DEVELOPMENT OF A PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

Elementary educators searching for strategies to improve student achievement may benefit from examining the relationship between parents and classroom teachers. The literature indicates that parent involvement may be linked to student achievement, attendance, student motivation, and student self-esteem. Likewise, parents who have a positive relationship with their child‟s teacher may also be associated with an increase in their child‟s academic achievement.

The intent of this study was to create an instrument to measure parents‟ perceptions of their relationship with their child‟s classroom teacher. An initial instrument was developed based upon a review of the literature on parent involvement in schools, and on parent-teacher relationships. The instrument was administered to 945 parents from a mid-size Midwestern school district. A 26-item, four-factor instrument was developed through the use of factor analysis. The factors and descriptions are as follows:

Factor 1: Parent-Teacher Relationships. The issues of trust and caring highlight this factor. The findings for this factor demonstrate the importance of a positive relationship between parents and elementary school teachers.

Factor 2: Opportunity for Parent Involvement. The importance of inviting parents to be involved in their child‟s education are featured in this factor. The findings for this factor support the significance of teachers providing parents with the opportunity to be involved in their child‟s education.

Factor 3: Parent Efficacy. This factor revolves around parents‟ beliefs about how their involvement in their child‟s school experience positively or negatively impacts the education their child receives. Parents with a high sense of efficacy believe their involvement in school will show a positive impact on their child‟s educational experience.

Factor 4: Time for Parent Involvement. The issue of time highlights this factor. The findings of this factor support the concept that parents who spend time on their child‟s education help their child achieve more in school, as well as help their child understand the value of his or her education.

The Parent-Teacher Relationship Survey provides classroom teachers and principals the opportunity to gather data to gain an understanding of parents‟ perceptions of their child‟s classroom teacher. Furthermore, use of the survey could help determine whether a correlation exists between parents‟ positive perceptions of their child‟s classroom teacher and increased student achievement. If a positive correlation exists, teachers and administrators will have concrete evidence regarding the importance of the parent-teacher relationship. Having this information will greatly help educators in their efforts to help every child achieve to his or her potential.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Study

School leadership is a difficult challenge in today‟s educational environment. Accountability has increased, society demands no child be left behind, and resources available to educators have been reduced to bare bones. Leading a school in such an environment is a daunting task. In that environment, school leaders may be searching for the "magic bullet" which will raise student achievement, increase test scores, and help their schools make Adequate Yearly Progress. Test preparation programs have become more prevalent, with many companies claiming to have the secret to raising test scores and closing achievement gaps between students. It is possible, however, that a significant part of the answer to raising student achievement has been there all along – increasing and improving parental involvement in schools, as well as improving the relationships between parents and teachers. Parents and schools share a responsibility to provide an appropriate education for children (Brandt, 1989; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; McWayne, et al, 2004; Shedlin, 2004). Educational opportunities improve when parents and the school work together effectively (Epstein, 2001). "Today, in the context of greater accountability and demands for children‟s achievement, schools and families have formed partnerships and share the responsibilities for children‟s education," (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Effective parental involvement in schools has proven to positively influence attendance, homework completion, grades, and plans for post-secondary education (Epstein, 2001). Additionally, establishing positive relationships between parents and teachers has been shown to be an effective school improvement strategy. Epstein and Dauber (1991) found the following:

> When teachers make parent involvement part of their regular teaching practice, parents increase their interactions with their children at home, feel more positive about their

abilities to help their children in the elementary grades, and rate the teachers as better teachers overall; and students improve their attitudes and achievement. (p. 289)

Statement of the Problem

While educators can agree that parent-teacher relationships are critical to a school‟s success (Epstein & Jansorn, 2004; Ingram, Wolf & Lieberman, 2007; Goldring, & Sullivan, 1996; Hill & Taylor, 2004), measuring those relationships has proven more elusive. A search of the literature reveals the understanding of the importance of parent-teacher involvement has been around for some time. A 1958 study of parent attitudes found similar results to what are seen in schools today. Leton‟s research (1958) found the following:

> The influence of parents' attitudes on the social and emotional development of children has long been recognized. Extensive programs of parent education are being conducted through the schools, clinics, and hospitals; yet seldom, if ever, are these programs evaluated in terms of the changes produced in parents' attitudes or in children's adjustment. (p. 516)

To effectively learn, children must have their social, emotional, and physical needs met (Vail, 2004). Children learn at home, at school, and in their community. Parents are critical components of the academic success of their children. Epstein (2001) explained the following:

> Even as students‟ time with peers increases across grades, parents remain important influences in their children‟s lives on academic decisions about schoolwork, behaviors, and postsecondary plans. Parents, community leaders, teachers, and other adults may serve as important counterpoints to friends and peers who challenge or distract students from learning. (p. 162)

Bridges between parents, school, and the community are interconnected and intertwined. Schools, parents and communities face the challenge of assuring these bridges are safe and well designed to allow safe passage for children (Epstein, 2001).

While parent involvement is critical to student success, the role of the classroom teacher cannot be overstated (Ripley, 2010). Teacher efficacy is positively related to student performance (Dembo & Gibson, 1985). In an elementary school, a child‟s classroom teacher makes an enormous amount of difference in what that child learns or does not learn during a school year. "Parents have always worried about where to send their children to school; but the school, statistically speaking, does not matter as much as which adult stands in front of their children" (Ripley, p. 4). Top teachers have five tendencies in common: 1) constantly reevaluating their practices, 2) recruiting students and families into the learning process, 3) maintaining consistent focus on keeping student learning as the priority, 4) planning thoroughly and purposefully, and 5) refusing to surrender to the combined menaces of poverty, school bureaucracy, and school budgetary problems (Ripley).

It is a challenge for schools to determine what specifically makes the difference in establishing positive relationships with parents. It may not be as simple as increasing the numbers of hours parents are involved in helping their children at home or at school. Kohl, et al., (2000) reported "the quality of the parent-teacher relationships was more strongly associated with positive child outcomes than was the amount of involvement" (p. 517). Ultimately, many educators want to understand how to most effectively make use of the parents of their students. "We need to know: How can all families be involved in their children‟s education – from the earliest years on – in ways that will help students be ready for school and do their best learning every year in school?" (Epstein, 2004).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to design a valid and reliable instrument to be used to measure parents‟ perceptions of parent-teacher relationships. An extensive review of the literature regarding parent-teacher relationships and parent involvement in schools provided the basis for the development of an initial set of theoretical concepts and items that could be associated with those concepts. Those items led to the development of a parent survey about parents‟ perceptions of their child‟s classroom teacher. The survey instrument was used to gather parent perceptions about their child‟s classroom teacher. This information became the basis for factor analysis and instrument development. Further studies may be able to determine if a correlation exists between parent-teacher relationships and student achievement.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. Parents who responded to the survey came from eight elementary schools in one mid-sized Midwestern school district. An effort was made to encompass the views of all parents by sending out surveys to each parent in the eight schools. However, an analysis of the demographic responses of the parents shows those parents who responded may have been more involved than the average parent. Furthermore, the researcher is employed as a principal in the district, and the survey was administered to parents in his school.

Several pieces of literature cited in this study were more than 10 years old. However, whenever possible the researcher cited follow-up studies from the same authors. Not all studies cited discussed whether the authors controlled for the effect of socio-economic status, race, or other potentially discriminating variables. When researching parent-teacher relationships, the researcher found there was a scarcity of research on this topic. Therefore, he expanded the study to include parent involvement in school as well. The study was limited to the perceptions of the

parents who responded to surveys. It is assumed the parents responded honestly and interpreted the instrument as intended.

Definitions

Parental involvement has multiple definitions in the literature. Kohl, Lengua, & McMahon (2000) identified six reliable factors of parent involvement: parent-teacher contact, parent involvement at school, quality of parent-teacher relationship, teacher‟s perception of the parent, parent involvement at home, and parent endorsement of the school. This study will measure all of the factors mentioned with the exception of teacher‟s perception of the parent, though the focus of the study involves the first three factors. These factors were highlighted to limit the scope of the study and to keep the focus on parent perceptions of their child‟s classroom teacher.

The term parent refers to the adult or adults who are responsible for the care of a child in their custody. This may include biological parents, step parents, adoptive parents, and legal guardians.

Summary

Home and school are the two most influential systems for young children (McWayne, 2004). Parent involvement in schools is a key to raising student achievement (Goldring & Sullivan (1996); Hill & Taylor (2004)). Creating an instrument to measure parents‟ perceptions of their child‟s classroom teacher could have a positive influence on schools. If the instrument demonstrates a correlation between positive parent-teacher relationships and increased student achievement, schools could make changes to help facilitate more positive relationships with parents. Having data to show teachers what parents value about the parent-teacher relationship may help encourage teachers to strive to construct such relationships with their parents. This, in

turn, would allow schools the opportunity to focus their parental involvement programs to maximize parent-teacher relationships and possibly positively impact student achievement.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Related Literature

This chapter has 10 sections: (1) Background Information, (2) Leadership and Parent Involvement, (3) Parent Involvement Models, (4) Why Parents Decide to Become Involved in School, (5) Benefits to Parent Involvement (6) How Parents Can Help, (7) Challenges to Parent Involvement, (8) What Schools Can Do to Involve Parents, (9) Parent-Teacher Relationships, and (10) Summary.

Background Information

In today‟s educational field, it is important for parents and teachers work together to better the educational experience of the child (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). In the beginning of formalized schooling, however, parents had much more power and control regarding the education of their children. Typically children would apprentice in the family business, and teachers were hired by the family to educate their children (Hill & Taylor, 2004). That changed, however, during the past century. “By the middle of the 20th century, there was strict role separation between families and schools. Schools were responsible for academic topics, and families were responsible for moral, cultural, and religious education” (p. 161). Today‟s educational experience is much different. Teachers often find themselves responsible for much more than academics. Milne and Plourde (2006) found the following:

> The role of the teacher has taken on many descriptors over the past 100 years. Today the job of the teacher is not simply to facilitate learning, but often includes being a nurse, social worker, parent, referee, advocate, and much, much, more. (p. 183)

Parent involvement is typically placed into two categories – home-based and school-based (Green, et al., 2007). More affluent parents are able to spend more time volunteering at

school, while less affluent parents are often limited to helping their children at home due to work responsibilities (Sheldon, 2003). Teachers of young children often have the highest percentage of involvement from the parents of their students. As children age, parent involvement decreases (Green, et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2005). Reasons parent involvement decreases as students progress through school include students‟ increased independence, as well as parents‟ inability to help as much with more challenging curricula. Parent involvement still continues to be a predictor of student success throughout high school, however (Hill & Taylor, 2004).

Support for parent involvement in schools is widespread in the political arena (Ingram, et al., 2007). Recent legislation has mandated schools engage parents in the education of their children. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 requires schools to communicate effectively with parents regarding student achievement and the quality of teachers and schools. This includes providing yearly assessment results for individuals, schools, and school districts in communication arts, math, and science. NCLB also requires schools to organize and implement programs to involve families in their children‟s education (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). According to NCLB, parent participation programs are to be designed in an effort to increase the number of parents participating in their children‟s education.

Leadership and Parent Involvement

The role of the principal is critical in establishing the importance of parent involvement in schools (Epstein & Janhorn, 2004, Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2005). Goldring & Sullivan (1996) introduced the concept of Environmental Leadership, which combined the roles of leading internal (school related) and external (parents and community) contexts. “Principals can no longer serve as mere gatekeepers who attempt to limit parental and community involvement, but must become negotiators who utilize complex strategies to balance institutional autonomy

with external participation" (p. 198). This leadership style also involves recognizing that parents have skills which can help the school move forward. To accomplish this, principals must assure they remove potential roadblocks to parents providing assistance. "To make full use of the talent represented by the diverse members of the organization, it is essential to eliminate constraints that prevent qualified people from selection for important positions" (Yukl, 2005, p. 436).

Principals are important in establishing a family-friendly culture in which parents feel welcome in their children‟s schools. Parents who described their child‟s school as empowering and welcoming were more involved than those in other schools. The principal‟s role in developing, supporting and maintaining a welcoming school climate is critical (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2005). Principals‟ effective leadership allows the entire community, including teachers, students, parents, and community leaders, to work together for the benefit of the school (Epstein & Janshorn, 2004). "The more committed, visible, and active principals are in supporting parent-teacher relationships, the more likely schools are to develop strong programs of parent and community involvement" (p. 117).

Some schools have very extensive parent involvement programs. Parents may be involved in decision-making regarding a variety of items, such as dress codes or curricular choices. However, principals of schools which do not already have well-established parent involvement programs may need to make accommodations to establish parent leadership in their school. "In systems where parents have not typically held leadership or participatory roles, principals may need to devise special methods for involvement, and create opportunities at a variety of levels for parental participation" (Goldring & Sullivan, 1996, p. 211).

Epstein and Jansorn (2004) call for new approaches to improve parental involvement. Schools should utilize a program of school, family, and community partnerships linked to a

school‟s improvement plan. “Principals are key to whether these new approaches to partnership succeed. Only with their leadership and ongoing support will teachers, students, parents, community leaders, and others work closely together for the benefit of schools and the children they serve” (p. 23). Epstein and Jansorn outline 10 strategies school principals can use to enhance school partnership programs with parents and the community:

1. Use the bully pulpit of the principal‟s office to let teachers, staff, parents, and the community know that yours is a partnership school, and that the administration, staff, and action team will work with them to help all students succeed to their fullest potential.
2. Let *all* students know – frequently – how important their families are to the school and to the students‟ progress and success.
3. Allocate or budget funds for planned activities of school, family, and community partnerships.
4. At the year‟s first faculty meeting, talk about the Action Team for Partnership‟s (consisting of teachers, parents, the principal, other educators, and community partners) mission, the importance of partnership teamwork, and the support that will be provided.
5. Recognize teachers‟ contributions to the school‟s program of partnerships in activities they conduct with students‟ families. Help teachers become more effective in communicating with parents about students‟ homework, schoolwork, grades, and test scores, and in conducting parent-teacher-student conferences.

6. Publicize scheduled involvement activities throughout the school year. Encourage participation by teachers, parents, and others to develop a strong partnership program, a welcoming school climate, and sense of community.
7. Guide the Action Team for Partnership in making periodic reports on partnership plans and accomplishments to the school council, faculty, parent organization, local media, and key community groups.
8. Work with community groups and leaders to locate resources that will enrich the curriculum.
9. Recognize and thank Action Team for Partnership leaders and team members, active family volunteers, business and community partners, and others for their time and contributions to involvement activities.
10. Work with district administrators and principals from other schools to arrange professional development, share ideas, solve challenges, and improve school, family, and community partnerships.

Parent Involvement Models

In 1987 Epstein published the concept of five types of parent involvement related to helping one"s child or school. The five areas were: Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at Home, and Decision Making. In 1995 Epstein added a sixth area – Collaborating with the Community (Sanders & Epstein, 2000). Epstein"s framework of six types of involvement are as follows:

1. Parenting – Assist families with parenting skills, family support, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions to support

learning at each age and grade level. Assist schools in understanding families‟ backgrounds, cultures, and goals for children.

2. Communicating – Communicate with families about school programs and student progress in varied, clear, and productive ways. Create two-way communication channels from school to home and from home to school, so that families can easily keep in touch with teachers, administrators, counselors, and other families.
3. Volunteering – Improve recruitment, training, activities, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences. Enable educators to work with regular and occasional volunteers who assist and support students and the school.
4. Learning at Home – Involve families with their children in academic learning activities at home, including homework, goal-setting, and other curriculum-related activities. Encourage teachers to design homework that enables students to share and discuss interesting work and ideas with family members.
5. Decision Making – Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy activities through school councils or improvement teams, committees, PTA/PTO, and other parent organizations. Assist family and teacher representatives in obtaining information from and giving information to those they represent.
6. Collaborating with the Community – Coordinate resources and services for families, students, and the school with community businesses, agencies, cultural and civic organizations, colleges or universities, and other community groups. Enable students, staff, and families to contribute their service to the community.

Epstein and Salinas (2004) advocate for schools to find ways to utilize all six types of involvement to maximize parent involvement. “By implementing activities for all six types of involvement, schools can help parents become involved at school and at home in various ways that meet student needs and family schedules” (p. 12). The six types of involvement can be used by schools to link school, family, and community partnerships to schools‟ improvement plans. “This approach recognizes that students learn and grow at home, at school, and in their communities, and that they are influenced and assisted by their families, teachers, principals, and others in the community” (Epstein and Jansorn, 2004, p. 20).

