational attainment level.

Finally, the educational attainment levels of the fathers are presented in Figure 8. The results in Figure 8 indicate that, as with the mothers, the most common level of educational attainment was "high school or equivalent." Fathers were not likely to be college-educated, although some had earned graduate degrees up to the doctorate level.
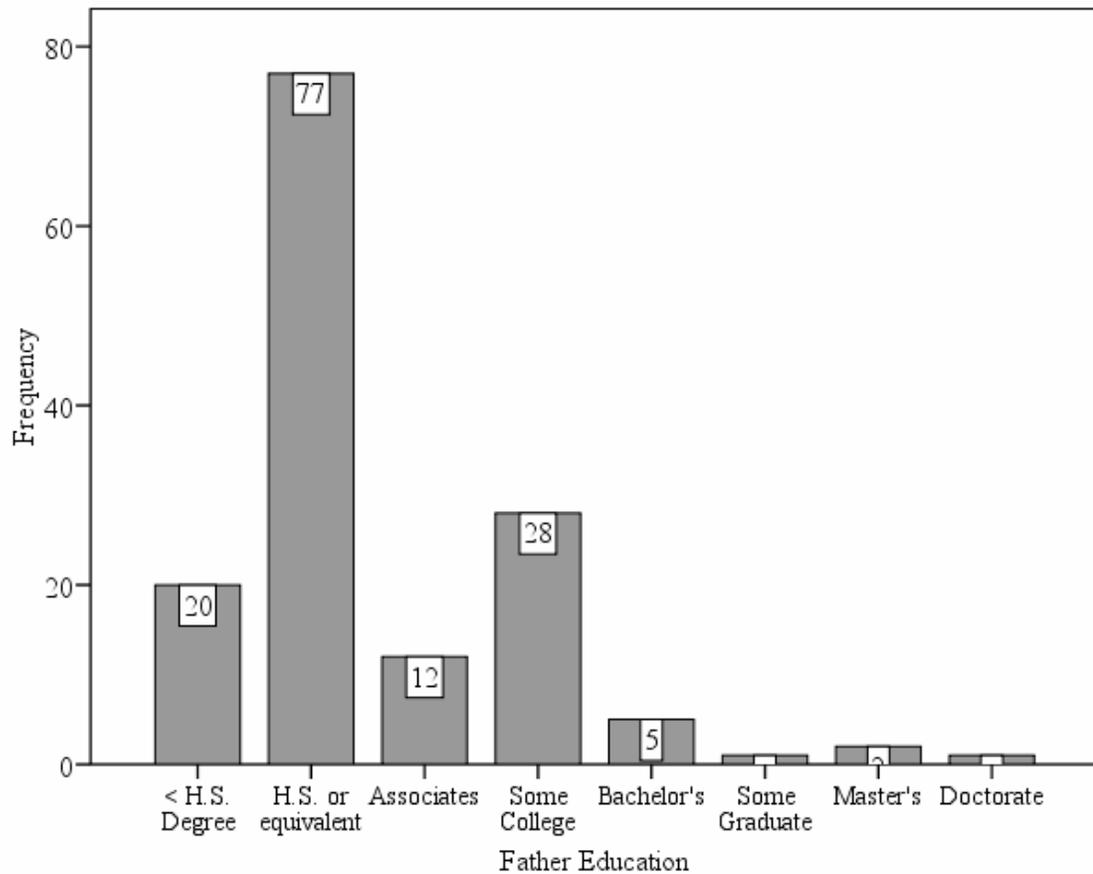
Figure 8. Father educational attainment level.

Educator Demographic Characteristics

The summarized responses pertaining to the current position of the educators at the time of the study is provided in Figure 9. The results in Figure 9 indicate that the majority of the participants who completed the Teacher Survey indicated that their current position was "teacher." There were 2 interventionists, 1 coach and 1 principal, also represented in the sample.
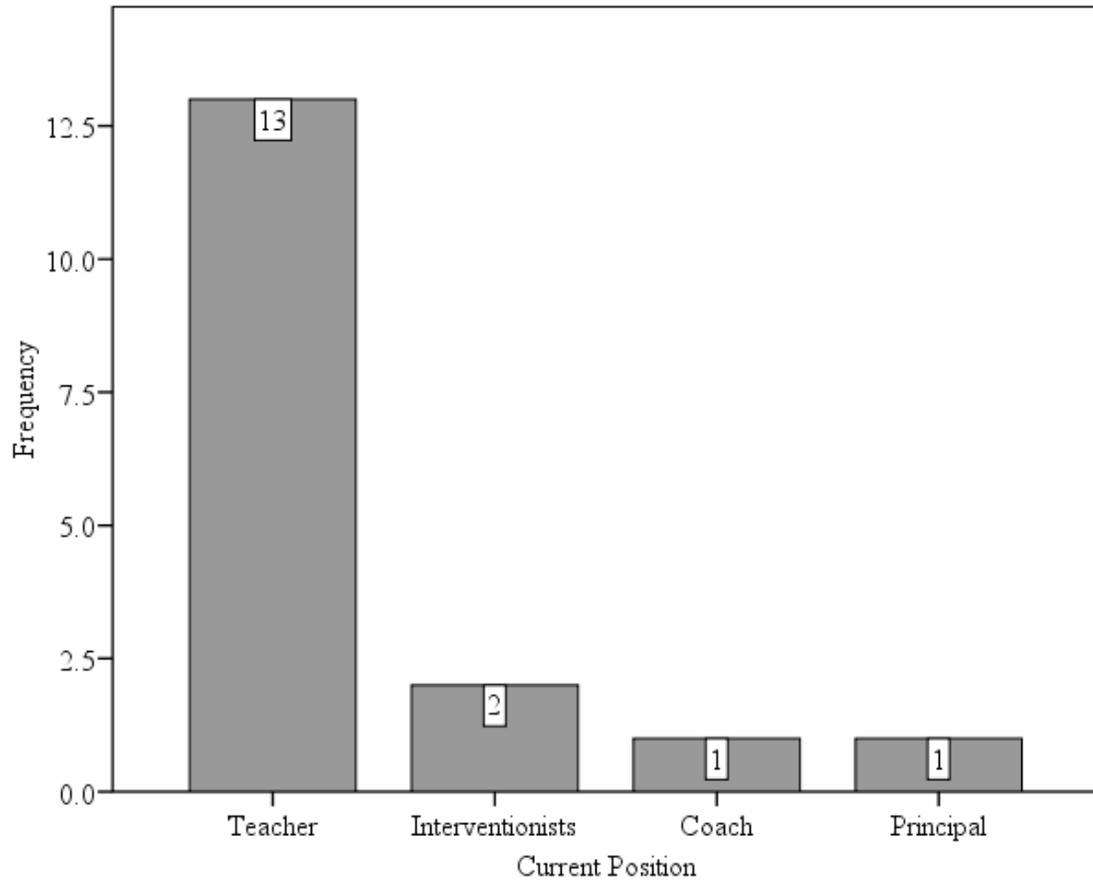
Figure 9. Current position of educator participants.

The summarized educational attainment levels of the educators in the sample are provided in Figure 10. The results in Figure 10 indicate that the most common education level was bachelor's degree. However, several of the educator participants had completed some graduate level coursework and 2 held a master's degree and 1 held a doctorate.
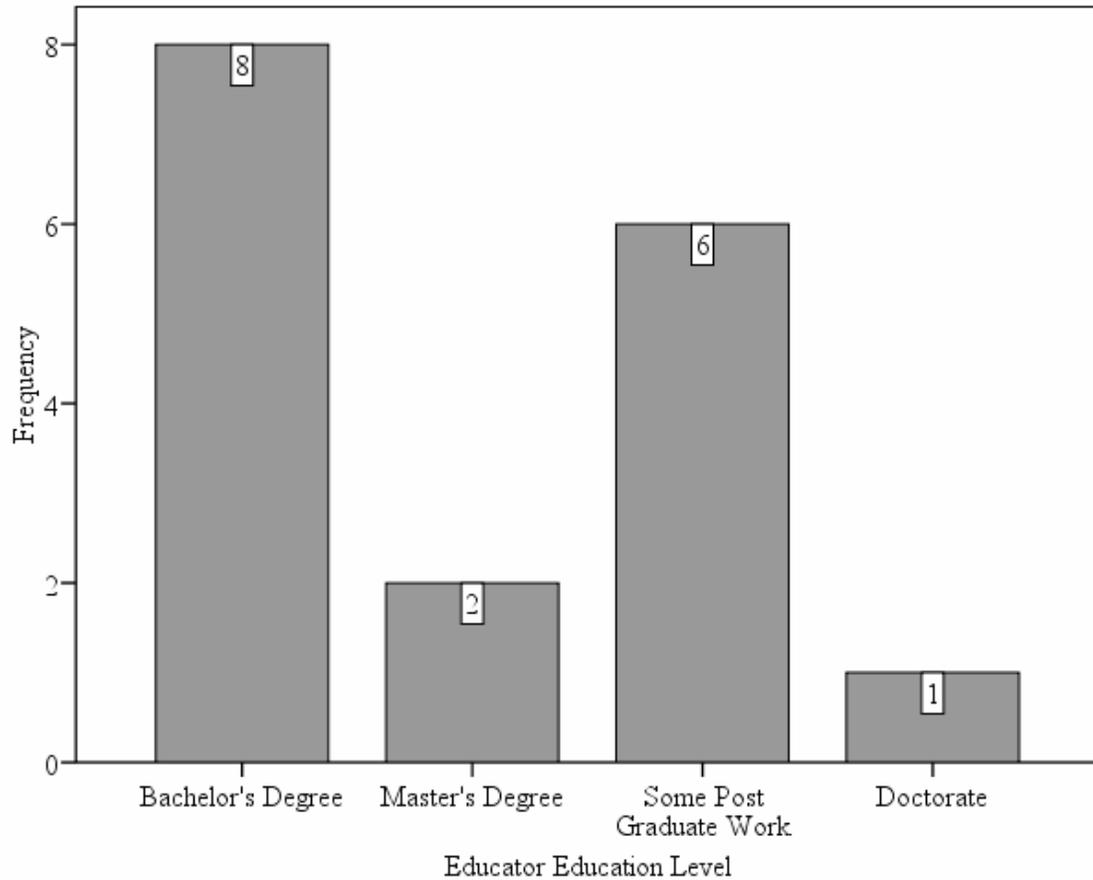
Figure 10. Education level of educator sample.