Parents at three high performing Chicago elementary schools were surveyed regarding Epstein‟s six types of parent involvement. Parents indicated a stronger tendency to participate in Type I [parenting] and Type IV [Learning at Home] (Ingram, et al. 2007). The study suggested several of the six parent involvement activities studied by Epstein did not raise student achievement. “Parent involvement in the form of communicating with the school, volunteering, attending school events, and participating in parent-parent connections appears to have little effect on student achievement” (p. 483).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) created a model to describe the parental involvement process in school. The model has five levels (p. 4):

Level 1 – Parents‟ basic involvement decision. Influenced by –

1. Parents‟ construction of the parental role
2. Parents‟ sense of efficacy for helping his/her children succeed in school
3. General invitations and demand for involvement from the child and school

Level 2 – Parents‟ choice of involvement forms. Influenced by –

1. Specific domains of parents‟ skill and knowledge

2. Mix of demands on total parental time and energy (family, employment)
3. Specific invitations and demands for involvement from the child and school

Level 3 – Mechanisms through which parental involvement influences child outcomes

1. Modeling
2. Reinforcement
3. Instruction

Level 4 – Tempering/mediating variables

1. Parents‟ use of developmentally appropriate involvement strategies
2. Fit between parents‟ involvement actions and school expectations

Level 5 – Child/student outcomes

1. Skills and knowledge
2. Personal sense of efficacy for doing well in school

Why Parents Decide to Become Involved in School

There are three constructs central to whether parents become involved in their children‟s education: parents‟ role construction, sense of efficacy, and invitations from the child and school to participate (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Role construction is a parent‟s belief about his or her responsibility for the child‟s educational outcome, and a belief about what the parent is supposed to do in his or her role as parent. This can be influenced by a parent‟s personal experiences with school. Role construction is the most important of the three elements in determining parent involvement (1997). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler found the following:

> Parents‟ ideas about child development, child rearing, and appropriate roles in supporting children‟s education at home appear to constitute important specific components of the parental role construct as influential particularly in parents‟ decisions about involvement in their children‟s education. Parents‟ role construction appears overall to offer some portion of the answer to the question, „Why do parents become involved in their children‟s education?‟ (p. 17)

Role construction theory suggests parents belong to several groups (family, workplace, school) which influence parents‟ beliefs about what role they should take in their child‟s education. Conflicts can occur if the groups parents belong to do not agree on the role – such as if the school desires involvement, but the parents‟ workplace will not allow the parent to participate. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) explained the following:

> Where all constituents agreed on parental involvement, school involvement programs were stronger than was true when such agreement was missing. Conversely, of course, if the groups to which a parent belongs expect little or no parental involvement in children‟s education, parents will be less likely to choose to become actively involved. (p. 10)

The second construct influencing parental involvement in school is efficacy. Parents‟ sense of efficacy for helping their children succeed in school concerns how much positive influence the parents believe they can exert on their children‟s education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Teachers can help raise a parent‟s sense of efficacy by being specific about how the parent can help his or her child. Examples include how to help one‟s child with homework. “Specific suggestions from teachers, support program personnel, and parent leaders about how to

help and what to do when helping also offer considerable support for parents‟ active role construction and positive sense of efficacy" (Hoover–Dempsey & Sandler, 2005, p. 119).

Parents with a higher sense of efficacy related to their child‟s education believe they will have a positive impact on their child‟s education, and thus do not hesitate to become involved. Parents with a lower sense of efficacy do not believe they will have a positive impact and therefore tend not to become involved. "A sense of efficacy for helping children succeed in school fundamentally predisposes a parent to choose (or not to choose, in the case of low efficacy) an active involvement role in the child‟s education" (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997, p. 27). The authors found parents‟ level of efficacy was related to their educational background – the higher the education, the higher the efficacy. Efficacy was found not to be related to income, employment status, or marital status. However, Anderson and Minke (2007) found parent efficacy can be influenced by employment and family demands. Parents‟ perceptions of their own skills shape the types of involvement activities in which they participate. For example, parents with knowledge of government might feel comfortable helping their child with a social studies project, but feel uncomfortable helping with math. Parents who are at ease speaking in public might be more inclined to volunteer to speak at career day (Green et al., 2007).

The third construct central to whether parents become involved in the school are general invitations, demands, and opportunities for involvement from the school or child to the parent (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Teacher invitations of parental involvement encourage more time spent on homework and improved student performance. They make parents feel welcome, provide information about how their child is learning, and reassure parents that their efforts of involvement are making a difference (Hoover-Dempsey, et al, 2005). An invitation

from a teacher has proven to be a motivator for parents to become involved from elementary school through high school (Green, et al. 2007). "Invitations generated by positive school climate are significant because they suggest strongly that parents are welcome at school and that their involvement is important, expected, and supported" (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2005, p. 110)

Teacher invitations can be separated into two categories: ongoing (help with homework, at school, etc.) and time-limited (attending a specific event) (Anderson & Minke, 2007). "Invitations from teachers are important because they underscore the value of parents" engagement in the child"s learning and the power of parental action to affect student learning" (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2005, p. 110). Teachers who provide parents with the opportunity to make important contributions with their time increased the likelihood that their requests would be met with approval from parents. "School commitment to working effectively with families (e.g., engaging parents in meaningful roles; offering substantive, specific, and positive feedback on the importance of parents" contributions) was also identified as a critical component of effective school invitations" (p. 110).

Anderson and Minke (2007) surveyed parents at an urban elementary school and found specific invitations from teachers had the largest impact of the three types of parent involvement. Parents" sense of efficacy and role construction were not found to be as influential. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) reported the following:

> The overall value of multiple invitations, opportunities, and requests presented by children and their schools appears to lie in the welcoming and proactive demand they create for parents" involvement. The extent to which parents believe themselves to be invited in the educational process will, the model suggests, exert important influence on their basic decisions about involvement. This influence may be particularly important if a

parent‟s role construction or sense of efficacy for helping children succeed in school does not encourage involvement. (p. 30-31)

Benefits to Parent Involvement

Parent participation in school models the importance of school to their children (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Children whose parents are involved in school may infer that their parents value school. These children may believe their parents have the expectation that they are expected to be successful in school (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000). Gutman and McLoyd found the following:

> Students often perceive their parents‟ school involvement as evidence of continued parental expectation of their successful school performance and of parental acceptance of some responsibility for that performance. Parent-initiated contact with the school may also reinforce the students‟ identification with the teachers and their acceptance of the student role. (p. 18)

Additional benefits from positive parent involvement in children‟s education include higher grades, test scores and graduation rates, better school attendance, increased motivation, improved self-esteem, lower rates of suspension, decreased student use of drugs and alcohol, fewer instances of violent behavior, and greater enrollment rates in post-secondary education (Ingram, et al., 2007). Parent participation has also been linked to student efficacy for learning (the student‟s belief he or she can do the work), self-regulatory knowledge (the student‟s belief he or she knows how to do the work), and beliefs about the importance of education (the student‟s desire to do the work) (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2005). Parents‟ perceptions of themselves and their child‟s school are also impacted by the level of parent involvement (Goldring & Sullivan, 1996).

Research suggests that a parent‟s involvement in school raises student achievement (Brandt, 1989; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Tingley (2006); Anderson & Minke, 2007). Teachers should be mindful that parents are a valuable resource which can be utilized to help garner student achievement gains (Lazar, et al., 1999). A 1987 national survey on parent involvement in school also found the educational status of a child‟s mother to be positively related to the level of parental involvement (Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Successful students are nearly almost always supported by their families, while conversely students who are less successful struggle without parental support (Epstein & Jansorn, 2004). Benefits to parent involvement go beyond increasing student achievement. Parent involvement in a child‟s school has been shown to improve student attendance, behavior, homework completion, and grades. "When schools have well-developed partnership programs, families become involved and students become more positive about school and learning" (p. 23).

Epstein‟s six types of parent involvement were studied to examine the relationship between school, family, and community partnerships and student achievement (Sheldon, 2003). Representatives from 82 urban elementary schools used a rubric to rate their schools using Epstein‟s six types of parent involvement. This information was then compared to student test results. Results found that effective partnership programs positively impacted student achievement. Results showed "the degree to which schools were working to overcome challenges to family and community involvement predicted higher percentages of students scoring at or above satisfactory on state achievement tests" (p. 149). Sheldon‟s research demonstrated the positive results available to schools focusing on increasing student achievement through increased parent involvement. "Schools efforts to involve families and the

community in students‟ learning may be a useful approach to help students achieve in school, especially for students in early elementary grades” (p. 149).

Parent involvement has been demonstrated to positively impact student achievement, especially in a specific academic area focused on by a school. Various studies have shown that student achievement gains can be directly linked to specific areas (reading, math, etc.) the school has asked parents to concentrate on with their children (Sanders & Epstein, 2000; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). “In designing programs of home-school-community partnerships, schools cannot assume that one type of involvement or a single activity will affect student achievement positively in all subjects. Studies indicate that each type of involvement activity leads to some different results” (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005, p. 197). Brandt (1987) concurs that parent involvement activities must be varied to see the largest benefit. “Any one practice – parent-teacher conferences or PTA activities or public relations efforts – can‟t cover the full range of ways parents and teachers need to work together for their children‟s education” (p. 24).

Research Corner (2007) reported the following school-family connections produced higher levels of student achievement:

1. Link family involvement with learning
2. Support children‟s learning at home
3. Help families influence student aspirations
4. Invite participation from diverse families
5. Increase educator awareness of home, school, and societal factors

Faires, et al., (2000), completed a qualitative study of first graders struggling in reading to determine if parental training and involvement in reading lessons increased their child‟s reading level. Parents of the students in the experimental group received training in components

of Reading Recovery (a research-based reading intervention program). The parents were then expected to implement lessons at home in conjunction with the classroom teacher. The students in the experimental group made significant gains compared to those in the control group. "(Parental) involvement can motivate children's interest in learning and facilitate the development of partnerships between parents and teachers that ultimately lead to gains in student literacy achievement" (p. 196).

Poor student attendance can lead to fewer learning opportunities, lower scores on achievement tests, and decreased school funding for schools (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). Parent involvement in school, however, may help increase student attendance. "Families are now being recognized as an important influence on student attendance and an important resource for decreasing truancy and chronic absenteeism" (p. 309). A longitudinal study of family-school-community partnerships suggests schools may be able to increase attendance by implementing specific involvement activities. School officials utilized a variety of different strategies in an attempt to improve student attendance. Among the most successful strategies included assigning parents a contact person at school and improving communication with parents. Improving communication with parents in an effort to help increase attendance proved successful with parents from a variety of different demographic backgrounds. "Elementary schools that effectively fulfill this obligation (communicating with families) with all families (e.g., families who do not speak English at home and families whose students have serious attendance problems) make significant gains in attendance" (p. 315).

Parental involvement in schools increases social capital and social control. Social capital is parents' skills and information, which increase the more they spend time in schools (Hill & Taylor, 2004). This increase in social capital in turn makes parents more likely to be able to help

their children in school activities. Interaction with teachers and others in schools help teach parents what the school‟s expectations are for behavior and homework. They also learn how to help their child with homework. Spending time at school also helps parents meet other parents who provide information on school policies and extracurricular activities. They learn from other parents which teachers are considered the best. From teachers, parents learn school expectations for their children. They learn strategies to help their child increase their academic achievement.

Social control for parents occurs when parents and the school work together to create expectations for students (Hill & Taylor, 2004). The expectations are then conveyed to students both at home and at school. This helps reduce behavior concerns. Hill and Taylor found the following:

> "When children and their peers receive similar messages about appropriate behavior across settings and from different sources, the messages become clear and salient, reducing confusion about expectations. Moreover, when families do not agree with each other or with schools about appropriate behavior, the authority and effectiveness of teachers, parents, or other adults may be undermined" (p. 162).

Parent involvement has been shown to positively impact student behavior. Parents who were described as involved provide a rich learning environment at home, and had children who were more cooperative, exhibited more self control, and were more socially engaged than less involved parents (McWayne, et al., 2004). Their children were also more successful academically. Conversely, parents who were less involved reported they had more barriers to helping their child, including increased stress in the family. "By engaging in educational activities with their children at home (such as supporting homework and modeling reading

behavior), parents communicate clear expectations for achievement, while integrating school curriculum goals within the home" (p. 363-364).

Parent involvement can also impact teacher behavior and attitudes. A 2004 study found that teachers believed parents who volunteered at school cared more about their child‟s education than parents who did not volunteer at school (Hill & Taylor). Teachers may also pay more attention to children whose parents are involved in the school (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Additionally, teachers‟ attitudes about teaching changed when parents were involved in the school (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001). "Research shows that family involvement also benefits teachers. They report more positive feelings about teaching and about their schools when there is more parent involvement in the school" (p. 185).

How Parents Can Help

Research shows that parents who are not involved in their child‟s education may have the desire to be involved, but not the knowledge of how to do it. Epstein (2007) calls for educators to develop new ideas on how to help parents help their child. Epstein reported the following:

> New approaches are needed because research shows that most parents not presently involved would like to be, if their children‟s teachers, administrators, and counselors showed them how to help their children increase reading and math scores, improve attendance, and meet other important goals." (p. 20)

Parents can help their child through both activities at home and at school. "If teachers want parents to think that they should help, then they must demonstrate this with an active program of parent involvement in learning activities at home" (Epstein, 1986, p. 291). Examples of parental involvement at home include reviewing homework, monitoring progress, helping with homework, discussing school events, providing enrichment events, reviewing for a test,

discussing post-high school plans, and talking on the phone with the teacher. Teachers can even have parents sign a pledge to help their children for a minimum number of minutes per school night. Examples of school-based activities include observing a child in class, driving for a field trip, working a concession stand, attending parent-teacher conferences or school functions, volunteering, and serving on a committee (Epstein, 1986, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997, Gutman & McLoyd 2000, Hughes & Kwok, 2007, Green et al., 2007). Parents report much more involvement in home activities than school activities (Anderson & Minke, 2007). "Schools will be surprised by how much help parents can be if the parents are given useful, clear information about what they can do, especially at home" (Brandt, 1989, p. 27).

Research suggests parents assisting their children with homework has three benefits – 1) establishing communication between the parents and the teacher, 2) increasing time families spend together, and 3) increasing student achievement (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). "When teachers of any grade level involve parents frequently in home learning activities, they can positively affect the parents‟ awareness of the teachers‟ efforts and knowledge about the school program" (Epstein, 1986, p. 289). Activities that supported learning mathematics included homework assignments students and parents had to do together, and math materials families could use together at home (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). Some parents of older elementary children reported they did not have enough training to help their children with their reading and math homework. They also reported they did not feel confident about helping their children with homework (Epstein, 1986). Gutman and McLoyd (2000) found providing too much help on homework could be detrimental to student progress because students may not learn as much as when they complete homework themselves.

A study of high performing students from low socio-economic backgrounds found common themes among parenting strategies of the families observed (Milne & Plourne, 2006). This qualitative study examined six high performing second graders who lived in homes qualifying for free or reduced price lunch. Similarities among the children included all having attended preschool. Books and writing materials were available in all six homes. Routines were an important part of the day in each home. The children spent time each day doing educational work. The parents had established a structured time to do homework and read. TV was limited to 30-60 minutes a day and the shows were monitored by the parents.

All of the parents in the study stated they valued education, and all said they participated in their child‟s school work. The parents stated they prioritized spending time with their children each day. Another common theme was support for parents. All parents said they had some sort of support system where they could seek advice regarding parenting. “If enough support is given to low-SES parents, in order that they may have the resources (time, educational materials, and knowledge) that other higher SES homes have, their financial situations will not impact their child‟s academic achievement” (Milne & Plourne, p. 191).

Gutman and McLoyd‟s (2000) study examined parenting styles of African-American families. They observed differences in the parenting styles between students who were considered to be high achievers versus students who were low academic achievers. Parents of high achievers contacted the school to check on their children‟s progress and continue positive relationships with the school. They went to school to meet with their child‟s teachers and participated in parent committees to demonstrate they were committed to their child‟s education. Parents of low achievers infrequently visited school unless requested because of their children‟s poor work or behavior. “Parents of low-achieving students rarely make such unsolicited

impromptu visits to see how school personnel are performing on their children‟s behalf, and as a result, this positive, reinforcing pattern of school-home encouragement for student achievement may be absent” (p. 18).

Parents of both high achieving and low achieving African-American students both said they helped their children with homework and discussed school with their children. However, parents of high achievers used more specific strategies to help their children. Specific strategies included tutoring with practice problems, supervising homework at a specific time each day, and providing their children with problem-solving tasks. These parents also reported more supportive conversations with their children when compared to parents of low achieving children. Conversations between parents of high achievers and their children involved encouragement, support, praise, and goal setting. Parents of low achievers focused their conversations on their child‟s behavior (Gutman & McLoyd).

Parents of both high achievers and low achievers agreed on the importance of teachers and school officials contacting them if their children had problems in school. Both groups wanted to be able to intervene before the problems became worse. However, parents of high achievers felt the school and the parents were both responsible for their children‟s education. Parents of low achievers wanted the school to contact them, but felt the parents should be responsible for the intervention. Some of the parents of low achievers expressed a concern that teachers were too interested in the home lives of their children, rather than their education (Gutman & McLoyd).

One strategy utilized by the parents of high performing children was having their children participate in different community activities. This was shown to be a factor in raising student achievement. However, working out the logistics to these activities often proved to be a

challenge. Gutman and McLoyd (2000) called for schools to work to make programs accessible to parents with hectic lives. Gutman and McLoyd reported the following:

> Parents in poor neighborhoods must be supermotivated and exceptionally competent in seeking out community resources for their children in order to help prevent negative outcomes such as school failure and dropout. Resourceful parents in disadvantaged communities often maintain links to external sources of support such as religious institutions and manage their children‟s environment by keeping their children busy in neighborhood recreational programs (p. 5).

Challenges to Parent Involvement

There are multiple reasons parents may have difficulty being involved in their children‟s education. Barriers include parents‟ lack of knowledge about how to help with schoolwork or support learning at home, parents‟ negative attitudes about school, societally pervasive barriers such as lack of time and money, single parenthood, lack of teacher training in parent involvement, teachers‟ negative attitudes and inaccurate assumptions about parents (Ingram, et al., 2007). Some research has shown that family demographics also play a big role in determining if parents will be involved in their child‟s schooling (Crozier (1999); Kohl, et al., 2000). “Demographic characteristics, such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and cultural background, and other parental characteristics are systemically associated with parental school involvement” (Hill & Taylor, 2004, p. 162).

Both parents and teachers face challenges when they do not share the same culture. Cultural differences can create barriers to parent-teacher relationships (Witmer, 2007). “Parent/teacher relationships are formed with relative ease when groups share a common culture, language and background. Relationships that must bridge cultures and languages, however,

require more effort to create and sustain" (Colombo, 2006, p. 315). To gain full parental support, schools need to respect the culture of all families (Hoover-Dempsey, et al. (2005). Hill and Taylor concurred, and reported the following:

> Often, teachers who are different culturally from their students are less likely to know the students and parents than are teachers who come from similar cultural backgrounds; culturally different teachers are also more likely to believe that students and parents are disinterested or uninvolved in schooling" (p. 162).

Columbo"s 2006 study, however, indicated that culturally and linguistically diverse parents wanted to be involved in their children"s education and participate when invited by a teacher.

It is a school"s responsibility to reach out to students and parents of all cultures and make them feel welcome in the school. This includes providing interpreters and inclusion in school planning and goal setting (Epstein, 2001). Parents and teachers who speak different a different language can be one of most challenging barriers to overcome (Sheldon, 2003). Sheldon and Epstein (2005) found the following:

> Schools may be faced with the challenge of making sure that parents who cannot read or understand English have access to the information in languages or forms they can understand. Also, schools may be faced with the challenge of providing ways for all parents to contact and communicate with teachers and administrators so that information about students flows in two directions – from school to home and from home to school (p. 197).

Studies have shown poverty is a significant barrier to parents being involved in their child"s education (Sheldon, 2003; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Payne, 2008). Parents of higher socio-economic status are more likely to be involved with their child"s school and to advocate for their

children than parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Hill & Taylor). The authors reported the following:

> Impoverished families are less likely to be involved in schooling than wealthier families, and schools in impoverished communities are less likely to promote school involvement than schools in wealthier communities. Consequently, the children who would benefit most from involvement are those who are least likely to receive it unless a special effort is made. (p. 163)

Barriers to parents of lower socio-economic status being involved in their child‟s education include inflexible work schedules, lack of resources, transportation issues, and stress. These parents typically have less education than their more affluent counterparts. This often causes them to feel negatively towards school, or to feel incapable of questioning the school (Hill & Taylor). Schools often make assumptions that parents cannot or do not wish to access school-based resources (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2005).

Formal schooling presents problems for children living in poverty because they may not have been taught techniques to use to succeed in school. Payne (2008) developed nine strategies schools can use to help children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds succeed in school:

1. Build relationships of respect – know the student personally, have high expectations, help when needed
2. Make beginning learning relational – make sure students are interacting positively with peers (including at social times) – use cooperative learning strategies
3. Teach students to speak in formal register – students use casual speech inappropriately at school and must be taught to speak more formally

4. Assess each student‟s resources – students need multiple resources in order to be successful in school.
5. Teach students the hidden rules of school – be sure students understand that different rules are needed in school and at home
6. Monitor progress and plan interventions – keep accurate data on student progress
7. Translate the concrete and the abstract – provide mental models to help students understand
8. Teach students how to ask questions – have students write questions to things they are studying
9. Forge relationships with parents
    a. Climate is important – how are parents greeted at school?
    b. Reduce the ratio of teachers to parents in meetings or discuss the meeting ahead of time with the parent so he or she knows what to expect
    c. Don‟t speak in educationese
    d. Interventions parents are asked to implement should be reasonable
    e. Let parents know you care about their child
    f. Home visits – consider employing a substitute teacher so a teacher can spend the day doing home visits

Less affluent parents may have different expectations of teachers and schools than their more affluent counterparts (Hoover-Dempsey, 1997). Parents from a low socio-economic background tend to believe their role in their child‟s education is to get their child ready for school. They believe their responsibility is to physically get their children to school and make sure they behave appropriately. These parents accept school decisions readily. “Working-class

parents tend to be more deferential towards the professionalism of teachers, and less likely to intervene in the schooling process, on their children‟s behalf" (Crozier, 1999, p. 316). Upper middle class parents, on the other hand, see themselves as having a more significant role in their child‟s education. They believe it is necessary to intervene on their child‟s behalf when necessary. More affluent parents exert more control over their child‟s education than parents from lower socio-economic status (Hoover-Dempsey, 1997).

Parents examined in a three-year study in Britain were found to be supportive of their child‟s secondary school. Yet less affluent parents were less apt to get involved in school decisions (Crozier, 1999). Parents of all children reported they would like more information about what their child was doing in school, as well as how they could help their child, specifically with homework. More affluent parents, however, were more capable of accessing this information, and also intervening on their child‟s behalf. Less affluent parents, on the other hand, assessed the parent-teacher relationship as a "division of labour". These parents felt they needed to be supportive of the school, but should not interfere with the school‟s decisions. "There was amongst these parents an overwhelming sense of trust placed in the professionals to fulfill their role" (p. 319). Other reasons listed for not intervening in their children‟s education included a lack of time, a need to care for other children, work commitments, worry of ramifications against their children if they did express concerns, and not wanting to put too much pressure on the teacher. Parents involved in the study reported concerns such as assignments not being graded, their child‟s potential not being fulfilled, and their child‟s lack of motivation. Yet less affluent parents were still reluctant to go to school to question the teachers. Crozier (1999) found the following:

> (Parents) were very reliant upon the teachers‟ professional judgment to inform them of any problems. Then, if there were any problems, they waited to be told how they might help and would do so. Such a view was not blind to reality. Parents are aware that teachers are not always, or even frequently, successful in their endeavours, but they take the view that if the teachers can‟t do it, then they themselves would stand no chance of doing it (p. 321)

Overall, minority parents and parents from lower socio-economic status have less positive relationships with teachers and are less involved in school activities than Caucasian parents and parents from higher socio-economic status (Hughes and Kwok, 2007). Teachers and principals attribute lower parent involvement among minority and poorer parents to a lower value on education. Parent surveys did not agree with this analysis, however (Hughes & Kwok). African-American parents are more often involved in school-related activities at home, while Caucasians parents are more likely to be involved at school. Parents whose first language is not English may also be more likely to be involved at home, rather than at school (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Contributions of minority parents are often overlooked because their involvement is usually away from school grounds (Anderson & Minke, 2007).

While several researchers have found a correlation between socio-economic status and parent involvement (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Payne, 2008), others have questioned that premise (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2005; Anderson & Minke, 2007; Green, et al., 2007). “Parents‟ resources did not influence their involvement decisions; parents‟ self-reported level of resources was unrelated to all types of involvement” (Anderson & Minke, p. 319). Parental involvement is more a function of parental beliefs and school outreach than of

family demographics (Sheldon, 2003). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1991) found the following:

> Family status variables do not explain fully parents‟ decisions to become involved in their children‟s education, nor do such variables explain the linkages between parents‟ involvement and child and adolescent school outcomes. Status does not determine parents‟ thinking, actions, or influence related to their involvement in children‟s schooling. (p. 7)

What Schools Can Do To Involve Parents

Effective schools provide parents the opportunity to participate in and support their child‟s education (Goldring & Sullivan, 1996). Schools willing to partner with families can provide parents with opportunities to improve their children‟s educational experience (Epstein, 2001; Sheldon, 2003; Epstein & Jansorn, 2004; Payne, 2008). Creating a welcoming atmosphere is an important component to making parents feel welcome in the school (Epstein, 2004). This includes introducing parents to the school‟s culture, and providing them opportunities to participate in different activities (Goldring & Sullivan, 1996). Epstein (2001) reported the following:

> Some students, including some who are at risk of failing, presently succeed in school because their parents, teachers, friends, and others in the community communicate well with each other and help students focus on their attendance, classwork, homework, and other important behaviors. More students, especially those who are at risk of failing, need this kind of coordinated support so that they, too, have a better chance to succeed in school (p. 166)

Schools, however, may not be well versed in how to involve parents. “The problem is not a lack of desire for parent involvement; the problem is that most schools are unsure how to involve parents and how to translate parent involvement into student achievement” (Ingram, et al., 2007, p. 480). Hoover-Dempsey, et al. (2005) created a list of strategies designed to increase schools‟ capacities for involving parents in their children‟s education:

1. Create an inviting school climate
2. Empower teachers for parental involvement
3. Learn about parents‟ goals, perspectives on child‟s learning, family circumstances, and culture
4. Join with existing parent-teacher-family structures to enhance involvement
5. Offer full range of involvement opportunities, including standard approaches (parent-teacher conferences, student performances) and new opportunities unique to school and community (e.g., first-day-of-school celebrations, parent workshops, social/networking events)
6. Invite teachers, parents, principal, and staff to student-centered events at school

Thinking of new and creative ways to involve parents is an effective strategy to reach challenging parents. These strategies include conveying information in a variety of forms in an effort to reach parents who do not regularly come to school to meet with teachers or attend events. Videotapes, audiotapes, websites, and phone messages have proven effective communication strategies (Epstein, 2004). Other strategies schools can employ to help parents from low socio-economic backgrounds is to provide opportunities perhaps not available it the past. Payne (2008) found the following:

> If a student isn‟t completing homework, telling that student‟s parent, who is working two jobs, to make sure the student does his or her homework isn‟t going to be effective. But if the school provides a time and place before school, after school, or during lunch for the student to complete homework, that intervention will be more successful (p. 50).

Carlson (1991) developed seven important principles for schools to use to encourage an increase in parent involvement:

1. Climate should be helpful and friendly
2. Communication should be often and two-way
3. Parents should be treated as collaborators
4. Parents should be able to share in decision making of school policies
5. The school should understand the responsibility of partnerships with parents
6. Administrators should promote partnerships with parents at all times.
7. The school should encourage volunteer participation

"Full service" or "Community" schools offer parents and students multiple programs to utilize to improve quality of life and student achievement. These schools offer after school programs, adult education and parenting classes, preschool classes, health care, and social services. The goal is increased student achievement, especially among families from low socio-economic backgrounds. These schools have shown increased parent involvement, decreased student mobility, and improved student health (Vail, 2004). The Minneapolis, MN, school district utilized a program in which parents and students learn together from birth. Parents bring their baby or toddler to class. Parents and children have an activity together. The children then continue with learning activities while parents attend class with other parents. Parents classes‟

focus on parent education and child rearing. Parents are referred to other agencies if necessary (Vail).

Sheldon & Epstein (2005) devised a list of 14 parent-involvement strategies schools could use to boost student achievement in math.

1. Conduct workshops during daytime or school hours for parents on mathematics skills and expectations for children in mathematics.
2. Conduct similar workshops for parents in the evening.
3. Give families information on how to contact the mathematics teacher at school.
4. Issue certificates for students to take home that recognize mastery of new mathematics skills.
5. Schedule individual conferences with parents of students who are failing mathematics or are at risk of failing.
6. Inform parents of students‟ progress and problems in mathematics on report cards.
7. Offer videotapes on mathematics skills that families can view at school or at home.
8. Invite parents and the community to assemblies for student awards for excellence in mathematics.
9. Invite parents and the community to assemblies for student awards for improvement in mathematics.
10. Request parent or community volunteers to tutor students in mathematics.
11. Assign students mathematics homework that requires them to show and discuss mathematics skills with a family member.

12. Offer parents or students mathematics game packets or lending-library activities to use at home.
13. Offer students and families mathematics activities on Saturdays.
14. Organize presentations for students on how mathematics is used by business, government, and industry.

Parent-Teacher Relationships

The benefits to positive relationships between parents and teachers are many (Epstein, 1986, Hill & Taylor, 2004, McWayne, et al., 2004, Hughes & Kwok, 2007). Parents who have had positive relationships with their children‟s school and teachers are more likely to initiate contact with the school. Conversely, parents who have had negative interactions with the school and teacher are likely to have ill feelings towards the school and are less likely to contact the school or be involved in school activities (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000). Another significant benefit of a positive parent-teacher relationship is increased student achievement. “A high-quality parent-teacher relationship may strengthen the positive impact of a parent‟s home involvement on achievement” (Hill & Taylor, p. 163).

Research has demonstrated parent involvement is stronger in elementary school than in older grades (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Similarly, parent involvement is stronger in self-contained classrooms. The researchers found the following:

> Teachers in self-contained classes (mainly in elementary schools) have fewer students to teach and are more apt to make frequent and diverse contacts with parents. They may feel more familiar with a small number of parents or more fully responsible for students‟ school programs, including home learning activities. (p. 300)

An earlier study by Epstein (1986) demonstrated that even within elementary schools, younger grades had both more parent involvement and more teacher use of parent involvement. "Early elementary students gain more in achievement when they and their parents experience supportive relationships with teachers" (Hughes & Kwok, p. 45). McWayne, et al. (2004), concur, and reported the following:

> Parent-teacher collaboration becomes critical in early childhood, as children transition from home to preschool or from preschool to kindergarten. Beneficial connections between home and school have been show to enhance children"s motivation to learn as well as the development of key emergent skills that are necessary for academic success. (p. 363)

Teachers who effectively involve parents in the educational process were rated higher in both their teaching ability and interpersonal skills by both their parents and their principals (Epstein, 1986; Epstein & Dauber, 1991). "Teacher practices of parent involvement maximize cooperation and minimize antagonism between teachers and parents and enhance the teachers" professional standing from the parents" perspective" (Epstein, p. 290). In fact, parent opinions related to their relationship with their child"s teacher are not limited to their beliefs about just the teacher. "Parents often form their opinions about the quality of a whole school based on their relationship with their child"s teacher" (Witmer, 2007, p. 225).

Many schools focus on increasing parent involvement, rather than increasing the quality of the parent-teacher relationship. This is in contrast to research which suggests the quality of parent-teacher relationships may be more significant than the quantity of involvement. This was especially found to be true for African-American and low-income families (Hughes & Kwok, 2007). The researchers reported the following:

> When parents participate in their children‟s education, both at home and at school, and experience relationships with teachers characterized by mutuality, warmth, and respect, students achieve more, demonstrate increased achievement motivation, and exhibit higher levels of emotional, social, and behavioral adjustment. (p. 41)

One teacher can be shown to have an enormous impact on a class of students. Ripley (2010) reported on a teacher named Mr. Taylor, a 5th grade math teacher who obtained remarkable results from his students. Mr. Taylor worked in an urban southeast Washington D.C. elementary school where more than 80 percent of students received free or reduced priced lunches. Poor parent involvement negatively impacted some teachers‟ attitudes. Ripley reported that one veteran teacher commented on the differences in parent involvement within schools in the area:

> „The kids in Northwest [D.C.] go on trips to France, on cruises. They go places and their parents talk to them and take them to the library,‟ she says one fall afternoon between classes. „Our parents on this side don‟t have the know-how to raise their children. They‟re not sure what it takes for their child to make it‟. (p. 9)

At the beginning of the year, 44 percent of students in this teacher‟s class were at or above grade level in reading. End of the year results showed 44 percent of students on grade level.

Mr. Taylor, on the other hand, appeared to have a different attitude toward parent involvement, although he did speak to the effort it takes on the teacher‟s part to make sure some parents are involved. Ripley reported Mr. Taylor said the following:

> „On back-to-school night, if you have 28 or 30 kids in your class, you‟re lucky to see six or seven parents,‟ he says. But when I ask him how that affects his teaching, he says, „Actually, it doesn‟t. I make it my business to call the parents – and not just for bad

> things.“ The first week of class, Mr. Taylor calls all of his students“ parents and gives them his cell-phone number. (p. 8).