The educators in the sample were asked if they had a state teaching certificate/license. The participants' responses are summarized in Figure 11. The results in Figure 11 indicate that the vast majority had a state license/certificate at the time of the study; only 2 participants did not.
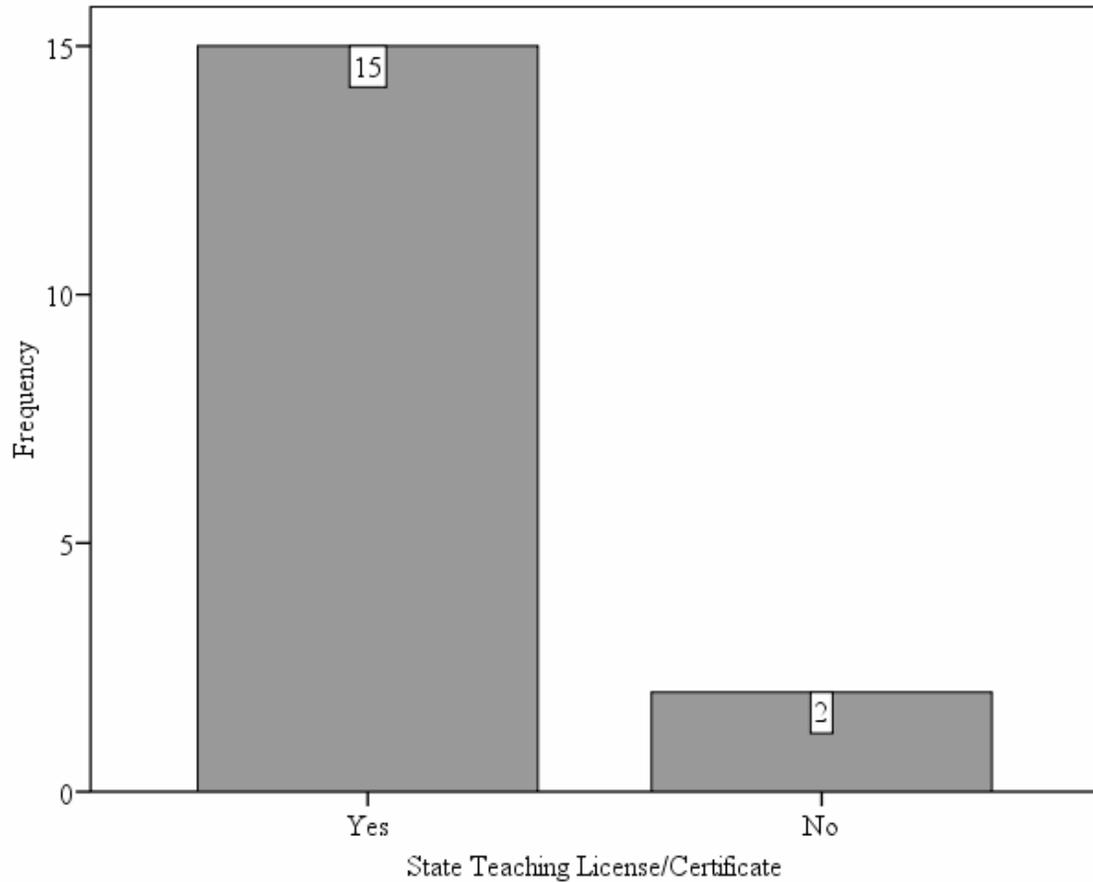
Figure 11. State teaching license/certificate.

Figure 12 summarizes the number of years that the educators had been teaching in an inner-city school. The results in Figure 12 indicate that there was a lot of variability in their responses. The responses ranged from 0–5 years to 21 years or more. The most common response was 21 years or more, but several had 10 years or less. Therefore, the sample of educators represented a wide range of teaching experience within an inner-city school.
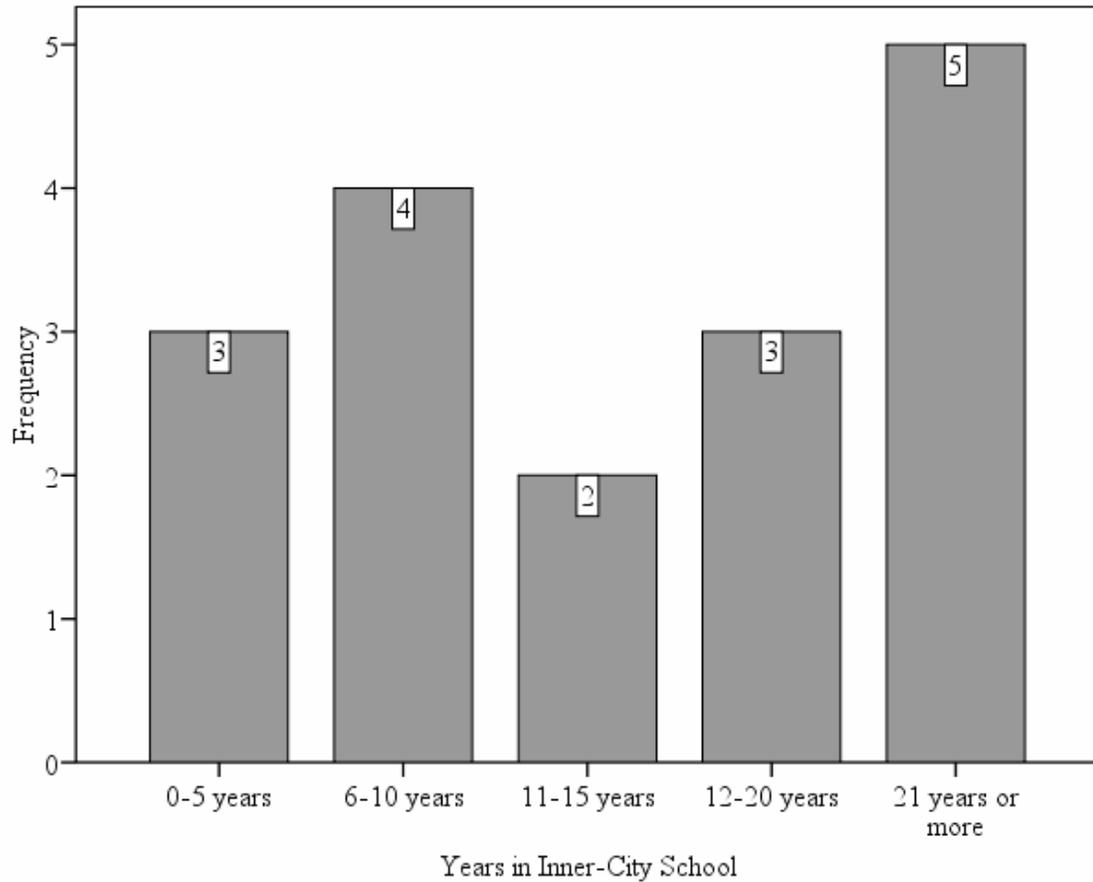
Figure 12. Number of years teaching in an inner-city school.

The number of years of experience teaching reading at the time of the study is summarized in Figure 13. The results in Figure 13 indicate that, again, a wide range existed. The sample of educators had responses ranging from 0–5 years to 12–20 years. However, no one had more than 20 years of experience. The most common response was 12–20 years of teaching reading experience, although several teachers had 10 years of experience or less.
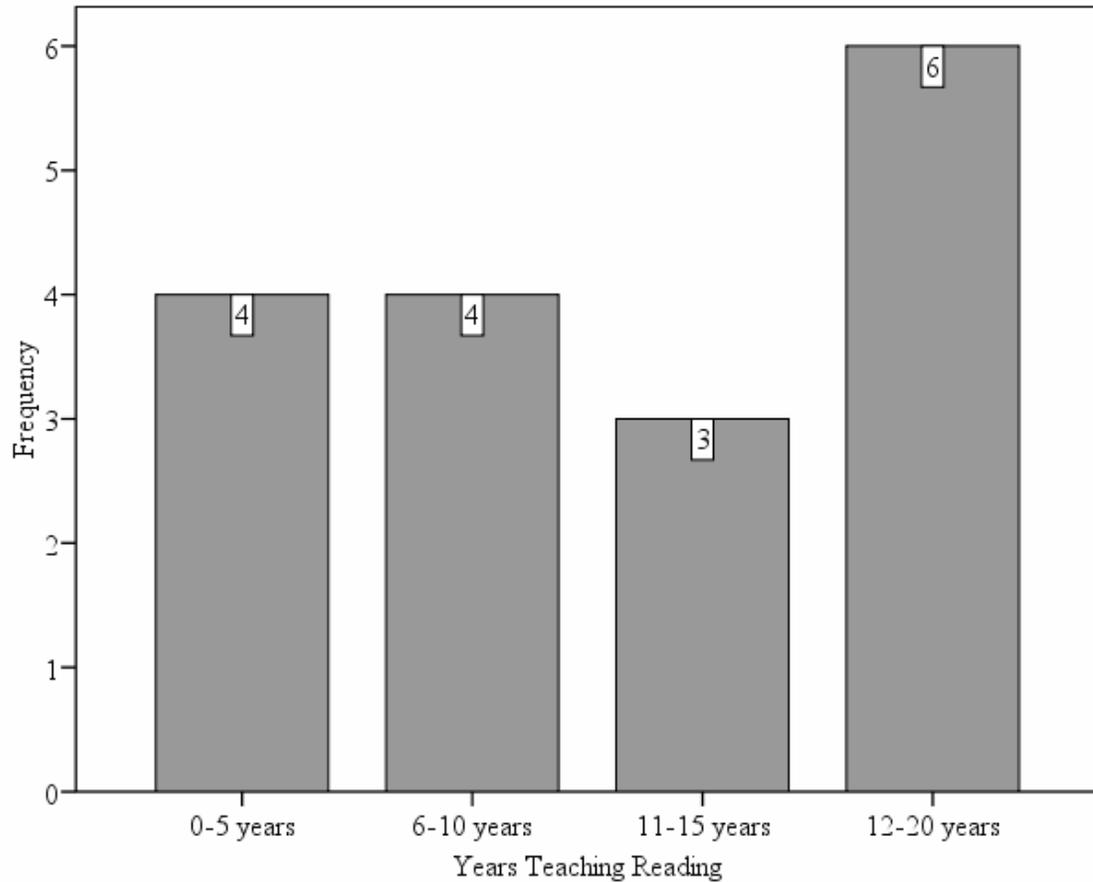
Figure 13. Number of years teaching reading.