Mr. Taylor“s students made significant academic gains while in his classroom. When the school year began, 40 percent of students in the classroom were on grade level in math. By the end of the year, 90 percent were at or above grade level. Ripley“s research found the following:

> For decades, education researchers blamed kids and their home life for their failure to learn. Now, given the data coming out of classrooms like Mr. Taylor“s, those arguments are harder to take. Poverty matters enormously. But teachers all over the country are moving poor kids forward anyway, even as the class next door stagnates. (p. 9)

Schools with teachers showing strong efficacy related to their ability to connect with parents had more support from parents (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Teachers who feel they share beliefs with parents about parental involvement take the initiative to make contact with all parents, including those other teachers find difficult to reach. These teachers also involve families in more activities and their relationships with parents are not as impacted by family demographics. Epstein and Dauber reported the following:

> The analysis of discrepancy scores suggest that it is important to build common understanding about shared goals and common support among teachers, parents, and principals so that teachers“ feelings of isolation or separateness from others will decrease and so that school and family partnerships will increase. (p. 300-301)

The success of parent/school involvement programs is tied to the importance placed on such programs by the school“s teachers (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Research has shown that teacher attitudes impact parent involvement. “Teacher attitudes and practices have been shown to be highly influential in determining parents“ level of involvement” (Kohl, et al., 2000, p. 520).

Brandes (2005) developed a list of 20 strategies for teachers to use to partner with parents.

1. Give parents your undivided attention, and be an active listener.
2. Stand or sit alongside parents when communicating.
3. Take notes openly while conversing with parents.
4. When first meeting parents, engage them in conversation and pay close attention to what they choose to discuss.
5. View parents who are challenging as an opportunity for you to grow.
6. When working with angry parents, maintain a respectful demeanor and take notes rather than defend your actions at the time of the accusations.
7. Allow parents to regard you as one of the experts in their child‟s education.
8. Share the relevance of the curriculum to the student‟s goals.
9. Share specific behavioral expectations early and regularly.
10. Explain that you will try to resolve any conflict their child may have at school before you engage the parents.
11. Model respect for the student by frequently acknowledging his or her efforts and achievements.
12. Share some of the students‟ positive events that happen at school, such as successfully serving on a committee.
13. Set up regular and frequent positive communication avenues such as a weekly newsletter that is sent home each Thursday.
14. Be specific about when you will return phone calls, e-mails, and notes.
15. Communicate often.

16. Let parents know you appreciate their support and follow-through at home.
17. Encourage parents to make provisions for their children who do not need to be at a meeting.
18. Try to have both parents present when "major" topics are being discussed.
19. Start every meeting with a welcome, introductions, and review; clarify the purpose of the current meeting and the ending time; and recap the meeting before everyone leaves.
20. Never assume parents know how to help with homework. The more specific you are, the greater the chance of success for the child and the parents.

A lack of parent involvement in some schools may not be a result of a lack of parental desire to participate in their children"s education. Instead, it may be that parents want to be involved but are unsure how to do so. "Parents often lack information about school activities and operations, have unclear understandings of the parameters of their power, and are unwilling to express their preferences" (Goldring & Sullivan, 1996, p. 210). It is the school"s and teacher"s responsibility to show parents how they can effectively be involved in school activities both at home and at school (Epstein & Jansorn, 2004). Sheldon"s (2003) research found the following:

> Teachers" encouragement of parents to become involved predicts greater parental involvement, even in those families typically considered „hard to reach". When teachers reach out to families and make them feel comfortable and capable of promoting their children"s education, parents are likely to become more involved in helping their child succeed in school. (Sheldon, 2003, p. 50)

Teachers also have the opportunity to focus on and create positive interactions with parents by letting parents know their involvement in their child"s education is appreciated (Gutman &

McLoyd, 2000). “Teachers who communicate with parents tend to increase their expectations and appreciation of all parents and continue to add activities for family involvement” (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001, p. 185).

Teachers must work to establish trust among their parents. A positive school climate and atmosphere helps engender trust between parents and teachers. Hoover-Dempsey, et. al., reported the following:

> One major goal and an outcome of a welcoming school climate is the creation of trust among members of the school community. Parents‟ trust in teachers influences their responses to involvement invitations, and parental perceptions that schools are safe, empowering, and trustworthy have been consistently associated with greater parental involvement. (p. 117)

Other strategies which engender trust between parents and teachers include maintaining respectful and collaborative attitudes toward families, and providing regular opportunities for two-way contact between parents and teachers (Hoover-Dempsey, et al.). Teachers may have to make extra efforts to establish a trusting relationship with parents from other cultures. Strategies to create trust among non-English speaking parents include hanging welcome signs in multiple languages and linking parents who do not speak English with those who speak their native language and can provide monthly updates from the school (Epstein, 2005).

Effectively communicating with parents is an important skill for teachers (Faires, et al., 2000). This communication can be through face-to-face conversations, phone calls, e-mail, newsletters, weekly folders, written notes, and many other avenues. One communication strategy is for teachers to make a positive contact with each parent at the beginning of the school year. This could be done with a phone call or e-mail. This positive comment creates an environment in

which parents are more receptive to talking about potential concerns later in the school year (Witmer, 2007). Beyond fostering improved relations with parents, effective communication can also help improve student achievement. “In order for parents to know what to do with their children, teachers must try to keep open lines of communication with parents, especially about classroom strategies their children are using to learn to read and write” (Faires, et al., p. 197).

If a parent-teacher relationship goes poorly, research says a lack of education of both parents and teachers could be the reason. Most parents need to learn how to be effectively involved in their child‟s education (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). In the same vein, teacher education programs often do not prepare teachers in how to interact positively with parents (Lazar, et al., 1999; Witmer, 2007). In some schools, however, involving parents is largely up to each individual teacher. Most teachers have indicated they would like to have additional training in this area (Lazar, et al.). “Teachers who remain in the classroom discover that, in addition to classroom management skills, they must develop parent management skills as well” (Tingley, 2006, p. 8). Nevertheless, some parents provide challenges to even the most seasoned teacher. “Teachers are unprepared to handle difficult parents. Despite all of their training, nothing really prepares teachers for working with some of today‟s parents” (p. 8).

Some individual teachers, however, have developed significant skills in working with parents. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) identified “high involvement” teachers who were effective in working with all parents, even those who were difficult to involve. These teachers included parents in meaningful roles, which increased communication and trust, along with student achievement. They found parents were more likely to participate in school activities when teachers encourage involvement. “Parents with high-involvement teachers were more positive about school and more aware of teachers‟ interest in their involvement than were parents

with low-involvement teachers" (p. 29). Teachers who were leaders in the frequent use of parent involvement rated all groups of parents higher on helpfulness and follow-through (Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

A 1998 study highlighted the efforts of an elementary teacher who made a specific effort to increase all forms of parent involvement in her classroom (Gustafson). The teacher utilized a weekly newsletter, a weekly folder including notices and student work, and a progress-monitoring system to keep parents informed of classroom activities. She also was determined to contact each parent by phone at least monthly throughout the school year. The phone calls had no specific agenda, but were a way to get to know the students and the parents better. The teacher started each conversation with an open ended question, asking if parents had anything they would like to talk about. Parents commented that the phone calls made them aware that the teacher cared about their child. The teacher reported the calls were effective in providing useful information about her students. Gustafson found the following:

> Monthly phone calls have kept me up-to-date on my students" lives. Without them I might not have known that one quiet girl often had late assignments because she was competing in gymnastics, that a boy"s father was taking over custody, that several 5th grade girls were picking on one another at recess, that a beloved grandfather had died. (p. 31)

The teacher reported academic gains in her classroom she attributed to regular communication with parents.

Inviting parents to visit school has proven to be an effective parent involvement technique (Faires, et al., 2000; Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2005; Witmer, 2007). Parents can be invited to a variety of different activities, including open houses, evening events, celebrations,

awards ceremonies, academic competitions, or just to observe in classrooms. Invitations to these events help generate trust between parents and teachers. Parents who participate in visits to schools reported they enjoyed talking with the teacher, were comfortable in asking questions, and believed the teacher cared about their child and were interested in the parents‟ suggestions and ideas (Hoover-Dempsey, et al.). “Teacher invitations are especially powerful because they are responsive to many parents‟ expressed wishes to know more about *how* to support children‟s learning” (p. 111). Schools can help parents feel more comfortable at school by creating a welcoming atmosphere. This may include a parent lounge or work area (Witmer, 2007).

Hoover-Dempsey, et al. (2005) listed seven strategies schools and teachers could utilize to enhance parents‟ capacities for effective involvement:

1. Communicate clearly that *all* parents have an important role to play in children‟s school success
2. Give parents specific information about *what* they can do to be involved
3. Give parents specific information about the general *effects* of involvement on student learning
4. Give parents specific information on *how* their involvement activities influence learning
5. Give parents specific information about curriculum and learning goals
6. Offer parents positive feedback on the effects of their involvement
7. Create and support parent and parent-teacher networks in the school

In a 2007 study (Ingram, et al.) parents expressed several recommendations regarding how teachers could assist parents. Parents‟ ideas included providing information on homework policies as well as guidance and advice on helping with homework. Parents also were interested

in being given encouragement to provide children with educational experiences outside of school, as well as advice on how to access potential community resources. "Parents care about their children"s success, but most parents need more and better information from schools and communities to become and remain productively involved in their children"s education" (Epstein, 2001, p. 161).

Wilde (2005) created a list of ideas to assist teachers and schools in gaining support from parents:

1. Publish a newsletter to spread positive news – everything in it should be positive
2. Actively recruit volunteers – also consider non-parents such as senior citizens
3. Utilize a homework hotline or website – update parents on homework assignments and grades.
4. Share decision making – provide parents with the sense of ownership by allowing them to be part of decisions about school issues.
5. Gather information – ask parents how the school is doing through information gathering efforts such as a survey
6. Make positive phone contacts early – this makes a good first impression with parents
7. Family hour at the school library – an easy, positive event for parents to attend
8. Cable access to share information – an opportunity for positive information to be distributed. Each classroom could be featured throughout the year.
9. Sensitivity to "second shift" families – some families work evenings or nights and schools should have activities at different times to accommodate the needs of all families.

10. Family math and science night – monthly events to promote math and science
11. Workshops for parents – utilize school personnel to provide workshops for families
12. Parents day or VIP day – An annual event focused on recognizing parents or other adults who are important to a child

Summary

The investigation of literature regarding parent involvement in schools indicates the importance of a strong connection between home and school. Parent participation is a crucial component of an effective school (Goldring & Sullivan, 1996). Additionally, a positive connection between parents and the school is a reliable indicator of a child‟s potential for success (Tingley, 2006). The literature clearly supports the concept that parent involvement has been positively linked to increased student achievement (Sheldon, 2003, Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2005; Witmer, 2007). School leaders would be wise to cultivate opportunities to develop positive relationships between parents and teachers.

Focusing on the issues which have been shown to foster positive relationships between parents and teachers, concepts from the literature have been identified which could serve as the basis for items representing each construct. Survey items are listed on the following page and are grouped by theoretical construct.

Survey Items Listed by Theoretical Construct

Parent Satisfaction with the School/Teacher

1. My child is safe at this school
2. I feel welcome at this school
3. I believe my child‟s teacher is doing a good job educating my child
4. My child‟s teacher makes me feel welcome at school
5. I am glad my child has his/her current classroom teacher
6. This school has assisted me with improving my parenting skills
7. Overall, I have a positive perception of my child‟s teacher

Parent Involvement

1. I have enough time to help my child with homework
2. I have enough time and energy to attend special events at school
3. I have enough time to volunteer in the classroom
4. I help my child with his/her homework
5. I am an involved parent

Child/Teacher Relationship

1. My child‟s teacher cares about my child
2. My child‟s teacher cares about my child‟s education
3. My child gets enough attention from his/her classroom teacher

Parent-Teacher Communication

1. My child‟s teacher is a good communicator
2. My child‟s teacher provides regular feedback on my child‟s academic progress
3. My child‟s teacher provides regular feedback on my child‟s behavior at school
4. My child‟s teacher contacts me with both concerns and praise regarding my child
5. My child‟s teacher keeps me informed about what is happening in the classroom

Parental View of the Child

1. My child has excellent attendance
2. My child is a top student academically
3. My child does all assigned homework
4. My child‟s behavior at school is excellent

Opportunities for Parental Involvement

1. My child‟s teacher provides opportunities for me to be involved in my child‟s education at home
2. My child‟s teacher provides opportunities for me to be involved in my child‟s education at school
3. My child‟s teacher encourages me to be involved in my child‟s education
4. My child‟s teacher provides me opportunities to volunteer in the classroom
5. My child‟s teacher helps me understand how I can be involved in my child‟s education

Academic Issues

1. My child‟s homework is not too easy or too hard
2. The amount of homework my child receives is appropriate
3. My child is getting a good education at this school

Teacher Characteristics

1. My child‟s teacher is friendly
2. My child‟s teacher is fair
3. My child‟s teacher understands my cultural and ethnic heritage
4. My child‟s teacher expects me to help my child with homework

Efficacy

1. My involvement in my child‟s education will significantly impact my child‟s success in school
2. I believe my child can be successful in school
3. I believe maintaining regular contact with my child‟s teacher positively impacts my child‟s success in school

Parent-Teacher Interaction

1. My child‟s teacher and I work together to better my child‟s education
2. My child‟s teacher involves me in educational decisions
3. My child‟s teacher is welcome in my home
4. I feel comfortable in talking with my child‟s teacher about a concern
5. I respect my child‟s teacher
6. I trust my child‟s teacher
7. My child‟s teacher appreciates the efforts I make regarding my child‟s education

Parents‟ Role Construction

1. I seek opportunities to talk with my child‟s teacher
2. I am comfortable going to school and asking to speak with my child‟s teacher
3. I feel it is important to maintain regular contact with my child‟s teacher
4. I believe it is my role to initiate contact with my child‟s teacher when I have a question or concern

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Design of the Study

The purpose of this study was to design a valid and reliable instrument to be used to measure parents‟ perceptions of parent-teacher relationships. The development of the instrument was based upon an extensive review of the literature regarding parent involvement in schools.

The initial instrument was designed to be completed by parents of elementary school students, and to provide data which could be used to construct a valid, reliable measure of parents‟ perceptions of their child‟s classroom teacher. The unit of analysis in this study is the response of individual parents who took the time to fill out the survey. The data gathered reflects the responses of one parent per child. This chapter includes a list of procedures utilized in data analysis, and descriptions of data collection and data analysis methods.

Data Analysis Procedures

The following procedures were used to develop the Parent-Teacher Relationship Survey:

1. The identification of major theoretical constructs demonstrated through the literature to be characteristic of parent-teacher relationships.
2. The development of an instrument to help assess parents‟ perceptions of their child‟s elementary school classroom teacher.
3. Survey a population of parents to obtain adequate data for factor analysis.
4. Perform an item analysis in order to obtain descriptive statistics of the items.
5. Perform a scree test to determine the recommended number of factors.
6. Establish criteria for factors and retain the factors which meet the criteria.
7. Run varimax rotations according to the scree test findings and note the changes.

8. Retain individual items which met the established criteria.
9. Establish factor labels according to the retained items.
10. Utilize factor analysis to continue to refine the instrument.
11. Retain individual items which met the established criteria.
12. Complete internal correlations among retained factor items
13. Establish final factor labels according to the retained items.
14. Determine the format and items for the revised, factored instrument.

Data Collection and Analyses

The parent response data for factor analysis were collected by surveying parents in eight elementary schools in a mid-sized Midwestern school district. Permission to survey parents and use the data was obtained from the school district. Parents in each of the schools were asked to complete the literature-based conceptual version of the Parent-Teacher Relationship Survey (Appendix A). The survey was sent home to the parents of all children in the eight schools. Parents were asked to complete the survey and return it to the school office in a sealed envelope. Office personnel in each building were provided with sealed envelopes in which to collect the surveys. The researcher personally picked up the surveys from the school offices. In the survey, parents were assured their answers were both anonymous and that individual responses would not be shared with anyone from their child"s school (Appendix A). Classroom teachers were assured that survey results were anonymous, and that the results would not be analyzed at the classroom level (Appendix B). The data collection process took place in January and February 2011. A total of 945 parents returned surveys. Principals of the eight schools were provided with data specific to their school as well as the district as a whole.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to design a valid and reliable instrument to be used to measure parents‟ perceptions of parent-teacher relationships. Items for the Parent-Teacher Relationship Survey were developed through an extensive review of the literature pertaining to relationships between parents and classroom teachers. This chapter provided an explanation of the processes used to complete this research. Results of the detailed statistical analyses conducted for this study are described in Chapter Four. A copy of the instrument used to collect the initial data can be found in Appendix A.

CHAPTER 4

Presentation and Analysis of the Data

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to develop a valid and reliable instrument to measure parents‟ perceptions of parent-teacher relationships. The instrument was based on an extensive review of the literature and research about parent-teacher relationships and parent involvement in schools. The review provided the basis for the development of a pool of 50 questions. Parents were asked to respond to the 50 items, rating their perception of their relationship with their child‟s classroom teacher.