The number of years of experience teaching in a Reading First school is summarized in Figure 14. The results in Figure 14 indicate that the range was from 0–2 years to 5 years. The most common response was 2–4 years, followed by 0–2 years. Only 1 educator had 5 years of experience in a Reading First school.
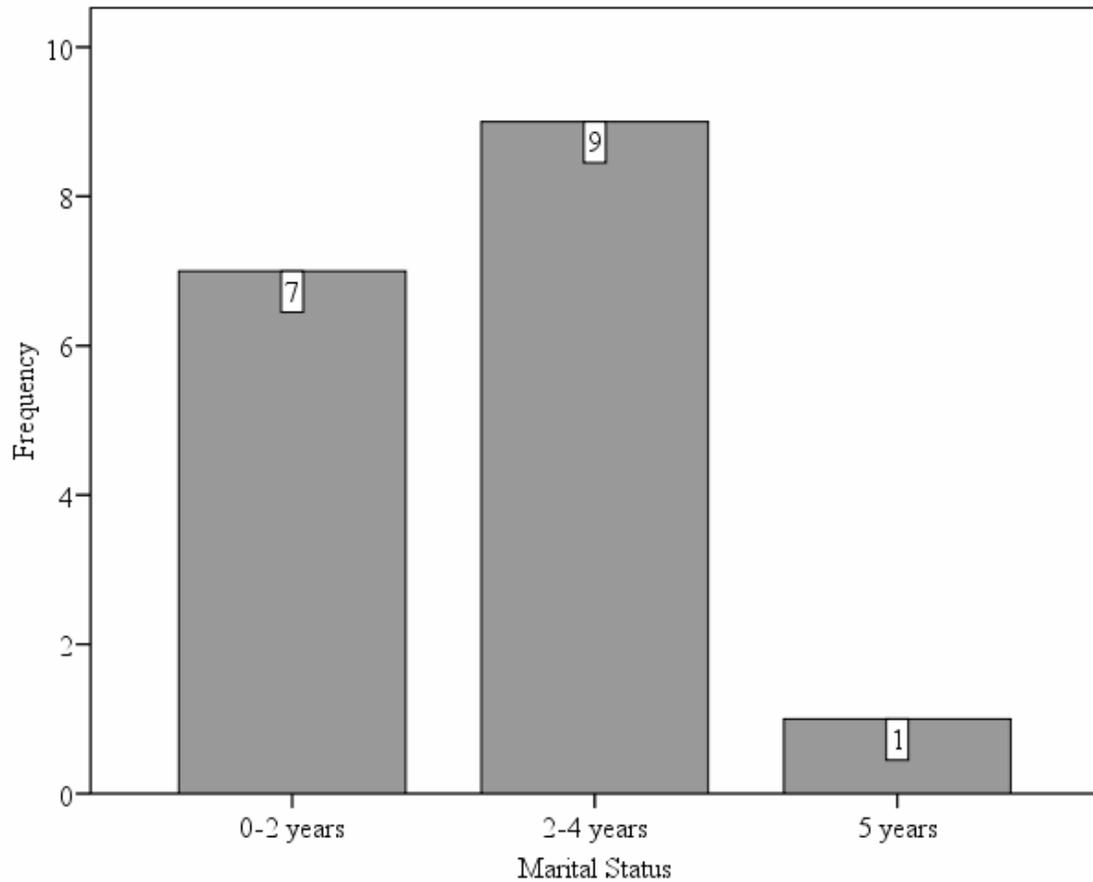
Figure 14. Number of years teaching in a Reading First school.

Finally, Figure 15 illustrates the number of teachers who have had poverty-sensitivity training. The results in Figure 15 indicate that the majority of educators in the sample had been through poverty-sensitivity training at the time of the study; only 3 educators had not been through the training.
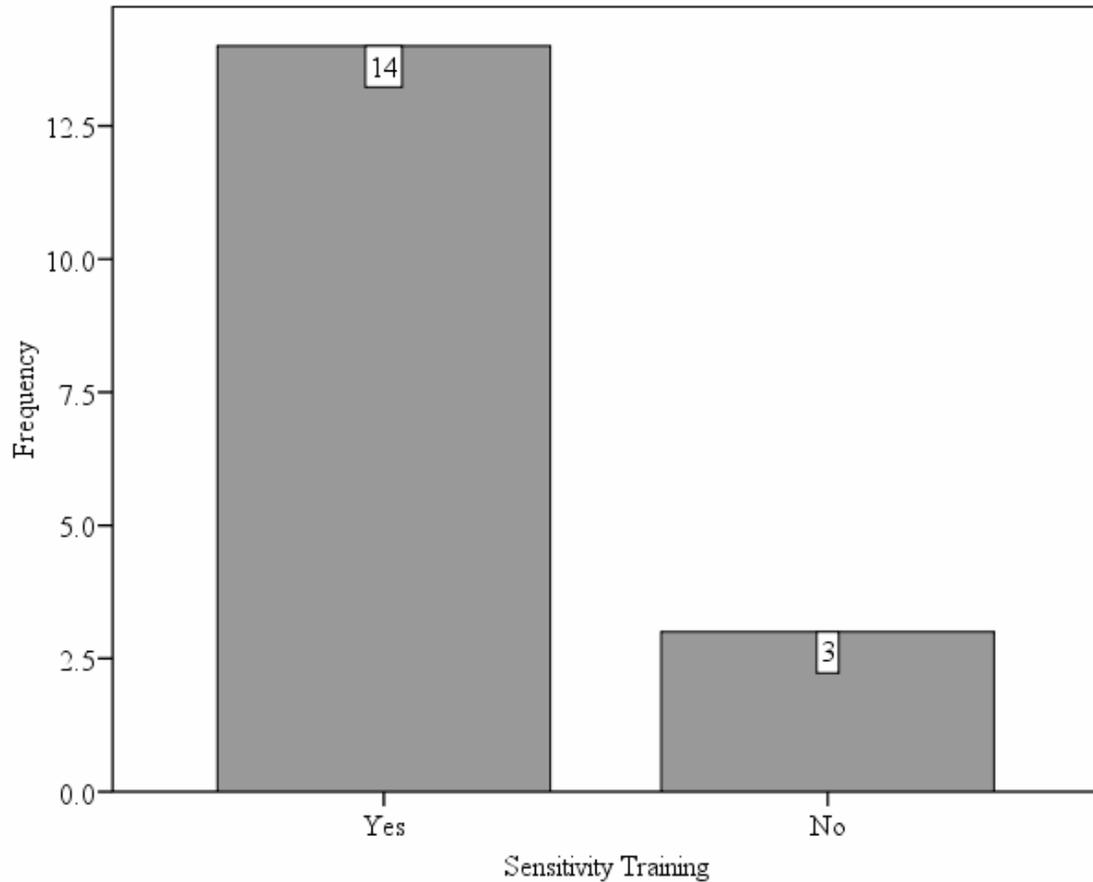
Figure 15. Sensitivity training.

Results

Prior to specifically addressing each of the research questions, the descriptive

summaries of the parent and teacher survey responses are presented in order to determine

parent and educator perceptions regarding parental involvement. These descriptive

summaries are based on all participants and therefore do not group the results by

demographic categories, and so forth. Item level descriptive statistics are presented so

that specific factors may be examined and therefore specific behaviors, limitations, and

parental deficiencies may be identified. These summarized results may be referred to later in the chapter when appropriate.

Parent Survey Item Descriptive Analyses

The first domain on the parental involvement survey related to parent-teacher literacy communication. The descriptive statistics for the items linking to this domain are provided in Table 1. Since a response of *never* was coded as 1 and a response of *extensively* was coded as 5, higher responses are indicative of a higher frequency. The results in Table 1 indicate that teachers emphasize the importance of reading at home most often (4.27) and parents provide tutoring to other children during the reading block least often (1.51). In general, parents indicated that they are rarely involved in parent-related activities such as volunteering, tutoring, or attending literacy programs at the school. However, parents indicated that teachers communicate and focus on literacy-related issues on a fairly regular basis.

According to the educators' responses in Table 2, the most frequently occurring behavior of the teachers is to send home communication to parents about the current week's reading skills (4.86), although they provided the second highest mean rating with regard to emphasizing the importance of reading at home (4.76). In fact, the educators provided a higher mean rating with regard to emphasizing the importance of reading at home than did the parents. In addition, they tended to provide lower mean ratings on the parent-related activities than did the parents themselves.

Table 1. Parent-Teacher Literacy Communication: Parent Perceptions

Item	N	Min	Max	M	SD	Mode
Current week's reading skills	154	1	5	4.10	0.94	4
Helpful strategies to enforce reading skills	155	1	5	4.06	0.95	4
Encouraged to contact teacher	153	1	5	3.97	1.05	4
Teacher emphasizes reading at home	154	1	5	4.27	0.91	5
Directions/expectations are sent home	148	1	5	4.19	0.99	5
School has literacy programs that I attend	145	1	5	2.03	1.15	1
Volunteer in child's classroom during reading block	142	1	5	1.56	0.99	1
I tutor my child during reading block	150	1	5	1.81	1.19	1
I tutor other children during reading block	150	1	5	1.51	1.02	1
Receive progress reports	145	1	5	4.25	1.02	5
Teacher sends home decodable/phonics readers	138	1	5	3.30	1.54	5
Teacher sends home leveled readers	139	1	5	3.57	1.37	5

Educators gave the lowest mean rating to parents tutoring other people's children during the reading block (1.20). Their mean rating suggests that parents almost never engage in that behavior. Therefore, in general, teachers followed the parents' protocol of rating teacher-related behaviors/activities as occurring most frequently and parent-related behaviors/activities as occurring least frequently. The main difference between the

parents' ratings and the educators' ratings is that the educators' mean ratings were more extreme.

Table 2. Parent-Teacher Literacy Communication: Educator Perceptions

Item	N	Min	Max	M	SD	Mode
Current week's reading skills	14	4	5	4.86	0.36	5
Helpful strategies to enforce reading skills	17	3	5	4.35	0.70	5
Encouraged to contact teacher	16	3	5	4.44	0.63	5
Teacher emphasizes reading at home	17	3	5	4.76	0.56	5
Directions/expectations are sent home	16	4	5	4.75	0.45	5
School has literacy programs that I attend	17	1	5	3.12	1.05	3
Volunteer in child's classroom during reading block	13	1	3	1.46	0.78	1
I tutor my child during reading block	17	1	5	1.65	1.17	1
I tutor other children during reading block	15	1	3	1.20	0.56	1
Receive progress reports	17	1	5	3.59	1.23	4
Teacher sends home decodable/phonics readers	15	1	5	2.53	1.64	1
Teacher sends home leveled readers	17	1	5	3.00	1.27	2

Parents were asked to indicate the frequency at which they had been involved with their children relative to reading activities. Educators were not asked this question because the items pertained to behaviors and activities that parents did with their children

outside of the school environment. The summarized responses to the relevant items are provided in Table 3. The results in Table 3 indicate that parents tended to report that they engaged in reading activities with their child frequently, although some parents reported to have never or rarely engaged in such activities. The most common response was *extensively*.

Parents were also surveyed about activities other than reading that they did (or did not do) with their children. Again, educators were not asked this question because the items pertained to activities that parents did with their children outside of the school environment. The summarized responses to these items in Table 4 indicate that parents were most likely to take their children to the grocery store and explain the activities that take place in a grocery store (3.76). Conversely, parents were least likely to take their children outside of the country (1.28). Overall, parents tended to engage in nonreading-related activities with their child occasionally. Again, there was a fair amount of diversity in the responses with some parents choosing *never* and other parents choosing *extensively*. Therefore, parental involvement varied substantially in this sample of parents.

The next set of items on the parent survey asked parents to indicate how many literacy-related materials they had in the home. The parents were given a checklist of literacy-related materials from which to select.

Table 3. Parental Involvement in Reading Activities

Item	N	Min	Max	M	SD	Mode
Read fiction stories to child	134	1	5	3.32	0.98	3
Read nonfiction stories to child	156	1	5	3.26	1.00	3
Express importance of reading to child	150	2	5	4.28	0.82	5
Listen to child read aloud	158	1	5	4.28	0.87	5
Listen to child recall what was read	152	1	5	4.19	0.93	5
Help child with reading homework	158	2	5	4.48	0.67	5
Practice the sounds of letters with child	155	1	5	4.14	0.93	5
Practice matching sounds to letters with child	157	1	5	3.91	1.05	5
Help child break down or decode unfamiliar words	157	1	5	4.29	0.84	5
Help child break down or decode nonsense words	156	1	5	4.06	0.98	5
Help child read with speed or fluency	150	1	5	4.05	1.02	5
Help child read decodable and phonics books	152	1	5	3.73	1.23	5
Help child read books at performance level	153	1	5	4.08	1.00	5
Discuss what child learned during reading books	152	1	5	3.47	1.24	4
Practice timed reading with child	155	1	5	3.95	1.02	5

Table 4. Parental Involvement in Nonreading-Related Activities

Item	N	Min	Max	M	SD	Mode
Take child to the museum	152	1	5	2.30	1.00	2
Take child to the zoo	152	1	5	2.72	0.91	3
Take child to the library	142	1	5	2.79	1.06	3
Take child to book stores	148	1	5	2.55	1.06	3
Take child to and explain grocery store activities	151	1	5	3.76	1.02	3
Take child to and explain post office activities	148	1	5	2.41	1.21	1
Take child to community programs and events	148	1	5	2.71	1.19	3
Take child to theater to see plays	147	1	5	2.22	1.10	1
Travel with child to other cities/states	147	1	5	3.01	1.32	3
Travel with child outside the country	147	1	5	1.28	0.82	1

The percentage of parents who selected each of the listed literacy-related materials is provided in Table 5. The results in Table 5 indicate that parents were most likely to have story books in the home (92.4%) followed by magazines (80.3%). Besides the "other" category, parents were least likely to have an atlas in the home (18.5%). The majority of the parents reported having newspapers (75.6%), a dictionary (73.1%), alphabet flash cards (51.6%), and board games (67.9%) in the home.

Table 5. Literacy-Related Materials in the Home

Item	*N*	*%*
Story books	157	92.4
Leveled and/or decodable readers	157	29.3
Magazines	157	80.3
Newspapers	156	75.6
Dictionary	156	73.1
Thesaurus	156	34.0
Encyclopedia	157	40.1
Atlas	157	18.5
Computer with educational software	157	45.2
Computer with Internet access	157	48.4
Labeled items (furniture, doors, tables, oven, etc.)	155	18.7
Picture cards	157	45.9
Alphabet flash cards	157	51.6
Sight word cards	157	43.3
Board games	156	67.9
Other	162	3.7

The educators were provided with the same checklist of literacy materials except they were instructed to indicate which of the listed items they sent home with students. The percentage of educators who selected each of the items on the checklist is provided

in Table 6. The results in Table 6 indicate that the educators were most likely to send students home with sight word cards (94.1%), followed by story books (82.4%).

Table 6. Literacy-Related Materials Sent Home by Teacher

Item	N	%
Story books	17	82.4
Leveled and/or decodable readers	17	64.7
Magazines	17	23.5
Newspapers	17	17.6
Dictionary	17	0.0
Thesaurus	17	0.0
Encyclopedia	17	0.0
Atlas	17	0.0
Computer with educational software	17	11.8
Computer with Internet access	17	47.1
Labeled items (furniture, doors, tables, oven, etc.)	17	11.8
Picture cards	17	35.3
Alphabet flash cards	17	35.3
Sight word cards	17	94.1
Board games	17	5.9
Other	17	23.5

More than half of the teachers (64.7%) indicated that they sent children home with leveled and/or decodable readers. However, teachers were not very likely to send students home with other literacy-related materials. In fact, none of the educators had sent students home with a dictionary, thesaurus, encyclopedia, or atlas. Therefore, this sample of educators did not send children home with reference-type literacy materials in kindergarten through 3rd grade.

Of the literacy-related materials that are sent home with students, the frequency with which they are sent home depended on the educator. Based on the educators' responses, the most common response was once a week (50.0%), followed by 2–3 times per week (31.3%), and, finally, daily (18.8%). However, 1 of the teachers did not respond to this item and, therefore, these percentages were based on a total of 16 educators.

Both parents and educators were surveyed about their perceptions relating to limitations to parental involvement. The participants were given a checklist of possible limitations and asked to select those that they perceived to be a limitation to parental involvement. The parents' summarized results are provided in Table 7 and indicate that the most frequently chosen limitation was a demanding work schedule (37.7%). Having two or more children was the second most common limitation (22.2%). However, none of the limitations was chosen by a majority of the parents. Less than 1% of the parents indicated that the school does not make them feel welcome or useful, and only 1.2% indicated that they believe they do not have a lot to offer related to reading. However, it is important to note that several of the parents chose multiple limitations, as illustrated in Table 8.

Table 7. Limitations to Parental Involvement: Parent Perceptions

Item	*N*	*%*
I do not understand the assignments	162	4.9
My work schedule is demanding	162	37.7
I do not think I have a lot to offer related to reading	162	1.2
School doesn't make me feel welcome or useful	162	0.6
I just do not have the time	162	8.0
I have two or more children; difficult to find time	162	22.2
I am sole caregiver of my parent(s) and children	162	9.3
I am going through a major life issue(s)	162	7.4
I do not understand why my child isn't learning; I'm frustrated	162	4.9
I am a single parent without any help	162	17.3

The results in Table 8 indicate that some parents had as many as five limitations, although the mean number was 1.33, and the most common response was "no limitations to parental involvement" (i.e., 0.00).

Table 8. Total Number of Limitations to Parental Involvement: Parent Perceptions

Item	*N*	Min	Max	*M*	*SD*	Mode
Total number of parental involvement limitations	162	0	5	1.14	1.33	0

The educators' summarized responses to the limitation checklist are provided in Table 9. The results in Table 9 indicate that the educators' perceptions were very different from the parents' perceptions. The educators had a much higher percentage selecting the limitations on the checklist. The most frequently chosen limitations were that parents have a demanding work schedule (76.5%) and parents do not have the time to commit (76.5%).

Table 9. Limitations to Parental Involvement: Educator Perceptions

Item	N	$\%$
Parents do not understand the assignments	17	23.5
Parents have a demanding work schedule	17	76.5
Some parents do not have a lot to offer	17	35.3
Parents do not feel welcome	17	0.0
Parents do not have time to commit	17	76.5
Parents have two or more children; difficult to find time	17	34.7
Parents are sole caregiver of other family and children	17	47.1
Some parents are going through a major life issue(s)	17	47.1
Some parents do not understand why child isn't learning; frustrated	17	41.2
There is only one parent in the home with little or no help	17	70.6

The majority of the educators selected only one parent being in the home with little or no help as a limitation to parental involvement (70.6%) and parents having

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multiple children (64.7%) as a limitation to parental involvement. Similar to the parents' results, less than 1% (i.e., none) of the educators believed not feeling welcome was a real limitation on parental involvement.

The parent and educator survey results indicate that both parents and educators perceived teachers to be communicating with parents on a regular basis and perceive parents to be involved at the school on a very infrequent basis; however, the educators' perceptions were more extreme. The survey results also suggest that there was a lot of variability in the sample with regard to parental involvement in reading and nonreading-related activities. However, on average, parents tended to be actively involved with their children on an occasional basis. Parents tended to have at least some literacy-related materials in the home and educators tended to send literacy-related materials home with the students at least once a week. Sight word flash cards and story books were the most common literacy-related materials sent home by educators. Finally, the survey results indicate that educators were much more likely to believe that limitations on parental involvement exist than were parents. However, regardless of the participant, having a demanding work schedule was the primary limitation noted, and not feeling welcome was not a limitation with regard to parental involvement.

In addition to the surveys, parent interviews were conducted in order to obtain a more in-depth and comprehensive understanding of parents' views regarding their involvement with their children and the dynamics that surround the phenomenon of parental involvement. The first question asked parents how they defined *parental involvement*. Therefore, this interview question investigated what parental involvement meant to the parents in the study and what they believed parental involvement entailed.

Of the 162 parents in the study, 101 provided a response for this question. Based on the

parents' responses, three major categories emerged. The categories and their supporting

responses are outlined in Table 10.

Table 10. Parents Define Parental Involvement

Setting	Activities/actions	Appraisal
Home	Educational	It's a must.
School	Helping	All parents should be involved.
Life	Spending time	Child should be number one priority.
Community	Teaching values	Parental involvement is great.
One-on-one	Communicating	
Church	Asking questions	
	Building good rapport with teachers	
	Volunteering at school	
	Being aware	
	Parent as teacher	
	Listening to child	
	Being an active participant	
	Getting involved	
	Hands-on	
	Interacting	

The parents' responses related to the setting or environment in which parental involvement occurs, such as the school or home environment. In addition, parents provided responses that explained or described the type of activities or actions that define parental involvement, such as spending time with the child, helping the child, teaching the child, and so forth. Finally, a few parents provided an actual appraisal of parental involvement by indicating that it is an important and necessary phenomenon.

Some of the supporting statements given by parents in the interviews were as follows:

> "I am very involved in my child's education whether its class work, homework or PTA meetings or whatever. I help as much as possible."

> "Parental involvement is when a parent gets involved along with a teacher to help a child succeed in whatever a child desires."

> "Volunteering in classroom, eating lunch with my child, reading bedtime stories, going to museums, talking to child about what's going on at home and school."

> "Having a good rapport with teachers and school stuff, showing concern about my child and doing as much as I can at my age to help him."

> "I think all parents should be involved with their child's life and school and education."

> "Being with your child's school. Doing what you need to do to get your child involved in his or her school work. Reading to them going over school work at home and making sure they really understand what they're doing."