Survey Respondents

Parents from eight elementary schools from a mid-sized Midwestern school district were asked to complete the survey, comprised of 50 questions from the research about parent-teacher relationship, and 21 demographic questions about their child and their interactions with their child‟s teacher. Average response time to complete the study was approximately 10 minutes. Completed surveys were returned from 945 parents in January and February 2011. A copy of the Parent Perceptions of Parent-Teacher Relationship Survey is included as Appendix A. Responses for selected items of the survey are presented in Table 1. Two-thirds of the respondents reported having a Caucasian child. Eleven percent of parents reported their child‟s ethnicity as Asian, 10 percent as multi-racial, and 8 percent as African-American. Thirty percent of parents reported their child qualified for free or reduced price lunch, while 91 percent of parents said their child‟s first language was English.

Table 1

Survey Response by Parents (About Their Child)

Gender					Female 48%	Male 52%
Ethnicity	African-American 8%	Asian 11%	Caucasian 67%	Hispanic 4%	Multi-racial 10%	Pacific Islander 0%
Grade	Kindergarten 15%	1st Grade 19%	2nd Grade 18%	3rd Grade 18%	4th Grade 16%	5th Grade 14%
Receive Free/Reduced Lunch					Yes 30%	No 70%
English was Child‟s First Language					Yes 91%	No 9%

Parents were asked what they would like their child to do after high school, with the option of choosing more than one selection. Parents overwhelmingly indicated they would like their child to attend college after high school. Attending a college was the choice of 98 percent of parents, followed by joining the military (4 percent), attending trade school (4 percent), and obtaining a job (1 percent). Of the parent respondents, 66 percent attended college.

Parents reported they believed their child‟s classroom teacher was the most significant factor in their child‟s education (52 percent), followed by home environment (22 percent), curriculum and materials (22 percent), the school of attendance (3 percent), and extracurricular activities (1 percent). Seventy-nine percent of parents reported they had visited their child‟s

school five or more times during the school year (not counting parent-teacher conferences), while four percent of parents said they had never visited the school. Eighty-five percent of parents said they had met face to face with their child‟s classroom teacher (other than parent-teacher conferences.)

Parents reported that teachers contacted 70 percent of them through a personal note or letter, 66 percent via e-mail, and 39 percent with a phone call. Five percent of parents reported their child‟s classroom teacher had visited their home. Eighteen percent of parents said they had specifically requested that their child have his or her classroom teacher, while 10 percent reported another of their children had also previously had the same classroom teacher. More than half of parent respondents (54 percent) said they had volunteered in their child‟s classroom this year.

Parent responses to the 50 relationship questions were analyzed through the data reduction technique of factor analysis. The following sections describe the techniques applied in the process of factor analysis.

Factor Analysis

Commonalities among items on the original Parent Perception Survey were determined through a factor analysis of the data. Factor analysis is “a statistical method used to reduce a large number of data to a few factors by grouping items which are moderately and highly correlated to each other” (Borg, Gall, & Gall, 1993, p. 268). Field (2005) found factor analysis has three main uses:

1) To understand the structure of a set of variables
2) To construct a questionnaire to measure an underlying variable

3) To reduce a data set to a more manageable size while retaining as much of the original information as possible. (p. 619)

The 50 items analyzed in this study are listed in Table 2. An item analysis was performed in order to obtain descriptive statistics for the items. The descriptive statistics include the N, Mean and Standard Deviation (Table 3).

Table 2

The 50 Items Analyzed in this Study

1. I have enough time to help my child with homework
2. My child‟s teacher cares about my child
3. My child is safe at this school
4. My child‟s teacher understands my cultural and ethnic heritage
5. My child‟s teacher is welcome in my home
6. My child gets enough attention from his/her classroom teacher
7. My child‟s teacher is a good communicator
8. My child‟s teacher cares about my child‟s education
9. I believe maintaining regular contact with my child‟s teacher positively impacts my child‟s success in school
10. My child has excellent attendance
11. My child‟s homework is not too easy or too hard
12. My child‟s teacher involves me in educational decisions
13. My child‟s teacher is friendly
14. This school has assisted me with improving my parenting skills
15. I have enough time and energy to attend special events at school
16. My child‟s teacher and I work together to better my child‟s education
17. My child‟s teacher expects me to help my child with homework
18. I am glad my child has his/her current classroom teacher
19. I seek opportunities to talk with my child‟s teacher
20. My child‟s teacher contacts me with both concerns and praise regarding my child
21. My child‟s teacher makes me feel welcome at school
22. My child‟s behavior at school is excellent
23. I respect my child‟s teacher
24. My child is getting a good education at this school
25. My child‟s teacher keeps me informed about what is happening in the classroom
26. My child‟s teacher provides opportunities for me to be involved in my child‟s education at home
27. I am comfortable going to my school and asking to speak with my child‟s teacher
28. My child‟s teacher provides opportunities for me to be involved in my child‟s education at school
29. My involvement in my child's education will significantly impact my child's success in school
30. I am an involved parent
31. The amount of homework my child receives is appropriate
32. My child‟s teacher is fair

33. My child‟s teacher provides regular feedback on my child‟s academic progress
34. My child‟s teacher provides regular feedback on my child‟s behavior at school
35. My child‟s teacher encourages me to be involved in my child‟s education
36. I believe my child can be successful in school
37. I help my child with his/her homework
38. I believe it is my role to initiate contact with my child‟s teacher when I have a question or concern
39. My child is a top student academically
40. My child‟s teacher provides me opportunities to volunteer in the classroom
41. I trust my child‟s teacher
42. I feel welcome at this school
43. My child‟s teacher appreciates the efforts I make regarding my child‟s education
44. I have enough time to volunteer in the classroom
45. My child does all assigned homework
46. I feel comfortable in talking with my child‟s teacher about a concern
47. I believe it is important to maintain regular contact with my child‟s teacher
48. My child‟s teacher helps me understand how I can be involved in my child‟s education
49. I believe my child‟s teacher is doing a good job educating my child
50. Overall, I have a positive perception of my child‟s teacher

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for 50 items (N = 945)

Item	N	Mean	SD
1	942	4.3662	.82640
2	944	4.4841	.72214
3	941	4.3592	.74705
4	940	4.1234	.86198
5	943	4.4390	.72581
6	938	4.2249	.82616
7	941	4.3369	.82527
8	940	4.4904	.67111
9	943	4.5684	.64124
10	944	4.3792	.78441
11	941	3.9660	.91146
12	937	3.7471	.98115
13	943	4.4952	.73416
14	936	3.0128	1.04643
15	943	3.9035	.96225
16	937	4.1644	.83249

17	938	4.0576	.81534
18	943	4.4136	.85381
19	936	3.9551	.84658
20	938	4.0842	.92766
21	942	4.4023	.76487
22	937	4.1665	.87586
23	942	4.5945	.64303
24	941	4.3560	.73928
25	942	4.3429	.82228
26	941	4.2752	.74926
27	942	4.4459	.73093
28	938	4.1269	.86303
29	939	4.5825	.62666
30	939	4.4313	.72004
31	942	4.0913	.88328
32	941	4.4006	.71901
33	943	4.2990	.82147
34	940	4.3521	.76980
35	936	4.2147	.80229
36	941	4.7056	.54525
37	937	4.3927	.73632
38	941	4.5611	.60647
39	936	3.9306	.95486
40	939	4.0170	.85999
41	941	4.4601	.71292
42	940	4.4617	.72357
43	936	4.2404	.76201
44	934	3.3373	1.15691
45	940	4.5117	.67896
46	939	4.5261	.68498
47	937	4.4899	.63897
48	938	4.1119	.84765
49	939	4.4537	.73645
50	941	4.5186	.73291

Using the factor procedure in PASW, it is appropriate to retain factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 (Field, 2005). Factors showing an eigenvalue greater than 1.0 account for a greater amount of variance than had been contributed by one item. The initial run yielded eight factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 (Table 4).

Table 4

Listing of Eigenvalues

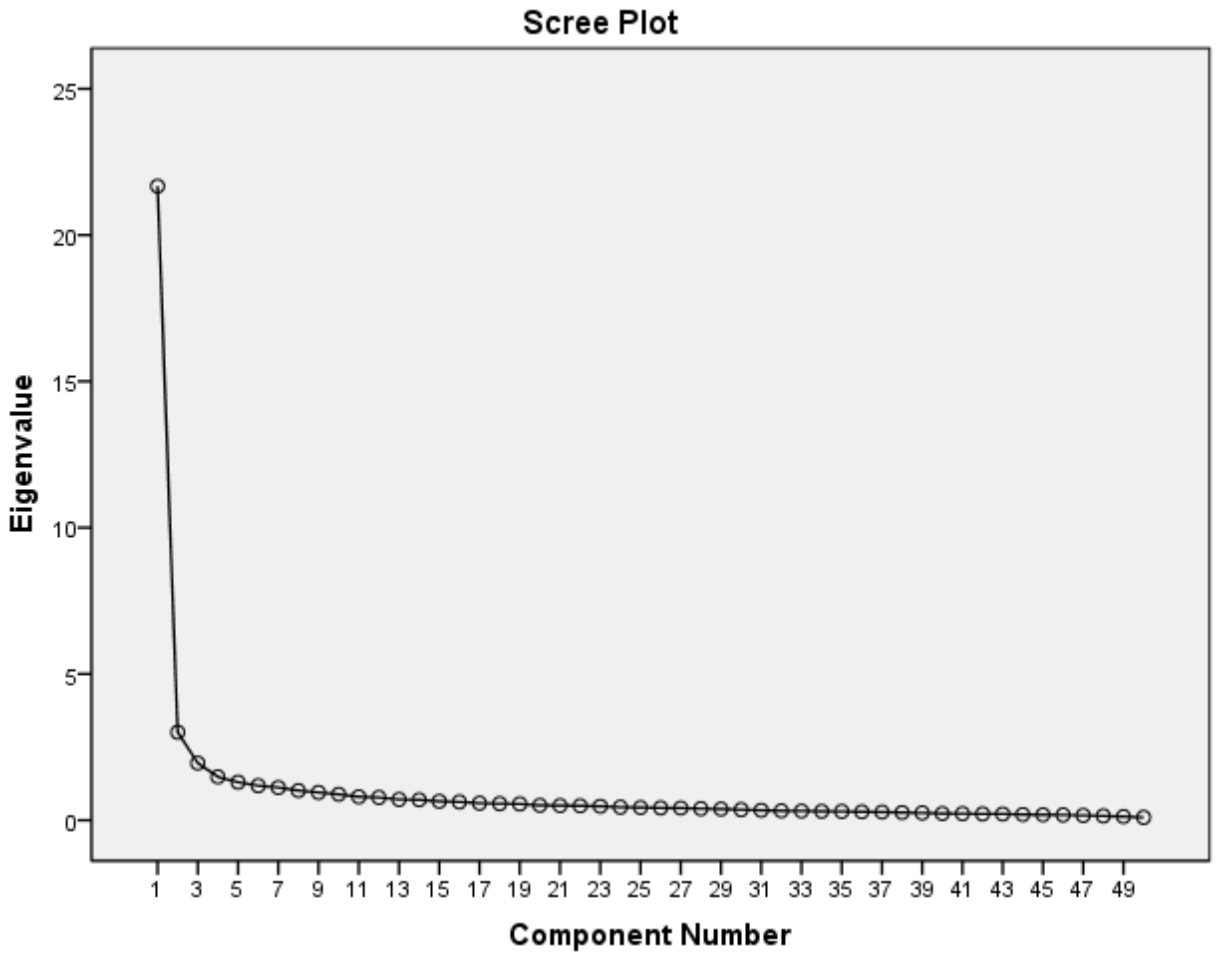
Factor	Eigenvalue	Percent of Variance	Cumulative Variance
1	21.673	43.345	43.345
2	3.008	6.017	49.362
3	1.951	3.901	53.264
4	1.481	2.962	56.226
5	1.299	2.597	58.823
6	1.181	2.362	61.185
7	1.119	2.238	63.423
8	1.012	2.024	65.447
9	.951	1.902	67.349

The eigenvalues for each of the factors were then plotted on a scree test. A scree test is used to determine how many factors should be retained. It is appropriate to retain factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0. A scree test allows researchers to scrutinize eigenvalues and stop factoring when the eigenvalues level off to form a line with a horizontal slope (Kim & Mueller,

1978). The initial run using the principal component analysis yielded 11 clusters of items, with eight clusters of items having eigenvalues greater than 1.0 (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Scree Test for Unspecified Number of Factors (50 Items)



After the examination of the scree test, factor analysis was conducted using the PASW statistical analysis software. Varimax orthogonal rotations were used. Varimax orthogonal rotations try to "load a smaller number of variables highly onto each factor resulting in more interpretable clusters of factors" (Field, p. 637). Factor analysis computes interdependencies

among a set of variables. This allows the researcher to reduce the number of variables from the original data set. The remaining variables take on meaning due to the interrelationship existing within the new data set (Ferguson, 1981). The criteria established for retaining items and factors were a) a loading of 0.3 or higher, b) cross-loading items with a value of 0.3 or higher must have a difference of 0.3 or greater, and c) there must be a minimum of three items per factor. Following the development of the scree test, varimax rotations were specified for runs of five, six, seven, eight, and nine factors. The eight factor run, recommended by the scree test, is shown in Table 5. Eventually, a six-factor solution was chosen and will be provided later in this chapter. The items which met the criteria of loading at 0.3 or higher, while not crossloading in the eight-factor run, are presented in Table 6.

Table 5

Varimax Rotated Factor Pattern with Eight Factors Rotated for 50 Items (N=945)

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8
50	.876	.115	.105	.106	.062	.059	.047	.105
18	.848	.130	.087	.004	.050	.098	.107	.042
41	.830	.137	.144	.159	.143	.065	.039	.170
7	.824	.106	.195	.057	-.001	.155	.082	.083
49	.816	.108	.158	.182	.083	.070	.142	.119
8	.800	.202	.139	.086	.013	.131	.103	.173
21	.786	.215	.196	.046	.096	.005	.074	.139
13	.783	.226	.061	.064	-.010	.108	.066	.102
32	.779	.205	.150	.155	.137	.062	.131	.161
23	.775	.249	.038	.112	.153	.039	.014	.153
2	.773	.156	.072	.004	.006	.216	.090	.196
6	.706	.026	.222	.131	.008	.158	.244	.169
46	.694	.362	.127	.253	.140	.038	.016	.071
25	.681	.166	.296	.180	.125	.055	.080	.115
33	.672	.142	.318	.222	.174	-.022	.193	.000
34	.633	.190	.267	.217	.194	-.045	.123	.037
43	.587	.307	.362	.171	.097	.118	.137	.075
20	.572	.261	.414	-.087	.033	.138	.136	-.088

27	.550	.378	.266	.164	.164	-.013	-.003	.157
35	.542	.214	.521	.154	.211	.046	.169	-.035
26	.521	.292	.411	.094	.270	.020	.255	.037
5	.497	.383	.090	.014	.076	.105	.094	.239
16	.449	.379	.448	-.048	.070	.173	.182	.018
4	.322	.262	.213	.133	.037	.177	.172	.280
9	.331	.743	.169	.026	-.007	.091	.064	.067
29	.191	.671	.080	.182	.211	.090	.109	.154
47	.319	.665	.260	.148	.195	.072	.023	.062
30	.160	.619	.075	.266	.172	.314	.127	.020
19	.247	.494	.430	-.129	.088	.238	.049	-.083
36	.311	.488	-.060	.345	.269	.008	.013	.207
38	.264	.431	.078	.187	.428	.096	.085	.105
10	.083	.356	-.106	.244	-.091	.163	.229	.323
14	.117	-.017	.663	.031	-.077	.127	-.015	.360
48	.520	.127	.561	.169	.194	.040	.158	.010
12	.413	.180	.543	-.082	-.013	.142	.289	.047
28	.511	.198	.533	.129	.213	.005	.134	.076
40	.385	.100	.511	.324	.207	.096	.077	.070
39	.113	.115	.166	.748	-.089	.134	.057	.018
22	.264	.150	.020	.569	.008	.188	.031	.155
45	.239	.349	-.030	.543	.240	.194	.108	.051
37	.055	.219	.025	.094	.775	.154	.133	.048
17	.151	.116	.158	-.122	.715	.136	.085	.029
44	.064	.085	.288	.146	.084	.754	-.110	.070
15	.136	.233	.115	.138	.138	.722	.088	.069
1	.200	.176	-.110	.211	.189	.580	.256	.068
11	.189	.124	.153	.071	.086	.051	.815	.141
31	.304	.125	.197	.083	.245	.073	.683	.027
3	.377	.141	.072	.023	.043	.142	.107	.706
42	.448	.157	.208	.230	.200	-.040	-.073	.533
24	.435	.138	.308	.125	.125	.026	.246	.514

Table 6

8 Factor Run (50 Items)

Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8	Crossload	No Load
Q50	Q9	Q14	Q39	Q37	Q44	Q11	Q3	Q43	
Q18	Q29		Q22	Q17	Q15	Q31		Q20	
Q41	Q47				Q1			Q27	
Q7	Q30							Q35	
Q49								Q26	
Q8								Q5	
Q21								Q16	
Q13								Q19	
Q32								Q36	
Q23								Q38	
Q2								Q10	
Q6								Q48	
Q46								Q12	
Q25								Q28	
Q33								Q40	
Q34								Q45	
Q4								Q42	
								Q24	

Criteria for items on factor lists:

A. 0.3 or higher item loading value

B. Crossloading difference of 0.3 or greater if another factor is above 0.3

After analyzing the five, six, seven, eight, and nine factor runs, several items were deleted from the instrument. While all items seemed appropriate during the initial item and construct development, three items (3, 14, 42) were ultimately deleted because they were deemed to be inconsistent with the focus of the instrument. The focus of these three items was parental satisfaction with the school, while the focus of the instrument is a parent‟s perception of their relationship with their child‟s classroom teacher. One item (5) was deleted because of significant crossloading issues. Further, three items (24, 49, 50) were deleted due to the fact they were more suited to be outcome or dependent variables against which to measure the eventual factors. This item reduction left 43 items in the instrument. A scree test (Figure 2) with these 43 items recommended seven clusters of items using the principal component analysis.