> "When parents become the teacher at home not just school. When the parents do everything thing with the child not for the child."

> "Being positively involved with your child's social, emotional, spiritual and educational growth."

> "By attending PTO meetings, classroom and school volunteer, attending school board parental sessions and keeping in touch with the teacher."

"I define it as being totally involved in your child's education. Finding out what the problems are and doing whatever it takes to make sure my child gets a good education."

"Parental involvement is the relationship between school and home that is a connection to better a child's education. This relationship between school and home coincides on a daily basis."

"A parent whose concern for their child's education leads them to ask questions, volunteer, stay on top of strategies that can be used, give suggestions and actively attend meetings."

Although many of the parents provided a definition of *parental involvement* and indicated that it included being involved in the child's education and school, only 26 of them indicated that they were familiar with the Reading First program. Furthermore, the majority of these 26 parents did not provide any specific supporting evidence of their knowledge. One of the parents explained, "I am a former 3rd grade teacher, I am very familiar with these (five) components."

Although many of the parents were not very familiar with the Reading First program, some indicated a desire to learn more about the program. For example, 2 of the parents stated that they were a little familiar with the Reading First program but would like to learn more about it.

In the interview, parents were also asked to indicate how they were implementing reading strategies at home to maximize the success of the components of the Reading First program for their child. The most commonly mentioned areas of concentration and the learning strategies employed are outlined in Table 11. The results in Table 11 indicate that parents tend to read regularly with their child, the child reads to the parent, they play learning games, use manipulatives such as flash cards, supplement with computer programs/Internet, and reinforce the importance and value of reading.

Table 11. Parents' Implementation of Reading Strategies

Areas of concentration	Strategies
Reading	Repetition
Vocabulary	Scaffolding
Spelling	Sound out difficult words
Sentence creation	Read together with child
Comprehension	Flash cards
Homework	Daily reading
Reading fluency	Include siblings in reading
	Use computer software and Internet
	Play reading games (i.e., phonics)
	Explain importance of reading
	Review school lesson on Web site
	Create sentences with words
	Test reading comprehension
	Work with child on homework
	Visit library
	Buy challenging books

Some of the supporting comments made by parents included the following:

"I'm implementing reading strategies at home to help my child succeed by repeating things and going over things numerous times, focusing on areas where weaknesses are sighted."

"Making my child read everything in sight, read to others and read to himself. Every game that I buy for him has to be educational and he has a mini library of books."

"By checking out library books and timing my child to see how fluent his reading and speed is."

"My children have to read from all types of literature to gain a wider range of usage of the five components."

"I am implementing reading strategies by timing my child's reading so that he can become fluent. Also by having him read age appropriate stories with understanding."

"My child and I read three books every night before bed. I feel it is working."

"I have reading software on my computer as well as internet interaction that makes it interesting to keep reading fresh for my child."

Parents were also asked to indicate the extent to which they were involved at their child's school. Many of the parents indicated they were not involved or not as involved as they would like to be. Some of the reasons given for the lack of involvement included illness, not enough time and/or a demanding schedule, working single mom, lack of transportation, and problems with another child who demands a lot of time. The most common reason was lack of time due to work and/or school schedule ($n = 13$). Those parents who were actively involved indicated that they volunteered at the school in the classroom and/or as a chaperone on field trips, communicated with child's teacher, attended offered programs, and served on the PTO. The most common response was to serve as a volunteer ($n = 27$). However, the extent to which parents indicated they volunteered varied from "when I can" to twice a year to all the time.

The next question asked in the interview was how the parent's continuous involvement had a significant impact on the child's reading academic success. Those

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parents who indicated that they were involved to at least some extent explained that their

involvement was important, it helped the child to excel, it encouraged the child to learn, it

allowed the parent to directly witness his or her child's academic progression, it helped

the child to earn better grades, and it increased the child's motivation to learn and

succeed. Some of the statements from parents explaining the impact that their

involvement has had on their child's reading academic success were as follows:

> "When you make learning fun, your child will put forth more effort and have a greater interest in it."

> "Continuing to be involved in my child's schooling has a tremendous impact on my child's success because it helps kids become eager to learn and make better grades."

> "My continuous involvement in my child's schooling has a significant impact on his reading academic success because he checks books out at school and comes home and reads them to me or someone in the home."

> "He knows the expectations I have set for him as far as grades are concerned and how important reading is in life."

> "It reinforces her belief that reading is important."

> "It helps her learn and also be creative. She learns to listen, interpret and project successfully."

> "My child used to struggle with reading, so I continued to work with him and encourage reading until he got better and better."

> "I believe involvement in my child's reading academic success has taught my child to be a confident, knowledgeable and comprehensive reader."

In cases where the interviewed parent was not able to help his or her child with

reading assignments on a regular basis, the parent was asked how he or she made

provisions to make sure that the child received the help that the child needed. In most

cases, the parent mentioned another family member such as another parent, a brother or

sister, an aunt or uncle, and so forth. In almost every case, a family member was identified as someone who would help meet the child's needs when the interviewed parent was not able to do so. In rare cases, the parent mentioned that the child was a self-motivator or that material resources were used (i.e., library books, educational games).

The next two interview questions were related to the school's strategy for fostering effective parental involvement and increasing the child's reading success. The parents' responses indicate that literacy-related materials such as books, workbooks, reading pamphlets, flash cards, and so forth, are sent home for parents to review and use with their children and to help the children with their reading success. Also, parents said that they had been invited to attend school meetings and events and that they were able to engage in online reading programs created through the school and/or teacher.

Finally, parents were asked to indicate other strategies that they would like the school to use to strengthen the parental involvement-school relationships to promote continued reading success for their children. Most of the parents either provided no comment or indicated that the school was already doing a good job. However, a few of the parents provided some suggestions, including having something sent home every week indicating the child's level of reading, having something for parents on the weekend, more tutoring programs, modifying the times of events (i.e., Family Reading Night) to make it more conducive to parents' schedules, more reading seminars for parents, offer parent-child literacy projects, send more books home, have show-and-tell for students, offer contests with prizes that children want, provide more Hooked On Phonics, more one-on-one time for students, and offer book clubs for parents and

students. The most common response was to offer opportunities for parental involvement on weekends or other nontraditional times.

Given the fact that many parents indicated that the reason for their lack of involvement was due to time and scheduling constraints, offering nontraditional times for parents to get involved is a logical way in which parental involvement may be increased. Teachers already appear to be communicating well and sending home a lot of literacy-related materials, based on the survey and interview responses. Therefore, helping to remove the barriers, with a particular emphasis on removing scheduling constraints, might help to increase parental involvement and therefore help children to become more successful in reading. Another approach to use, based on the parent data, may be to provide some sort of transportation. Perhaps parents can start a carpooling program or perhaps the school can provide parents with transportation vouchers, if financially able.

Research Question 1

The first research question examined the extent to which parental involvement influences a child's reading achievement as measured by proficiency levels on the DIBELS. The two parent groups (continuously involved and not involved) were compared with regard to their children's overall reading achievement (i.e., average across all three testing administrations). Table 12 shows the students' overall reading achievement by parent group. Lower values were indicative of lower levels of proficiency, and the possible range of values was between 1 and 3. The results in Table 10 indicate that the students from the continuously involved parent group had a higher overall mean than the students from the not involved parent group (2.62 vs. 2.55). However, both groups had some students who scored at the intensive level for all three

testing administrations (i.e., minimum value = 1.00). A score of 1.00 indicated that the

child scored at the intensive proficiency level on all three administrations and a score of

3.00 meant that the child scored at benchmark on all three administrations.

Table 12. Reading Achievement Comparisons

Group	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Not involved	74	1.00	3.00	2.55	0.62
Continuously involved	87	1.00	3.00	2.62	0.52

In order to determine if this difference was statistically significant, an independent

samples t test was conducted. The results of the independent samples t test indicate that

the difference in the two means was not statistically significant ($t = 1.07$, $p = .29$).

Therefore, the difference between the two groups' means could be attributed to sampling

error and not due to true differences.

In order to determine if overall differences in parent perceptions and behaviors

relative to parental involvement between involved and noninvolved parents exist, a

comparison of means between the two groups was made for each of the parent survey

mean domain scores. The results are featured in Figure 16.

The results in Figure 16 indicate that involved parents had higher mean scores for

parent-teacher communication and activities (3.29 vs. 3.17), reading activities (3.97 vs.

3.96), and nonreading activities (2.60 vs. 2.52) than noninvolved parents. Furthermore,

the involved parents had a lower mean domain score for limitations to parental

involvement (0.89 vs. 1.38), which makes sense; parents with more limitations are less likely to be involved. Interestingly, though, noninvolved parents had a higher mean domain score for literacy materials in the home (7.86 vs. 7.44). According to the parent interviews, some of the parents who were not able to meet the needs of their children indicated that they compensated for this lack of involvement with material resources such as books, educational games, and so forth. Therefore, the higher mean domain score for the noninvolved parents may be due to these compensations.
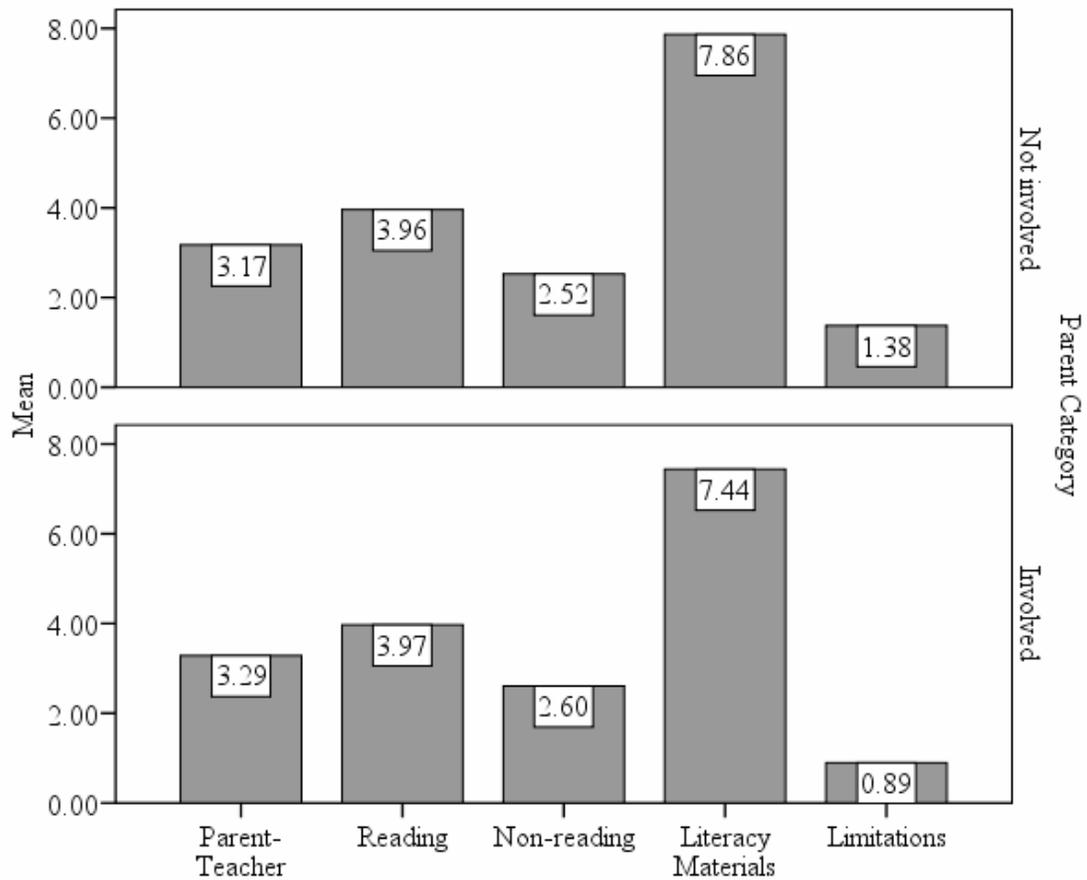

Figure 16. Parent survey mean domain comparisons: Involved vs. not involved.

The results for research question 1 indicate that parents who were classified as continuously involved actually reported being more involved on the parent survey. In addition, their children outperformed the children of the noninvolved parents on the DIBELS. Therefore, parental involvement does appear to influence a child's reading achievement, although the effect was not statistically significant.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 focused on the effect of continuous parental involvement with regard to enhancing a child's reading achievement level. Therefore, those students who did not make benchmark on the initial testing administration of the DIBELS were examined on the second administration, and comparisons were made between students with continuously involved parents and students without continuously involved parents. In addition, those who did not make benchmark on the second testing administration were examined again based on their performance on a third testing administration. Again, comparisons were made between the two groups of students to determine if parental involvement affected students' abilities to make benchmark. Therefore, the outcome of interest in these comparisons was the ability of the children to make benchmark on subsequent testing administrations (i.e., enhance their reading achievement level).

Table 13 provides the cross-tabulation results for the second administration of the DIBELS. Again, only those students who did not make benchmark on the initial testing administration were included in the analysis. The results in Table 13 indicate that the children in the continuously involved parent group were much more likely to make benchmark than those in the noninvolved parent group (59.0% vs. 40.0%) and much less

likely to be in the intensive group than those in the noninvolved parent group (12.8% vs. 30.0%). However, this difference did not reach statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 3.69$, $p = .16$).

Table 13. Student Reading Enhancement by Group: Benchmark II Results

Group	Statistic	Intensive	Strategic	Benchmark	Total
Not involved	Count	9	9	12	30
	%	30.0	30.0	40.0	100
Continuously involved	Count	5	11	23	39
	%	12.8	28.2	59.0	100

The results for the second comparison based on the Benchmark III results are provided in Table 14. The results in Table 14 indicate that although a higher percentage of children in the noninvolved parent group reached benchmark (39.1% vs. 30.0%), more than twice as many children in the noninvolved parent group fell into the Intensive category than those in the continuously involved parent group (34.8% vs. 15.0%). However, these differences were not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 4.15$, $p = .13$).

The parent interview responses support this finding in that those who were continuously involved indicated that they actually saw improvements with regard to their children's reading success. The children tended to be more motivated, have greater encouragement, and excel, according to the parent responses.

Table 14. Student Reading Enhancement by Group: Benchmark III Results

Group	Statistic	Intensive	Strategic	Benchmark	Total
Not involved	Count	8	6	9	23
	%	24.8	26.1	39.1	100
Continuously involved	Count	3	11	6	20
	%	15.0	55.0	30.0	100

The results for research question 2 indicate that although the differences between the two groups were not statistically significant, the children in the continuously involved parent group were less likely to need intensive interventions. Also, many of the students who did not make benchmark at the initial assessment period were able to make benchmark at the second assessment period. Therefore, at the end (i.e., Benchmark III), only 35.9% of those students in the continuously involved parent group were still not at the benchmark level (14 out of an initial 39 students who did not make benchmark) versus 46.7% of those in the noninvolved parent group (i.e., 14 out of an initial 30 students who did not make benchmark).

Research Question 3

The third research question focused on the extent to which limited parental involvement impacts a child's reading achievement. Based on the results of research question 1, the children in the involved parent group outperformed the children in the noninvolved parent group overall by 2.6% (i.e., 2.62 vs. 2.55). This is a small and nonsignificant effect. However, when children show deficiencies in reading, the effect of

limited parental involvement becomes more pronounced. For example, when looking at only those children who did not make benchmark at the initial assessment period, those in the continuously involved parent group were 20.2% more likely to make benchmark by the end of the study. This finding suggests that the effect of parental involvement becomes even more critical when children are struggling at the onset.

Summary

The results of this study indicate that parental involvement tends to be variable among parents, and the most common reason for lack of parental involvement is scheduling or time constraints. Many of the parents stated that their work schedules precluded them from being involved at the school, and many parents indicated they were single parents with no or little help and/or they were also going to school while working. Although the teachers communicated well and attempted to engage all of the parents, the parents were less likely than the teachers to be actively involved in school-related reading activities and school-related nonreading activities (i.e., field trips).

Although several parents in this study had limited involvement, many parents were involved and were able to provide specific examples of their involvement, ranging from strategies used inside the home to volunteering and participating at the child's school. These involved parents indicated that they could see the beneficial effects of their involvement with regard to their child's reading achievement. Also, those parents who were categorized as continuously involved actually had higher mean scores relative to their parent-teacher communication and involvement, their reading activities with their child, and their nonreading activities with their child as measured by the parent survey.

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The most salient result of this study indicates that children who have parents who are continuously involved perform better academically with regard to reading as measured by the DIBELS assessment. Overall, children with involved parents outperformed those with noninvolved parents with regard to their reading proficiency. Furthermore, of those children who were not proficient at the initial assessment period, the children who had continuously involved parents were more likely to become proficient at the end of the study and less likely to require intensive interventions.

CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Academic achievement consists of a culmination of a variety of stakeholders

working diligently together to maximize the academic success level of students. It

involves building a cohesive working relationship between educator leaders, teachers,

parents, and even community members. Inner-city schools are faced with a multitude of

challenges that potentially limit parental involvement and the overall academic success of

students due to limited funding and resources, effective school leadership, and the ability

to bridge the parental involvement element in these impoverished areas (Cox, 1998;

Leithwood, 2005). Lee (2003) advised of the importance of building, advocating, and

maintaining a collaborative relationship that fosters growth and positive influence

between schools and parents.

Research further indicates that parental involvement becomes sacrificed or even

diminished in inner-city environments based on inadequate economic resources and

challenging life events such as single-parent homes, exposure to violent domestic

situations, lack of understanding of home-school communication, and lack of

transportation (Eggen & Kauchak, 2001; Lee, 2003). These elements led to the research

topic and the eagerness to delve deeper into this critical issue for the sake of maximizing

student achievement. The remainder of this chapter provides a summary of the research study, final conclusions, recommendations, as well as the implications.

Summary of the Research Study

This study entailed taking a quantitative and qualitative approach that focused on the impact of continuous parental involvement and the potential contributions from active parent participation toward possibly increasing student literacy achievement in an inner-city school. This approach allowed for a more in-depth analysis and conversation with parents to occur, which allowed further exploration of challenges that may have interfered with continuous parental involvement in the home and at school. The study focused on an inner-city school that participated in a nationally recognized Reading First grant program. The stipulations set forth in this grant warranted for educator professionals to incorporate appropriate reading research-based strategies around the five critical reading components (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency) established and endorsed by the National Reading Panel.

The study addressed the extent to which parental involvement influences a child's reading achievement, the degree of engaging in continuous parental participation to enhance a child's literacy level, and examined the impact of limited parental involvement on a child's reading level. The research questions were addressed by collecting, evaluating, synthesizing, and summarizing data from teacher surveys, parent surveys, parent interviews, and student literacy data assessments (DIBELS).

The parent-teacher survey allowed for a variety of necessary data to be collected that included demographic information, determining the literature and environment

exposure within the home, and determining home-school behaviors. The parent

interviews allowed a deeper exploration and understanding about the children's home

environments; literacy exposure; understanding of the components of the Reading First

program; barriers, if any, to provide continuous parental involvement; and the

establishment of a working school-home relationship. The DIBELS literacy assessment

used was a determining factor of a child's literacy achievement in the critical five reading

components set forth by the NRP and supported, endorsed, and implemented by the

Reading First grant.

Conclusions

This study entailed analyzing and comparing two types of parental involvement

groups that consisted of those who were continuously involved versus parents who were

minimally or not involved in regards to fostering literature exposure, literature-rich

environments, and building effective, ongoing collaborative relationships with the school

in an inner-city setting. The first research question explored the extent to which parental

involvement influences a child's reading achievement based on the DIBELS assessment

measures, parent-teacher relationships, reading and nonreading activities, literacy

materials in the home, and parental involvement limitations. The overall results indicated

that children of the continuously involved parents outperformed the children of the

noninvolved or minimally involved parents on the DIBELS assessment.

It is also interesting to note that parents with limitations as indicated in the

interview and survey actually accounted for having more literacy resources in the home,

indicative of potentially having alternative strategies in place to substitute for the lack of

continuous involvement in the home. Although SES poses certain barriers and classifications based on a variety of data that includes attendance rates, high dropout rates, and lower than normal standardized assessment scores (Eggen & Kauchak, 2001), additional provisions made by parents to ensure alternative involvement methods in the home can still possibly contribute to the academic success based on the number of students meeting the benchmark in accordance to the data collected for this study.

The second research question examined the effect of continuous parental involvement on enhancing a child's reading achievement. Student data assessments indicated students of continuously involved parents were more successful on the DIBELS assessment than those students with parents who were not continuously involved. The data also indicated students with noninvolved parents fell in the Intensive category—performing significantly below grade level—versus students of involved parents having student assessment scores indicating minimal intensive intervention needed. It was further observed and documented that this same group of students who failed to make the initial benchmark were more likely to meet the benchmark during the second and third assessment periods. Parent interview results indicated that those who were continuously involved saw positive academic improvements; a higher desire to learn and read more, independently and as a family; with a natural motivation to learn.