After the examination of the scree test, factor analysis was conducted again using varimax orthogonal rotations. The criteria established for retaining items after the previously described item reduction were a) a loading of 0.5 or higher, b) cross-loading items must have a difference of 0.15 or higher, and c) there must be a minimum of three items per factor. These revised criteria appeared to better fit the nature of the items. A larger factor loading was established with a smaller crossloading standard. That accommodated the tendency of the many items that cross-loaded, while retaining a high-standard for item strength. Varimax rotations were then performed for five, six, and seven factors. The six factor run of 43 items (Table 7) was selected as the best solution because it provided factors that met the criteria. At that time it also provided factors that best met both an empirical and logical solution of item clusters. The factors that met the criteria of loading at 0.5 or higher, while not crossloading in the six-factor run are presented in Table 8.

Figure 2

Scree Test After Initial Item Reduction (43 Items)

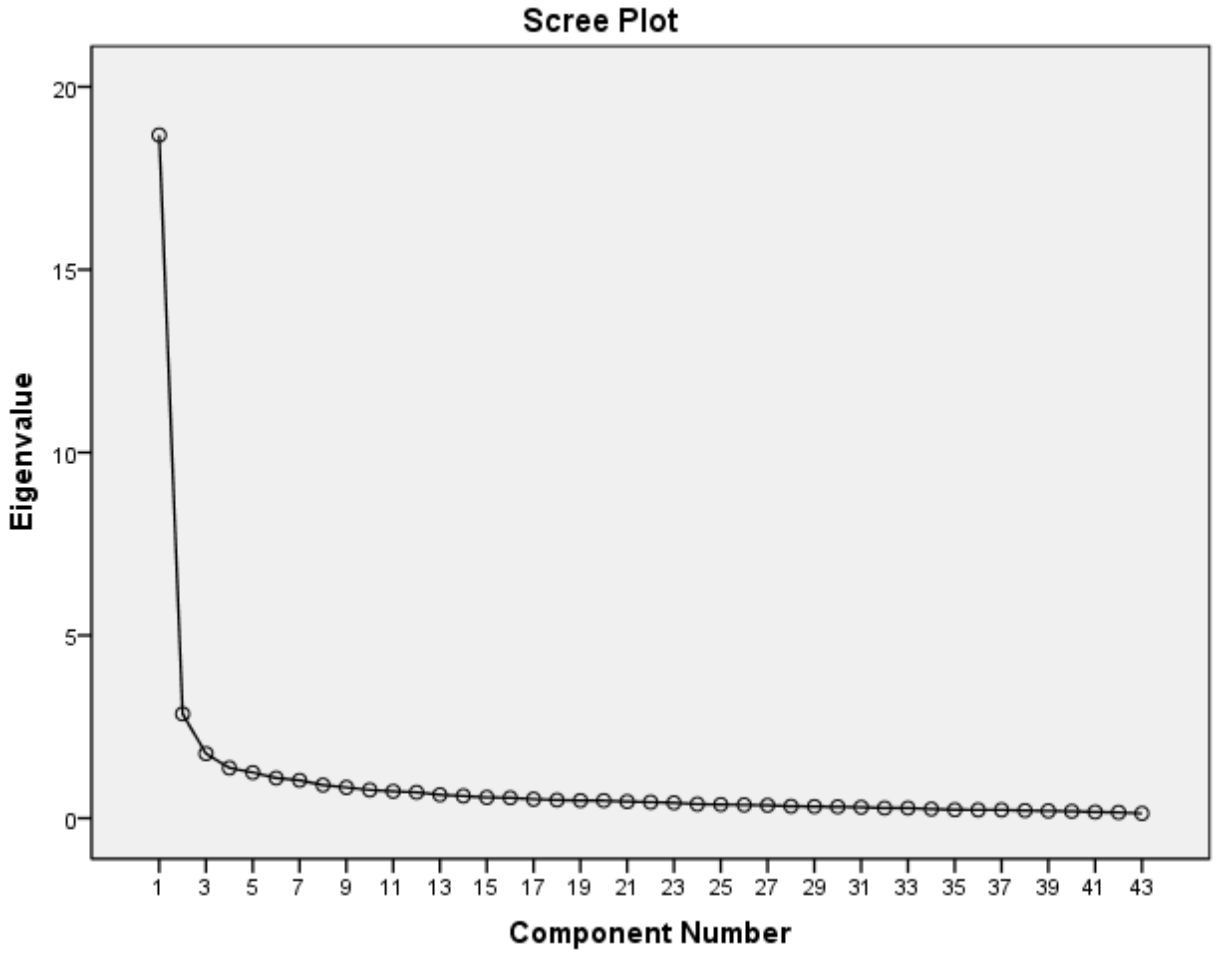


Table 7

Varimax Rotated Factor Pattern with Six Factors Rotated for 43 Items (N=945)

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
18	.824	.198	.119	.039	.109	.082
8	.805	.226	.166	.151	.074	.128
7	.800	.290	.084	.089	.039	.151
41	.798	.246	.188	.182	.116	.047
13	.795	.142	.183	.104	.046	.118
2	.789	.155	.117	.094	.087	.202
21	.778	.290	.199	.070	.103	.026

23	.772	.114	.285	.144	.128	.029
32	.762	.261	.205	.195	.177	.056
6	.693	.332	-.031	.196	.147	.159
46	.654	.229	.398	.257	.086	.035
25	.641	.397	.185	.178	.078	.057
33	.608	.460	.151	.204	.183	-.038
34	.587	.392	.212	.203	.163	-.067
27	.528	.332	.390	.168	.081	.026
43	.518	.483	.290	.189	.088	.142
20	.515	.494	.220	-.098	.058	.172
4	.341	.276	.161	.240	.131	.218
48	.426	.653	.167	.127	.154	.048
28	.432	.638	.217	.110	.147	.036
35	.456	.628	.239	.117	.173	.045
12	.372	.618	.078	-.043	.113	.209
40	.311	.584	.143	.279	.102	.099
26	.450	.547	.287	.103	.285	.042
16	.395	.520	.335	-.036	.104	.238
47	.276	.325	.676	.161	.103	.117
9	.321	.237	.666	.092	-.005	.159
29	.184	.144	.661	.240	.206	.118
30	.122	.175	.570	.314	.167	.339
36	.318	-.011	.539	.391	.211	-.009
38	.239	.140	.502	.200	.351	.096
19	.190	.449	.473	-.133	.042	.294
39	.069	.210	.086	.727	-.082	.086
22	.265	.066	.127	.608	.020	.143
45	.207	.064	.360	.563	.237	.141
10	.144	-.030	.186	.427	.101	.196
37	.029	.046	.383	.078	.687	.093
17	.140	.126	.276	-.142	.628	.081
31	.257	.411	-.001	.151	.572	.095
11	.167	.390	-.093	.222	.538	.106
44	.039	.209	.131	.136	-.030	.745
15	.125	.122	.209	.181	.145	.738
1	.215	-.039	.103	.284	.330	.560

Table 8

6 Factor Run

Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Crossload	No Load
Q18	Q48	Q47	Q39	Q37	Q44	Q11	Q4
Q8	Q28	Q9	Q22	Q17	Q15	Q16	Q10
Q7	Q35	Q29	Q45	Q31	Q1	Q20	Q19
Q41	Q12	Q30				Q36	
Q13	Q40	Q38				Q26	
Q2						Q43	
Q21						Q33	
Q23							
Q32							
Q6							
Q46							
Q25							
Q34							
Q27							

Criteria for items on factor lists:

A. 0.5 or higher item loading value
B. Crossloading difference of 0.15

The six factor varimax rotation yielded 33 items which met the criteria of loading at 0.5 or higher and not crossloading. All six factors had at least three items. Seven items (11, 16, 20, 26, 33, 36 and 43) were eliminated because they crossloaded with other items. Three items (4, 10, and 19) were eliminated because they did not load with any factor. At this point the six factors were named. The factor names and item loadings are provided in Table 9.

Table 9

Six Factor Solution and Final Factor Loading (N = 945)

Factor 1: Parent-Teacher Relationships

Item	Item	Factor Loading
18.	I am glad my child has his/her current classroom teacher.	.824
08.	My child‟s teacher cares about my child‟s education.	.805
07.	My child‟s teacher is a good communicator.	.800
41.	I trust my child‟s teacher.	.798
13.	My child‟s teacher is friendly.	.795
02.	My child‟s teacher cares about my child.	.789
21.	My child‟s teacher makes me feel welcome at school.	.778
23.	I respect my child‟s teacher.	.772
32.	My child‟s teacher is fair.	.762
06.	My child gets enough attention from his/her classroom teacher.	.693
46.	I feel comfortable in talking with my child‟s teacher about a concern.	.654
25.	My child‟s teacher keeps me informed about what is happening in the classroom.	.641
34.	My child‟s teacher provides regular feedback on my child‟s behavior at school.	.587
27.	I am comfortable going to my school and asking to speak with my child‟s teacher.	.528

Factor 2: Opportunity for Parent Involvement

Item	Item	Factor Loading
48.	My child‟s teacher helps me understand how I can be involved in my child‟s education.	.653
28.	My child‟s teacher provides opportunities for me to be involved in my child‟s education at school.	.638
35.	My child‟s teacher encourages me to be involved in my child‟s education.	.628
12.	My child‟s teacher involves me in educational decisions.	.618
40.	My child‟s teacher provides me opportunities to volunteer in the classroom.	.584

Factor 3: Parent Efficacy

Item	Item	Factor Loading
47.	I believe it is important to maintain regular contact with my child‟s teacher.	.676
09.	I believe maintaining regular contact with my child‟s teacher positively	.666

	impacts my child‟s success in school.	
29.	(I believe) My involvement in my child's education will significantly impact my child's success in school.	.661
30.	I am an involved parent.	.570
38.	I believe it is my role to initiate contact with my child‟s teacher when I have a question or concern.	.502

Factor 4: Parent Perception of Child‟s Success

Item	Item	Factor Loading
39.	My child is a top student academically.	.727
22.	My child‟s behavior at school is excellent.	.608
45.	My child does all assigned homework.	.563

Factor 5: Student Homework

Item	Item	Factor Loading
37.	I help my child with his/her homework.	.687
17.	My child‟s teacher expects me to help my child with homework.	.628
31.	The amount of homework my child receives is appropriate.	.572

Factor 6: Time for Parent Involvement

Item	Item	Factor Loading
44.	I have enough time to volunteer in the classroom.	.745
15.	I have enough time and energy to attend special events at school.	.738
01.	I have enough time to help my child with homework.	.560

After the examination of the six factors in Table 9, factor analysis was conducted again using varimax orthogonal rotations to assure the factors remained the same after the 10 items that crossloaded or did not load were removed. The criteria established for retaining items remained the same: a) a loading of 0.5 or higher, b) cross-loading items must have a difference of 0.15 or higher, and c) there must be a minimum of three items per factor. Varimax rotations were then performed for six factors. This six factor run can be found in Appendix C. In this run three items

(31, 38, and 45) were eliminated because they did not load at 0.5 or higher. One item (27) was eliminated because it crossloaded. These eliminations meant that two factors were no longer viable because they had only two items remaining. These factors were "Student Homework" and "Parent Perception of Child's Success". Eliminating these factors strengthened the instrument because both factors dealt primarily with students, while the focus of the instrument (and the other factors) involves the relationship between parents and teachers. The elimination of these two factors meant four additional items were removed (17, 22, 37 and 39), leaving 25 items. Factor analysis was then performed for the remaining 25 items. The same criteria were used, and four factors were specified. This four factor run can be found in Appendix C. Two items (25 and 34) were eliminated due to crossloading, necessitating an additional factor analysis run. In this final factor analysis, the same criteria were used for the varimax orthogonal rotations. Four factors were again specified. In this run, all 23 items loaded in one of the four factors. While the minimum acceptable loading factor was .5, the actual minimum loading was .634. Table 10 provides the descriptive statistics for the 23 items retained from the final four-factor rotation. This table lists the mean, standard deviation, and N for each item. The final four-factor run is presented in Table 11. The items which met the criteria of loading at 0.5 or higher, while not crossloading in the four-factor run, are presented in Table 12. The four factor solution and final factor loadings are in Table 13.

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics for 23 items (N = 945)

Item	N	Mean	SD
FACTOR 1			
18	917	4.4286	.84534
8	917	4.4940	.67002
13	917	4.5071	.72329
2	917	4.4896	.72174
41	917	4.4667	.71496
7	917	4.3511	.80996
23	917	4.6020	.64215
21	917	4.4100	.76197
32	917	4.4111	.71632
6	917	4.2323	.82240
46	917	4.5322	.68220
FACTOR 2			
48	917	4.1221	.84259
28	917	4.1429	.85287
40	917	4.0251	.85933
35	917	4.2214	.79027
12	917	3.7557	.97417
FACTOR 3			
29	928	4.5851	.62428
9	928	4.5711	.63118
47	928	4.4925	.64021
30	928	4.4364	.71677
FACTOR 4			
15	930	3.9108	.96192
44	930	3.3387	1.15640
1	930	4.3699	.82268

Table 11

Varimax Rotated Factor Pattern with Four Factors Rotated for 23 Items (N=945)

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
18	.823	.248	.140	.053
8	.798	.288	.202	.119
13	.795	.171	.204	.110
2	.785	.215	.128	.175
41	.784	.343	.216	.078
7	.779	.349	.105	.140
23	.762	.176	.313	.072
21	.758	.323	.211	.035
32	.752	.322	.263	.117
6	.700	.370	.054	.181
46	.650	.257	.439	.105
48	.381	.728	.191	.080
28	.392	.717	.223	.086
40	.280	.687	.185	.161
35	.410	.679	.265	.088
12	.333	.634	.106	.152
29	.186	.131	.789	.173
9	.312	.173	.736	.094
47	.250	.318	.734	.132
30	.141	.144	.663	.415
15	.111	.136	.222	.794
44	.006	.240	.083	.760
1	.254	-.039	.183	.693

Table 12

4 Factor Run

Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Q18	Q48	Q29	Q15
Q8	Q28	Q9	Q44
Q13	Q40	Q47	Q1
Q2	Q35	Q30	
Q41	Q12		
Q7			
Q23			
Q21			
Q32			
Q6			
Q46			

Criteria for items on factor lists:

A. 0.5 or higher item loading value
B. Crossloading difference of 0.15

Table 13

Four Factor Solution and Final Factor Loading (N = 945)

Factor 1: Parent-Teacher Relationships

Item #	Item	Factor Loading
18.	I am glad my child has his/her current classroom teacher.	.823
08.	My child‟s teacher cares about my child‟s education.	.798
13.	My child‟s teacher is friendly.	.795
02.	My child‟s teacher cares about my child.	.785
41.	I trust my child‟s teacher.	.784
07.	My child‟s teacher is a good communicator.	.779
23.	I respect my child‟s teacher.	.762
21.	My child‟s teacher makes me feel welcome at school.	.758
32.	My child‟s teacher is fair.	.752

06.	My child gets enough attention from his/her classroom teacher.	.700
46.	I feel comfortable in talking with my child‟s teacher about a concern.	.650

Factor 2: Opportunity for Parent Involvement

Item #	Item	Factor Loading
48.	My child‟s teacher helps me understand how I can be involved in my child‟s education.	.728
28.	My child‟s teacher provides opportunities for me to be involved in my child‟s education at school.	.717
40.	My child‟s teacher provides me opportunities to volunteer in the classroom.	.687
35.	My child‟s teacher encourages me to be involved in my child‟s education.	.679
12.	My child‟s teacher involves me in educational decisions.	.634

Factor 3: Parent Efficacy

Item #	Item	Factor Loading
29.	My involvement in my child's education will significantly impact my child's success in school.	.789
09.	I believe maintaining regular contact with my child‟s teacher positively impacts my child‟s success in school.	.736
47.	I believe it is important to maintain regular contact with my child‟s teacher.	.734
30.	I am an involved parent.	.663

Factor Four: Time for Parent Involvement

Item #	Item	Factor Loading
15.	I have enough time and energy to attend special events at school.	.794
44.	I have enough time to volunteer in the classroom.	.760
01.	I have enough time to help my child with homework.	.693

The factors, the items in each factor, and reliability coefficients for each factor are listed in Table 14. The Pearson correlation coefficients for each item within each factor are presented in Table 15.