The final research question explored the possible extent to which limited, minimal, or no parental involvement impacts a child's reading achievement level. The first two research questions indicated that students with involved parents slightly outperformed students with noninvolved parents overall by a small percentage, 2.6%. Yet it was noted that children who scored in the Intensive assessment category felt the

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negative effects of limited or no parental involvement. The data showed that parents who were actively involved in promoting the importance of reading and having a strong active presence in the home and school increased the chances by 20.2% of their children meeting and exceeding the district-required benchmark. Therefore, these findings suggest it is imperative for parents to become involved and stay continuously involved from the onset of any signs of possible reading deficiencies.

Data results from the surveys and interviews signified parents' awareness of the importance of reading achievement and teacher/school willingness to build and cultivate continuous open dialogue with parents about students' reading achievement levels. Despite knowing and understanding the importance of active parental involvement, many parents openly admitted to a demanding work schedule, inability to understand the assignments, commitment to two or more children in the home, attempting to balance major life issues (i.e., divorce, domestic issues, illness), and functioning as a single parent with little or no help. Involved parents shared some of the limitations that occurred within their own lives, but the main theme that surfaced regarding this discussion was finding and incorporating balance.

The involved parents shared seeing a significant, beneficial difference in their children's performance related to reading achievement. Parents stated the confidence level was increased, grades improved, and the motivational level naturally increased. This type of visible parental involvement (volunteering in the classroom, communicating with the teachers/school, conversing about school and other issues with the child, and helping with homework) for this particular group of parents yielded a higher mean score in relation to ongoing parent-teacher communication/involvement and reading and

nonreading activities. The data further indicated that parents who were more involved had children who performed better academically on the DIBELS assessment and in regards to their reading proficiency levels than children with parents with limited involvement. It is also important to note another prominent finding in regards to proficiency: Children in the involved parent group who did not initially score in the benchmark category—on or above grade level—had a higher chance of becoming more proficient by the final DIBELS assessment period, needing little or no intensive intervention instruction. It is evident this study found that involved parents have a positive, lasting effect on student reading achievement.

Recommendations for Educators

Parental involvement is crucial in order to maximize students' success academically and socially. The following recommendations attempt to address the critical issues regarding lack of parental involvement in poverty-stricken zones. Parental involvement serves as a powerful, realistic tool to establish an optimistic and effective cohesive, collaborative relationship to emerge among administrators, teachers, parents, and the community through dialogue, action, data collection, analysis, implementation, monitoring, and adjusting as needed. Although an overwhelming task, the long-term results of empowerment, knowledge, and positive change for all parties involved constitute attainable goals with the proper implementation and management of participatory action research.

The following objectives/goals are desired to be achieved via the proper implementation of this ongoing parental involvement action plan:

1.   To develop a Strategic Parental Involvement Task Force that involves members of the administrative leadership team, a teacher and parent representative from every grade level, and local community members.

2.   To identify and analyze the current parental involvement situation and potential barriers of the current school environment and strategize as a committee about possible solutions to increase parental involvement.

3.   To build and maintain a strong collaboration among teachers, administrators, parents, students, and the community.

4.   To empower and educate struggling parents about the importance of permanent and genuine involvement, time management, additional community resources, and alternative solutions to increasing parental involvement.

Task Force Development and Functions

The Strategic Parental Involvement Task Force should be developed to address strategies that will assist in increasing parental involvement in economically challenged environments and to address the aforementioned objectives and goals on a biweekly basis, weekly when necessary. Committee members will be selected based on their dedication and commitment to the underlying cause with a teacher and parent representative from each grade level. The entire purpose and function of this task force is to build and maintain an extremely strong and solid resourceful collaboration among the committee participants in regards to the specifics of this task force.

Upon analysis of the needs and concerns of the parents, the following strategies/solutions should be focused and expanded on based on the individual needs of each school regarding the possible attempts to solve the lack of visibility of parents in inner-city schools:

1. Defining Parental Involvement and Expectations

   The committee should collaborate in regards to defining what *parental involvement* means and establish expectations of that particular school and environment. All stakeholders should contribute to this discussion and development.

2. Parent-School Contract Development

   The contents of this contractual obligation between the parents and school will deal with issues in regards to attendance, homework, class work, academic/behavior progress, and medical concerns (i.e., hearing/vision). Committee members will establish exact guidelines and consequences of parents not meeting minimal outlined requirements. For instance, not turning in homework on a regular basis may constitute a mandatory parent-teacher conference.

3. Contractual Parental Involvement and Expansion of Family Involvement

   This solution is geared toward pulling in extended family members in the absence of an immediate family member. Contact information for alternative family members, such as paternal/maternal grandparents, aunts, uncles and so forth, is also requested. This has to be a collective and supportive effort that allows for flexibility for parents committed to jobs but willing to entrust and depend on other reliable family members for help.

4. Parent Surveys and Evaluations

   Parents should be sent surveys possibly every report card period (6–9 weeks) to see if the school has been meeting the needs of the parents in regards to fostering a healthy parental involvement relationship. Data collected from the surveys will allow for monitoring of the established goals and for the task force to determine if any adjustments are needed.

   An evaluation report should also be sent home with parents during each report card period addressing various guidelines, created by task force members, showing parents their progress, or lack thereof, in regards to being involved and visible in their child's education.

5. Identification of Needed Skills for Parents

   Several barriers for low-wage parents consist of illiteracy and lack of proper parenting skills and support groups. This portion will entail identifying pertinent skills needed for parents to be successful in rearing

their child and providing the opportunity to pave a more optimistic future. Sample programs may consist of GED completion, parenting classes hosted by qualified community members, a parenting newsletter sent home quarterly (or more frequently if needed), and ample opportunities to allow for open communication about concerns and even successes/celebrations at the school. Negative instances should not be the primary focus; instead, minimizing these barriers and highlighting the positives along the way should be the focus. Sensitivity in this area is crucial.

6.   Community Outreach Attempt

It is important to realize that community involvement and commitment to education play a huge part in the success of a school as well, despite the socioeconomic status of a particular area. The Strategic Parental Involvement Committee Task Force will work hard to reach out to community members to help support improving parental involvement in the school system. A survey will be conducted seeking employment and manager contact information from parents. This data will allow for the committee to contact local companies, establish a working relationship, and asking for help and participation to achieve the stated parental engagement goals. Companies will be asked to allow the parents at least 1 to 2 hours off at least once every 6- to 9-week reporting period without penalty to help increase parental involvement, thus contributing to higher student academics and morale for all those involved. This will make a strong statement that not only are the administrators, teachers, and parents committed to increasing the parental involvement factor, but the community members have committed as well, thus promoting the ultimate cohesive, collaborative relationship desired.

It is also recommended when schools apply for grants such as the Reading First grant, the school evaluates the parental involvement factor, and requirements, if any, are listed. In order for any grant to be completely successful when implemented, proper professional development is needed for all those directly involved. It should be noted that additional support from stakeholders, such as parents, is also needed to help increase the overall effectiveness. It is recommended that parents be aware of educational grants that are awarded, the purpose, objectives, and expected outcomes. Parents should be given and take responsibility to ensure their child is also reaping maximum benefits from the

chosen grants. This will help reinforce support implementing the grant requirements; parental involvement; the image of a strong, united, collective, and collaborative team presence; and allow all students to see all stakeholders are on one accord, thus maximizing the potential success of the grant program.

One last recommendation would be for parents who have limited or no involvement in the home or school due to life challenges (i.e., time management, large family to care for, transportation issues, heavy work load/school load) should establish a system that could possibly provide alternative methods of making sure the child will not suffer the long-term effects of the lack of parental presence. For instance, parents could make sure the home environment is literature-rich, such as equipping the home with a variety of books of all genres, board games, appropriate computer software (if available), and so forth. Create an educational lifeline with other family members, close neighbors, teachers, and/or even community centers. These alternative people should be available to help with homework, problem solve, create an encouraging and motivational environment to help the child grasp the importance of reading and school, and develop a strong desire to learn and want to continue to learn. It should be evident that despite a parent's inability to devote as much time to a child's educational well-being, positive, alternative methods are in place to promote the importance of involvement and education.

Implications

This study has provided an in-depth look at the significance and need for continuous parental involvement in any socioeconomic and/or academic setting. Data results revealed that realistic, challenging life situations will arise that may possibly

interfere with parents being actively engaged in the academic and social elements of their child's life. This has a potential negative statistical impact on a child's academic performance. As a result of this study, a variety of long-term solutions and alternative resolutions are possible to decrease limited parental involvement. It is important to note the long-term commitment needed from each stakeholder (i.e., administrators, teachers, parents, community members) to make these long-term solutions successful and effective.

The study will further result in parents being more aware of how to deal with daily life challenges and unexpected challenges, prioritizing and balancing life to contribute to the overall social and academic well-being of the child. It will allow for a stronger community connection of critical community members to gain a deeper understanding of the lack of parental involvement in economically challenged areas and allow community members to contribute to helping parents become more active on a continuous basis. School administrators and district leaders will also be more aware of the importance of relying and building a more collaborative, effective, working relationship among the parents, school, and community members. It is imperative for all involved to actively reflect, monitor, and adjust the selected strategies to maximize the overall effectiveness of the benefit of the child.

As a result of this research study, parents could become more aware of the resources the school and community may have available to aid in increasing knowledgeable, visible, active parental involvement on a continuous basis. The school-home communication and relationship among all stakeholders could be strengthened through the development and ongoing positive cooperative and collaborative alliance. A

greater understanding will be established in regards to identifying and meeting the needs of parents for the sake of the students. This could also result in providing parents with immediate feedback, praise, and celebration as parental involvement increases. The most vital result that could transpire from the results of this study consists of significantly increasing the overall academic performance level, natural motivation, and desire to learn for the students.

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APPENDIX. INSTRUMENTS

Literacy Parental Involvement Questionnaire

Instructions:
Please respond to all parts of the following questions honestly, accurately and to the best of your knowledge. All data collected will be collected anonymously and treated confidentially.

Part I: Demographic Information
Directions:
Please bubble in your response. If "Other" is selected please explain.

1. Marital Status:
   O Single   O Married   O Divorced   O Widowed
2. What is the mother's highest level of education?
   O Some High School Coursework
   O High School Diploma or Equivalent
   O Associate's Degree
   O Some College Coursework
   O Bachelor's Degree
   O Some Graduate Coursework
   O Master's Degree
   O Some Post Graduate Coursework
   O Ph.D, Ed.D or MED
3. What is the father's highest level of education?
   O Some High School Coursework
   O High School Diploma or Equivalent
   O Associate's Degree
   O Some College Coursework
   O Bachelor's Degree
   O Some Graduate Coursework
   O Master's Degree
   O Some Post Graduate Coursework
   O Ph.D, Ed.D, MED
4. Racial Ethnic:
   O Black/African American
   O Hispanic
   O Caucasian
   O Native American
   O Other: _____

5. Parent's Gender:
   O Female
   O Male
6. Student's Gender:
   O Female
   O Male
7. Are you currently employed?
   O Yes
   O No
8. What is your family income level?
   O $10,000 - $20,000
   O $20,000 - $30,000
   O $30,000 - $40,000
   O $40,000 - $50,000
   O $50,000 or more
9. Is this home a…
   O Single Parent Home
   O Two-Parent Home
   O Intermediate Single Family Home (i.e. guardian, grandmother, grandfather)
   O Intermediate Two-Parent Home (i.e. guardians, grandparents, guardians)

Part II: Home To School Literacy Communication/Assistance
Directions:
Please bubble in your response based on the scale guide listed below.
NEVER – Not practiced
RARELY – Occurs at least 1 time a MONTH
OCCASIONALLY - Occurs at least 3 times a MONTH
FREQUENTLY – Occurs at least 1-2 times a WEEK
EXTENSIVELY – Occurs 3 or more times a WEEK

QUESTIONS	1- Never	2- Rarely	3- Occasionally	4- Frequently	5- Extensively
9. I receive communication from my child's teacher about the current week's reading skills.	O	O	O	O	O
10. My child's teacher sends home helpful strategies to help enforce the week's reading skills.	O	O	O	O	O
11. I am encouraged to contact my child's teacher to discuss the progress of my child's	O	O	O	O	O

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	1	2	3	4	5
reading success in the classroom.					
12. My child's teacher emphasizes the importance of reading at home.	O	O	O	O	O
13. Directions and expectations are sent home with my child's reading assignments.	O	O	O	O	O
14. My child's school has literacy programs that I attend.	O	O	O	O	O
15. I volunteer in my child's classroom during the reading block.	O	O	O	O	O
16. I provide tutoring to my child during the reading block.	O	O	O	O	O
17. I provide tutoring to other children during the reading block.	O	O	O	O	O
18. I receive progress reports about my child's reading progress.	O	O	O	O	O
19. My child's teacher sends home decodable/phonics readers	O	O	O	O	O
20. My child's teacher sends home leveled readers.	O	O	O	O	O

Part III: Parental Involvement/Reading Activities
Directions:
Please bubble in your response based on the scale guide listed below.
NEVER – Not practiced
RARELY – Occurs at least 1 time a MONTH
OCCASIONALLY - Occurs at least 3 times a MONTH
FREQUENTLY – Occurs at least 1-2 times a WEEK
EXTENSIVELY – Occurs 3-5 or more times a WEEK

QUESTIONS	1- Never	2- Rarely	3- Occasionally	4- Frequently	5- Extensively

21. I read fiction stories to my child.	O	O	O	O	O
22. I read non-fiction stories to my child.	O	O	O	O	O
23. I express to my child the importance of reading.	O	O	O	O	O
24. I listen to my child read to me.	O	O	O	O	O
25. I listen to my child recall what was read to me.	O	O	O	O	O
26. I help with my child's reading homework.	O	O	O	O	O
27. I practice the sounds of letters with my child.	O	O	O	O	O
28. I practice with matching sounds to the actual letters with my child.	O	O	O	O	O
28. I help my child break down or decode unfamiliar words with my child.	O	O	O	O	O
29. I help my child break down or decode non-sense words.	O	O	O	O	O
30. I help my child read with speed or fluency.	O	O	O	O	O
31. I help my child read decodable and phonics books sent home by the teacher.	O	O	O	O	O
32. I help my child read books that are on their performance level.	O	O	O	O	O
33. I discuss what my child learned during the reading block.	O	O	O	O	O
34. I practice timed reading with my child to help build fluency.	O	O	O	O	O

Part IV: Prior Knowledge And Background Building Outside Of School
Directions:
Please bubble in your response based on the scale guide listed below.
NEVER – Not practiced
RARELY – Occurs at least 1 time a MONTH
OCCASIONALLY - Occurs at least 3 times a MONTH
FREQUENTLY – Occurs at least 1-2 times a WEEK
EXTENSIVELY – Occurs 3-5 or more times a WEEK

QUESTIONS	1- Never	2- Rarely	3- Occasionally	4- Frequently	5- Extensively
35. I take my child to the museum.	O	O	O	O	O
36. I take my child to the zoo.	O	O	O	O	O
37. I take my child to the library.	O	O	O	O	O
38. I take my child to book stores.	O	O	O	O	O
39. I take my child to and explain what takes place in the grocery store.	O	O	O	O	O
40. I take my child to and explain what takes place in the post office.	O	O	O	O	O
41. I take my child to community programs and events.	O	O	O	O	O
42. I take my child to the theater to see plays.	O	O	O	O	O
43. I travel with my child to other cities/states.	O	O	O	O	O
44. I travel with my child outside the country.	O	O	O	O	O

Please bubble *ALL* that apply. If "Other" is selected please explain.
    45. Which of the following literature materials are in your home?
        O Story Books

O Leveled and/or Decodable Readers
O Magazines
O Newspapers
O Dictionary
O Thesaurus
O Encyclopedia
O Atlas
O Computer with educational software
O Computer with internet access
O Labeled Items (furniture, doors, tables, oven, stove, etc.)
O Picture Cards
O Alphabet Flash Cards
O Sight Word Cards
O Board Games
O Other:

_____

Part V: Limitations On Your Personal Involvement With Your Child's Reading
Directions:
Please bubble *ALL* that apply. If "Other" is selected please explain.
46. Which of the following limits your personal involvement with helping your child with reading?
   O I do not understand the assignments.
   O My work schedule is demanding.
   O I do not think I have a lot to offer in the area of reading.
   O My child's school does not make me feel welcome or useful.
   O I just do not have the time.
   O I have more than two or more children and it is difficult to find the time.
   O I am the sole caregiver of my parent(s) and my children.
   O I am going through a major life issue(s) (divorce, illness, jobless, etc.).
   O I do not understand why my child is not grasping the skill and it is frustrating.
   O I am a single parent without any help.
   O Other(s):
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

Literacy Teacher Questionnaire

Instructions:
Please respond to all parts of the following questions honestly, accurately and to the best of your knowledge. All data collected will be collected anonymously and treated confidentially.

Part I: Demographic Information
Directions:
Please bubble in your response. If "Other" is selected please explain.
1. Do you have a state teaching certificate/license?
   O YES   O NO
2. What degree do you hold?
   O Bachelor's Degree
   O Master's Degree
   O Some Post Graduate Coursework
   O Ph.D, Ed.D
3. How many years have you been teaching reading?
   O 0 -5 years
   O 6 -10 years
   O 11-15 years
   O 12-20 years
   O 21 years or more
4. How many years have you taught in a Reading First School?
   O 0-2 years
   O 2-4 years
   O 5 years

Part II: Home To School Literacy Communication
Directions:
Please bubble in your response based on the scale guide listed below.
NEVER – Not practiced
RARELY – Occurs at least 1 time a MONTH
OCCASIONALLY - Occurs at least 3 times a MONTH
FREQUENTLY – Occurs at least 1-2 times a WEEK
EXTENSIVELY – Occurs 3 or more times a WEEK

QUESTIONS	1-	2-	3-	4-	5-

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	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
5. I send home communication to parents about the current week's reading skills.	O	O	O	O	O
6. I send home helpful strategies to help enforce the week's reading skills.	O	O	O	O	O
7. I encourage parents to contact me about their child's reading progress in class.	O	O	O	O	O
8. I emphasize the importance of reading at home for students and parents.	O	O	O	O	O
9. Directions and expectations are sent home with reading assignments.	O	O	O	O	O
10. I encourage parents to attend literacy programs.	O	O	O	O	O
11. Parents volunteer in my classroom during the reading block.	O	O	O	O	O
12. Parents provide tutoring to their child during the reading block.	O	O	O	O	O
13. Parents provide tutoring to other children during the reading block.	O	O	O	O	O
14. I send progress reports to parents about their child's reading progress.	O	O	O	O	O
15. I send home decodable/phonics readers	O	O	O	O	O
16. I send home leveled readers.	O	O	O	O	O

Part III: Prior Knowledge And Background Building Outside Of School
Directions:
Please bubble *ALL* that apply. If "Other" is selected please explain.

    17. Which of the following literature materials do you send home?
- O Story Books
- O Leveled and/or Decodable Readers
- O Magazines
- O Newspapers
- O Dictionary
- O Thesaurus
- O Encyclopedia
- O Atlas
- O Educational Software
- O Internet Literacy Sources
- O Labels (furniture, doors, tables, oven, stove, etc.)
- O Picture Cards
- O Alphabet Flash Cards
- O Sight Word Cards
- O Board Games
- O Other(s):

_____

Part IV: Limitations On Parental Involvement Pertaining To Your Current Reading Class
Directions:
Please bubble *ALL* that apply. If "Other" is selected please explain.

    18. Which of the following limits parental involvement with helping your student with reading?
- O Parents do not understand the assignments.
- O Parents have demanding work schedules.
- O Some parents do not have a lot to offer in the area of reading.
- O Parents do not feel welcome.
- O Parents do not have the time to commit.
- O Some parents have more than two or more children and it is difficult to find the time.
- O Parents are the sole caregiver of other family members in addition to their own children.
- O Some parents are going through a major life issue(s) (divorce, illness, jobless, etc.).
- O Parents do not understand why my child is not grasping the skill and cannot figure out how to teach the skill for mastery.
- O There is only one parent in the home with little or no help.
- O Other(s):

_____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Interview Questions for Parents

This interview was completed:
O In person   O By phone   O Electronic mail

1. How do you define parental involvement?
_____
_____
_____

2. To what extent are you familiar with the Reading First program's five components of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency?
_____
_____
_____

3. How are you implementing reading strategies at home to maximize the success of the components of the Reading First program for your child?
_____
_____
_____

4. To what extent are you involved at your child's school? (i.e. school committees, volunteer, chaperone, tutor, etc.)
_____
_____
_____

5. How does your continuous involvement in your child's schooling have a significant impact on your child's reading academic success?
_____
_____
_____

6. In the event of you being unable to help your child with reading assignments on a regular basis, what other provisions are put in place at home to make sure your child receives the help they need? (i.e. another adult in the home, older brother/sister, etc.)
_____
_____
_____

7. In what way is your school making effective parental involvement relationships are established and maintained in the area of reading?
_____
_____
_____

8. What are some types of reading literature, strategies, ideas and resources are sent home by your school and/or your child's teacher?
_____
_____
_____

9. What else would you like to see in place to strengthen the parental involvement-school relationship to promote continuous reading success for your child?
_____
_____
_____