Table 14

Items, Reliability, and Number of Items Comprising the Scale

Factor	N	Items	Reliability Coefficient *	Number of Items
1	917	2, 6, 7, 8, 13, 18, 21, 23, 32, 41, 46	.959	11
2	917	12, 28, 35, 40, 48	.869	5
3	928	9, 29, 30, 47	.830	4
4	930	1, 15, 44	.692	3

Factor 1 = Parent-Teacher Relationships

Factor 2 = Opportunity for Parent Involvement

Factor 3 = Parent Efficacy

Factor 4 = Time For Parent Involvement

* Cronbach‟s Alphas

Table 15

Pearson Correlation of Selected Items

Factor 1 (N = 917)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
18		.721	.696	.713	.752	.741	.719	.708	.708	.645	.640
8			.722	.761	.758	.782	.678	.696	.736	.687	.640
13				.664	.678	.676	.687	.738	.712	.587	.630
2					.693	.731	.619	.673	.668	.665	.583
41						.725	.740	.708	.770	.660	.703
7							.666	.697	.701	.731	.634
23								.695	.688	.597	.693
21									.719	.623	.640
32										.659	.691
6											.542
46											

Factor 2 (N = 917)	1	2	3	4	5
48		.647	.566	.704	.519
28			.631	.645	.545
40				.542	.435
35					.541
12					

Factor 3 (N = 928)	1	2	3	4
29		.561	.552	.567
9			.654	.488
47				.504
30				

Factor 4 (N = 930)	1	2	3
15		.530	.472
44			.311
1			

*All items within each factor correlated at the .0001 level of confidence

Summary

Developing a valid and reliable instrument to be used to measure parents‟ perceptions of parent-teacher relationships was the purpose of this study. The initial instrument included 50 items. After administering the instrument to 945 parents, factor analysis was utilized to reduce the instrument to 23 items, plus three additional items to be used as dependent variables. Criteria for retention of an item with a factor were at least .50 as a factor loading and a cross-loading difference of .15 or higher. Factors were retained if they had at least three items which met these criteria. The final instrument included four factors. One change added after determining the final four factors was to begin all efficacy questions with the phrase “I believe”, and to not have any other questions begin in that manner. The new instrument, with items renumbered, is presented in Table 16.

Table 16

The New Instrument with Renumbering & Minor Renaming of Several Items

1. I have enough time to help my child with homework
2. My child‟s teacher cares about my child
3. My child gets enough attention from his/her classroom teacher
4. My child‟s teacher is a good communicator
5. My child‟s teacher cares about my child‟s education
6. I believe maintaining regular contact with my child‟s teacher positively impacts my child‟s success in school
7. My child‟s teacher involves me in educational decisions
8. My child‟s teacher is friendly
9. I have enough time and energy to attend special events at school
10. I am glad my child has his/her current classroom teacher
11. My child‟s teacher makes me feel welcome at school
12. I respect my child‟s teacher
13. My child‟s teacher provides opportunities for me to be involved in my child‟s education at school
14. I believe my involvement in my child's education will significantly impact my child's success in school
15. I believe I am an involved parent
16. My child‟s teacher is fair
17. My child‟s teacher encourages me to be involved in my child‟s education
18. My child‟s teacher provides me opportunities to volunteer in the classroom
19. I trust my child‟s teacher
20. I have enough time to volunteer in the classroom
21. I feel comfortable in talking with my child‟s teacher about a concern
22. I believe it is important to maintain regular contact with my child‟s teacher
23. My child‟s teacher helps me understand how I can be involved in my child‟s education
24. My child is getting a good education at this school
25. My child‟s teacher is doing a good job educating my child
26. Overall, I have a positive perception of my child‟s teacher

CHAPTER 5

Summary and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to design a valid and reliable instrument to be used to measure parents‟ perceptions of parent-teacher relationships. The instrument was based on a review of the literature and research regarding parent-teacher relationships and parent involvement in schools. Items were then developed for a survey of elementary school parents. Parents were then asked to complete the survey regarding their relationship with their child‟s classroom teacher.

The review of the literature comprised the initial phase of this study and provided the framework for both theoretical constructs and survey items. A survey of 21 demographic questions about parents and their child, and 50 questions about parents‟ relationship with their child‟s elementary classroom teacher, was then developed. The 50 questions regarding parents‟ relationship with their child‟s classroom teacher were scored on a five-point Likert-type scale. In January and February 2011, the instrument was administered to 945 parents at eight elementary schools in a mid-sized Midwestern school district.

The data gathered from the surveys were analyzed using PASW. Factor analysis was applied to the data. After the initial factor run, a scree test suggested eight factors. Varimax rotations of six, seven, eight, and nine factors were completed. Analysis of the different runs showed the six factor run to be the most appropriate at the time. After item reduction and additional factor runs, it was determined that four factors best met the purpose of the study and provided the strongest set of factors. The original 50 items were reduced to 23. Three additional

items were retained to serve as dependent variables. A detailed description of the factor analysis process was described in Chapter Four.

Factor Definitions

The following are the names and descriptions given to the four factors which emerged from the factor analysis. Originally, the researcher developed 11 constructs about parent-teacher relationships based on the literature.

Factor 1: Parent-Teacher Relationships. This factor contains 11 items, making it the largest of the four factors. It contains items from five of the original theoretical constructs, including Parent Satisfaction with the School/Teacher, Child/Teacher Relationship, Parent/Teacher Communication, Teacher Characteristics, and Parent/Teacher Interaction. The issues of trust and caring highlight this factor. This factor also highlights attributes parents may value in their child‟s classroom teacher, such as welcoming, caring, friendly, and fair. The findings for this factor demonstrate the importance of a positive relationship between parents and elementary school teachers.

Factor 2: Opportunity for Parent Involvement. This factor contains five items. It contains items from two theoretical constructs – Opportunities for Parental Involvement and Parent/Teacher Interaction. The importance of both providing parents with opportunities to be involved in their child‟s education, as well as inviting parents to be involved, highlight this factor. The findings for this factor support the importance of teachers providing parents with a variety of different opportunities to be involved in their child‟s education. Parent involvement can take place at home or at school. Invitations to participate in a child‟s education not only benefit students. Such invitations also provide parents with the opportunity to increase their

social capital. This factor also supports the importance of teachers involving parents in educational decisions about their child.

Factor 3: Parent Efficacy. This factor contains four items. It contains items from three theoretical constructs, including Efficacy, Parents‟ Role Construction, and Parent Involvement. Two issues highlight this factor. The first issue revolves around parents‟ beliefs about how their involvement in their child‟s school experience positively or negatively impacts the education their child receives. Parents with a high sense of efficacy believe their involvement in school will show a positive impact on their child‟s educational experience. Also highlighting this factor is the issue of parents maintaining regular contact with the child‟s teacher. Parents with a high sense of efficacy believe it is critical to have regular and consistent contact with their child‟s classroom teacher.

Factor 4: Time for Parent Involvement. This factor contains three items. All three items came from the theoretical construct Parent Involvement. The issue of time highlights this factor. The findings of this factor support the concept that parents who spend time on their child‟s education help their child achieve more in school, as well as help their child understand the value of their education.

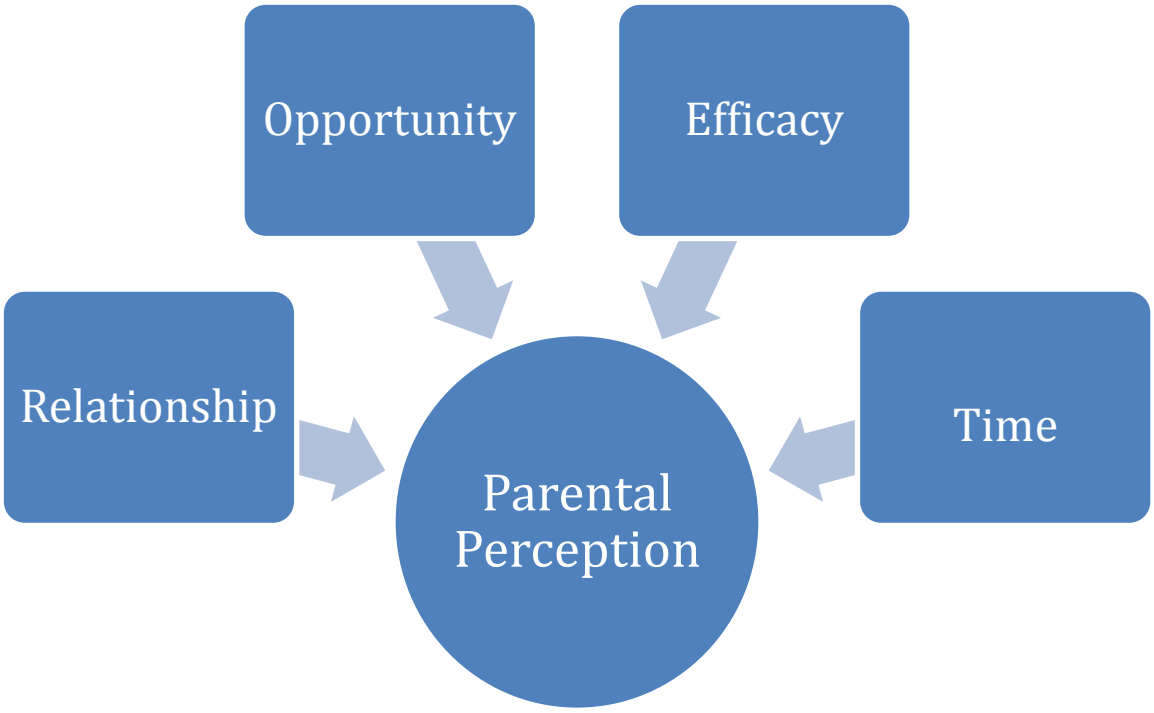
The final survey instrument included items from nine of the original eleven constructs. No items from the constructs Parental View of the Child and Academic Issues loaded strongly enough to be included in the final instrument. Items in these two constructs pertained almost exclusively to the child, rather than parents and teachers. Elimination of these types of items strengthened survey by emphasizing the parent-teacher relationship, rather than the parent-child or teacher-child relationships.

Theoretical Model

A theoretical model based on the findings of the study can be found in Figure 3. This model illustrates the concept that parents‟ perceptions of their child‟s classroom teacher are created through the combination of the influence of the four factors detailed in this study. The model demonstrates the factors of Parent-Teacher Relationships, Opportunity for Parent Involvement, Parent Efficacy, and Time for Parent Involvement together help create parents‟ perceptions of their child‟s classroom teacher.

Figure 3

Theoretical Model of the Study



Descriptive Data

Analyzing the data in this study provided the opportunity to determine descriptive data for a variety of different groups within the overall data set. Data grouped by the child‟s ethnicity,

child‟s grade in school, parents‟ level of education, child‟s free and reduced lunch status, and whether or not English was the first language of parents or students is provided in Tables 17-22. Data sorted by the child‟s ethnicity can be found in Table 17. Some research shows that minority parents are not as involved in their child‟s education and have less positive relationships with teachers as compared to Caucasian parents. In this study, Hispanic parents reported the highest level of satisfaction with their child‟s classroom teacher, while Asian parents had the lowest level of satisfaction. The results were the same for Factor 1, which measures parent-teacher relationships. Hispanic parents reported the lowest score in Factor 2 (Opportunity for Parent Involvement) and Factor 4 (Time for Parent Involvement). African-American parents reported the highest score for Factor 2, while Caucasian parents had the highest score for Factor 4. For Factor 3 (Parent Efficacy), Caucasian parents reported the highest score, while Asian parents had the lowest. One caution to these results is the N for Caucasian parents was 581, while the N for all other groups was less than 100.

Some research has shown that when considering elementary school age children, parents of younger children are more involved than parents of older children, and teachers involve parents of younger children more in the educational process. Results from this study, sorted by the child‟s grade in school, can be found in Table 18. In this study, parents of kindergartners and first graders reported the most positive perception of their child‟s classroom teacher. Parents of children in kindergarten also had the highest scores for each of the four factors.

Table 17

Results Sorted by Child's Ethnicity

Ethnicity	N	Teacher is Doing a Good Job	Positive Perception of the Teacher	My Child is Getting Good Education	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
African-American	73	4.48	4.51	4.30	4.41	4.09	4.53	3.82
Asian	87	4.34	4.44	4.31	4.32	4.05	4.26	3.69
Caucasian	581	4.51	4.57	4.40	4.51	4.08	4.61	3.97
Hispanic	30	4.63	4.60	4.43	4.55	3.97	4.33	3.63
Multi-racial	78	4.38	4.47	4.37	4.36	4.05	4.44	3.68
All	850	4.48	4.54	4.38	4.47	4.07	4.54	3.90

Factor 1: Parent-Teacher Relationships
Factor 2: Opportunity for Parent Involvement
Factor 3: Parent Efficacy
Factor 4: Time for Parent Involvement

Results of this study sorted by parents‟ education can be found in Table 19. Some research shows that a parent‟s level of efficacy is related to the parent‟s level of education - the higher the level of education, the higher the level of efficacy. In this study, parents who did not graduate from high school reported the lowest score in Factor 3 (Parent Efficacy). Parents who attended some college, were college graduates, or had acquired advanced degrees reported the highest score in Factor 3. Parents with advanced degrees reported the most positive perception of

classroom teachers, while parents who did not graduate from high school reported the least positive perception.

Table 18

Results Sorted by Child's Grade

Grade	N	Teacher is Doing a Good Job	Positive Perception of the Teacher	My Child is Getting Good Education	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Kindergarten	127	4.58	4.63	4.50	4.57	4.21	4.63	3.97
1st Grade	166	4.57	4.64	4.43	4.52	4.20	4.53	3.97
2nd Grade	151	4.42	4.44	4.38	4.37	4.04	4.53	3.93
3rd Grade	145	4.45	4.50	4.28	4.44	4.00	4.56	3.86
4th Grade	139	4.37	4.47	4.26	4.44	3.97	4.44	3.76
5th Grade	121	4.46	4.54	4.36	4.45	4.00	4.54	3.87
All	849	4.48	4.54	4.37	4.47	4.07	4.54	3.88

Factor 1: Parent-Teacher Relationships
Factor 2: Opportunity for Parent Involvement
Factor 3: Parent Efficacy
Factor 4: Time for Parent Involvement

Studies have differed about whether socio-economic status (measured in this study by whether students qualified for free or reduced price lunch), is related to parents" sense of efficacy and parent involvement. Results from this study, sorted by whether a child qualifies for free or reduced price lunch, can be found in Table 20. In this study, parents of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch price reported a lower perception of their child"s teacher. They also reported lower scores on Factors 1, 3, and 4. These parents" scores on Factor 2 (Opportunity for

Parent Involvement) were the same as parents whose children did not qualify for free or reduced priced lunch.

Table 19

Results Sorted by Parent's Education

Level of Education	N	Teacher is Doing a Good Job	Positive Perception of the Teacher	My Child is Getting Good Education	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Did Not Graduate HS	53	4.42	4.47	4.34	4.39	4.04	4.21	3.66
HS Graduate	91	4.44	4.48	4.35	4.40	4.10	4.46	3.51
Attended Some College	145	4.46	4.51	4.39	4.40	4.08	4.57	3.94
College Graduate	324	4.48	4.52	4.34	4.46	4.04	4.57	3.99
Advanced Degree	253	4.51	4.60	4.40	4.54	4.08	4.57	3.90
All	866	4.48	4.54	4.37	4.46	4.07	4.53	3.89

Factor 1: Parent-Teacher Relationships
Factor 2: Opportunity for Parent Involvement
Factor 3: Parent Efficacy
Factor 4: Time for Parent Involvement

Research has shown that cultural differences can create barriers to parent-teacher relationships. In this study, parents whose first language was English reported a more positive perception of their child"s teacher than parents whose first language was not English. Likewise, parents whose first language was English had higher scores on all four factors as compared to

parents whose first language was not English. Parents whose child‟s first language was English also had a more positive perception of their child‟s classroom teacher, as well as higher scores on all four factors, as compared to parents whose child‟s first language was not English. Results from this study, sorted by parents and children‟s first language, can be found in Tables 21 and 22.

Table 20

Results Sorted by Free/Reduced Lunch Status

Lunch Status	N	Teacher is Doing a Good Job	Positive Perception of the Teacher	My Child is Getting Good Education	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Free/Reduced Lunch	249	4.44	4.48	4.34	4.42	4.07	4.45	3.74
Paid Lunch	620	4.49	4.56	4.38	4.49	4.07	4.57	3.95
All	869	4.48	4.54	4.37	4.47	4.07	4.54	3.89

Factor 1: Parent-Teacher Relationships
Factor 2: Opportunity for Parent Involvement
Factor 3: Parent Efficacy
Factor 4: Time for Parent Involvement

Table 21

Results Sorted by Parents' First Language

First Language	N	Teacher is Doing a Good Job	Positive Perception of the Teacher	My Child is Getting Good Education	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
English	731	4.49	4.54	4.39	4.48	4.09	4.58	3.93
Not English	139	4.37	4.49	4.24	4.36	3.94	4.28	3.68
All	870	4.47	4.53	4.37	4.46	4.07	4.54	3.89

Factor 1: Parent-Teacher Relationships
Factor 2: Opportunity for Parent Involvement
Factor 3: Parent Efficacy
Factor 4: Time for Parent Involvement

Table 22
Results Sorted by Child's First Language

First Language	N	Teacher is Doing a Good Job	Positive Perception of the Teacher	My Child is Getting Good Education	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
English	789	4.48	4.54	4.38	4.48	4.08	4.57	3.92
Not English	84	4.38	4.44	4.25	4.31	3.96	4.20	3.60
All	873	4.47	4.53	4.37	4.46	4.07	4.53	3.89

Factor 1: Parent-Teacher Relationships
Factor 2: Opportunity for Parent Involvement
Factor 3: Parent Efficacy
Factor 4: Time for Parent Involvement

The means for the final four factors are listed in Table 23.

Table 23

Items & Factor Means (N = 874)

Factor	Items	Mean
Factor 1	2, 6, 7, 8, 13, 18, 21, 23, 32, 41, 46	4.46
Factor 2	12, 28, 35, 40, 48	4.07
Factor 3	9, 29, 30, 47	4.53
Factor 4	1, 15, 44	3.89

Factor 1: Parent-Teacher Relationships
Factor 2: Opportunity for Parent Involvement
Factor 3: Parent Efficacy
Factor 4: Time for Parent Involvement

Presentation of the New Instrument

The new instrument, including random arrangement of the items, is presented in Table 24. The final instrument, including a Likert-type response scale, can be found in Appendix D.

Table 24

The New Instrument with Random Arrangement of Items

1. My child‟s teacher makes me feel welcome at school
2. I believe my involvement in my child's education will significantly impact my child's success in school
3. I respect my child‟s teacher
4. My child‟s teacher is fair
5. My child‟s teacher provides opportunities for me to be involved in my child‟s education at school
6. I believe I am an involved parent
7. My child‟s teacher encourages me to be involved in my child‟s education
8. I trust my child‟s teacher

9. My child‟s teacher is a good communicator
10. I have enough time and energy to attend special events at school
11. My child‟s teacher provides me opportunities to volunteer in the classroom
12. I am glad my child has his/her current classroom teacher
13. I feel comfortable in talking with my child‟s teacher about a concern
14. My child‟s teacher involves me in educational decisions
15. My child‟s teacher cares about my child
16. My child‟s teacher helps me understand how I can be involved in my child‟s education
17. I believe maintaining regular contact with my child‟s teacher positively impacts my child‟s success in school
18. My child gets enough attention from his/her classroom teacher
19. My child‟s teacher is friendly
20. I have enough time to volunteer in the classroom
21. My child‟s teacher cares about my child‟s education
22. I believe it is important to maintain regular contact with my child‟s teacher
23. I have enough time to help my child with homework
24. My child‟s teacher is doing a good job educating my child
25. Overall, I have a positive perception of my child‟s teacher
26. My child is getting a good education at this school

Recommendations for Instrument Use

The Parent-Teacher Relationship Survey is intended to provide classroom teachers and principals with data useful in understanding parents‟ perceptions of their child‟s classroom teacher. The survey is designed to assess parents‟ perceptions of their perceived relationship with their child‟s classroom teacher. The instrument may be helpful to principals and teachers interested in gaining building-wide insight into how the school‟s parents perceive their relationships with the school‟s teachers.

The instrument could help faculties measure, understand, and establish positive, more effective relationships with parents. Strategies for addressing parent-teacher relationship issues could be provided through professional development at the district and building level.

Further Research

A further study could be conducted to reaffirm the results of this study. In particular, a study from a random population could provide normative data for the instrument. Such

normative data would then serve as a comparative basis for schools using the instrument. The instrument could also be used as a variable in the study of school effectiveness, both as a predictor variable and as an outcome variable. Such investigations could add insight about the correlations between parents‟ positive perceptions of their child‟s classroom teacher and increased student achievement. Additionally, the population surveyed through this study did not provide adequate insight into either English Language Learners or migrant workers and their relationship with their child‟s classroom teacher. Examining those relationships would provide additional research opportunities.

In essence, the instrument can be used to support changes in individual schools and to garner insights about the broader relationships between parent-teacher relationships and student academic success.

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Appendix A

Initial Parent-Teacher Relationship Survey

January 2011

Dear Elementary School Parent:

I am asking for your help to gather some important information. I am the principal of xxxxx Elementary School in Columbia, as well as a graduate student at the University of Missouri-Columbia. As an educator, a parent, and a doctoral student at MU, I am aware of the critical importance of the relationship between a parent and their child"s elementary teacher. Therefore, as a graduate student I am developing a survey to measure parents" perceptions about that relationship. To develop the survey instrument, I must collect the anonymous responses of hundreds of parents across the district. From those anonymous responses, I will work with my university advisor to statistically analyze and craft a valid and reliable survey instrument for determining teacher and parent relationships. An instrument like the one I am developing does not exist currently in the field of education, yet its value will be immense to parents and educators alike. Please read the remainder of this cover letter and complete the attached survey. Your anonymous responses are the critical first step toward creating a valuable tool for thousands of parents and educators in the years to come.

Participation is voluntary and responses are anonymous and secure

I think you will find the survey items interesting and thoughtful. However, please note that your participation in this study of parent/teacher relationships is optional. Should you choose to respond to the survey, your responses will be anonymous. Individual responses will not be shared with anyone from your child"s school. Should you choose not to respond, be assured that no one at your child"s school will be aware of your choice. Average response time to complete this study is slightly less than 10 minutes. Whether you choose to respond or not respond to this survey, your choice will have no impact on the services your child receives at your school. No one at your child"s school, including your child"s classroom teacher and the principal, will see your individual responses. To affirm you of your rights as a respondent, be assured that responses are anonymous, that no efforts will be made to link responses to individuals, and that there are no consequences to your student whether you do or do not choose to participate. All data for this study will be collectively analyzed from the hundreds of respondents across the elementary schools in the district. The University of Missouri is always sensitive to protecting the privacy and rights of respondents. So if you have any questions about this letter or the survey, please contact me at tmajerus@xxxx or by phone at (xxx-xxx-xxxx) or contact our University Institutional Review Board office for Human Subjects Research at umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu or by phone at (573) 882-9585. All data from this study will be kept confidential and stored on a secure, password protected hard drive. The University requires that data for studies such as this one be maintained for three years after the completion of the research project to ensure protection of your rights as a respondent.

Directions for completing the survey

This survey is intended to measure your perceptions of your child"s elementary classroom teacher. Therefore, if you have more than one child in elementary school I would ask you to please take the time to fill out a separate survey for each of your children attending this school.

When you have completed the survey, please seal it in the enclosed envelope. I am asking you to return the survey one of three ways.

1. Return the survey to the school office personally.
2. Have your child return the survey to the school office, or
3. Mail the survey to your school in the enclosed envelope (please remember to add postage).

When your survey arrives at the school office, the office staff will place your unopened envelope in a larger envelope which I will collect from the school.

Thank you in advance for your help with this project. The information you provide will help me develop a valid and reliable survey instrument to use to measure parents" perceptions of their child"s classroom teacher.

Sincerely,
Tim Majerus
University of Missouri-Columbia Graduate Student

Parent Survey

Please respond by darkening in the appropriate circle.

Section A						
1. My child is					Female ○	Male ○
2. My child's race is	African-American ○	Asian ○	Caucasian ○	Hispanic ○	Multi-racial ○	Pacific-Islander ○
3. My child's grade is	K ○	1st ○	2nd ○	3rd ○	4th ○	5th ○
4. After high school graduation, I would like my child to pursue (mark all that apply)			College ○	Job rather than further education ○	Military ○	Trade School ○
5. The most significant factor in my child's education is		Classroom Teacher ○	Curriculum & Materials ○	Extracurricular Opportunities ○	Home Environment ○	School of Attendance ○
6. The highest level of education I obtained was		Did Not Graduate High School ○	High School Graduate ○	Some College ○	College Degree ○	Advanced Degree ○
7. How many of your children have attended this school?			1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 or more ○
8. For those students, what was the total combined number of years they have attended this school?		Less Than 1 Year ○	1-3 Years ○	4-6 Years ○	7-9 Years ○	More than 9 years ○
9. How many times have you visited this school this year (not including parent/teacher conferences)?		Never ○	1-2 Times ○	3-5 Times ○	5-10 Times ○	More than 10 Times ○
10. Who initiated most of the contacts you had with the school this year?		Classroom teacher ○	Counselor ○	Office secretary ○	Me (Parent/ Guardian) ○	Principal ○
11. When you had contacts with school, which of the following best describes the reason for the contacts (select all that apply)			Praise or good news about my child ○	Academic/ grade concerns about my child ○	Behavior concerns about my child ○	Attendance concerns about my child ○
12. My child's teacher has contacted me by (select all that apply)				E-mail ○	Personal note or letter ○	Phone call ○

Section B

	Yes	No
1. My child qualifies for free or reduced price lunch	○	○
2. English was my first language	○	○
3. English was my child's first language	○	○
4. My child's teacher has visited my home	○	○
5. I requested that my child have his/her current teacher	○	○
6. One or more of my other children have also had this classroom teacher	○	○
7. I have volunteered in my child's classroom this year	○	○
8. I have volunteered in the school this year	○	○
9. I have met face to face with my child's teacher (other than parent/teacher conferences)	○	○

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Section C

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I have enough time to help my child with homework	①	②	③	④	⑤
2. My child"s teacher cares about my child	①	②	③	④	⑤
3. My child is safe at this school	①	②	③	④	⑤
4. My child"s teacher understands my cultural and ethnic heritage	①	②	③	④	⑤
5. My child"s teacher is welcome in my home	①	②	③	④	⑤
6. My child gets enough attention from his/her classroom teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
7. My child"s teacher is a good communicator	①	②	③	④	⑤
8. My child"s teacher cares about my child"s education	①	②	③	④	⑤
9. I believe maintaining regular contact with my child"s teacher positively impacts my child"s success in school	①	②	③	④	⑤
10. My child has excellent attendance	①	②	③	④	⑤
11. My child"s homework is not too easy or too hard	①	②	③	④	⑤
12. My child"s teacher involves me in educational decisions	①	②	③	④	⑤
13. My child"s teacher is friendly	①	②	③	④	⑤
14. This school has assisted me with improving my parenting skills	①	②	③	④	⑤
15. I have enough time and energy to attend special events at school	①	②	③	④	⑤
16. My child"s teacher and I work together to better my child"s education	①	②	③	④	⑤
17. My child"s teacher expects me to help my child with homework	①	②	③	④	⑤
18. I am glad my child has his/her current classroom teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
19. I seek opportunities to talk with my child"s teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
20. My child"s teacher contacts me with both concerns and praise regarding my child	①	②	③	④	⑤
21. My child"s teacher makes me feel welcome at school	①	②	③	④	⑤
22. My child"s behavior at school is excellent	①	②	③	④	⑤
23. I respect my child"s teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
24. My child is getting a good education at this school	①	②	③	④	⑤
25. My child"s teacher keeps me informed about what is happening in the classroom	①	②	③	④	⑤

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
26. My child‟s teacher provides opportunities for me to be involved in my child‟s education at home	①	②	③	④	⑤
27. I am comfortable going to my school and asking to speak with my child‟s teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
28. My child‟s teacher provides opportunities for me to be involved in my child‟s education at school	①	②	③	④	⑤
29. My involvement in my child's education will significantly impact my child's success in school	①	②	③	④	⑤
30. I am an involved parent	①	②	③	④	⑤
31. The amount of homework my child receives is appropriate	①	②	③	④	⑤
32. My child‟s teacher is fair	①	②	③	④	⑤
33. My child‟s teacher provides regular feedback on my child‟s academic progress	①	②	③	④	⑤
34. My child‟s teacher provides regular feedback on my child‟s behavior at school	①	②	③	④	⑤
35. My child‟s teacher encourages me to be involved in my child‟s education	①	②	③	④	⑤
36. I believe my child can be successful in school	①	②	③	④	⑤
37. I help my child with his/her homework	①	②	③	④	⑤
38. I believe it is my role to initiate contact with my child‟s teacher when I have a question or concern	①	②	③	④	⑤
39. My child is a top student academically	①	②	③	④	⑤
40. My child‟s teacher provides me opportunities to volunteer in the classroom	①	②	③	④	⑤
41. I trust my child‟s teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
42. I feel welcome at this school	①	②	③	④	⑤
43. My child‟s teacher appreciates the efforts I make regarding my child‟s education	①	②	③	④	⑤
44. I have enough time to volunteer in the classroom	①	②	③	④	⑤
45. My child does all assigned homework	①	②	③	④	⑤
46. I feel comfortable in talking with my child‟s teacher about a concern	①	②	③	④	⑤
47. I believe it is important to maintain regular contact with my child‟s teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
48. My child‟s teacher helps me understand how I can be involved in my child‟s education	①	②	③	④	⑤
49. I believe my child‟s teacher is doing a good job educating my child	①	②	③	④	⑤
50. Overall, I have a positive perception of my child‟s teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤

Questions about this survey should be directed to:

Tim Majerus
Principal
xxxx Elementary School

Appendix B

Letter to Classroom Teachers

January, 2011

Dear Elementary School Teacher,

My name is Tim Majerus. I am the principal at xxxxx Elementary School, and I am also a graduate student at the University of Missouri. I am working on my dissertation at MU, and I am asking for your help in gathering some data. My study involves creating a survey to measure parent perceptions regarding the relationship they have with their child‟s classroom teacher. I‟m sure you would agree that parent/teacher relationships are critical in elementary schools, and I am hopeful the results of this survey will help me craft a valid and reliable survey to use in the future to help measure that relationship. Your principal has agreed to allow me to survey the parents in your school, and I thank you in advance for your help with this project.

Attached to this letter is a classroom set of envelopes containing the parent survey. The survey asks parents a variety of questions designed to understand their perception of the relationship they have with their child‟s classroom teacher. It‟s important for both you and the parents of your students to know that the survey is anonymous. No individual or classroom data will be analyzed. When all surveys are collected I will share school-wide data with your principal, but there will be no way for him or her to identify individual or classroom responses.

In order to assure parents that their responses are anonymous, I have asked them to return the survey in the sealed envelope. They can either return the survey to the office themselves, have their child return it to the office, or mail the survey to the office.

Please send the survey home to your parents at your earliest convenience. You are welcome to read the survey before sending it home with your students. I believe I have provided you with enough surveys for your entire class (if you need an extra, the office has a few extra copies). However, because the survey asks questions about parent/teacher relationships, there is no need to send it home to parents with whom you have not had time to develop a significant relationship. Therefore, please do not send the survey home with students who joined your class after the November Parent/Teacher conferences. Please do send it home to all of the rest of your parents.

Thank you for your help in collecting data for my study! If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at xxx-xxxx.

Sincerely,

Tim Majerus

Appendix C

Additional Factor Runs

Table 25

Varimax Rotated Factor Pattern with Six Factors Rotated for 33 Items (N=945)

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
18	.835	.187	.107	.062	.102	.049
8	.812	.214	.182	.120	.073	.121
13	.803	.116	.212	.106	.033	.066
7	.802	.286	.101	.140	.036	.087
41	.799	.255	.179	.064	.136	.167
2	.796	.152	.110	.180	.086	.072
21	.780	.286	.214	.022	.096	.043
23	.775	.113	.272	.040	.146	.134
32	.764	.272	.232	.089	.148	.129
6	.704	.335	.008	.169	.088	.180
46	.655	.211	.436	.046	.108	.222
25	.636	.414	.213	.101	.061	.120
34	.575	.395	.245	.021	.144	.125
27	.519	.335	.434	.044	.089	.111
28	.431	.671	.243	.074	.128	.049
48	.426	.666	.159	.066	.158	.131
35	.444	.645	.228	.076	.183	.101
40	.305	.644	.155	.132	.117	.252
12	.383	.610	.135	.190	.051	-.093
31	.287	.392	.127	.161	.380	.048
9	.334	.167	.742	.116	.008	.019
47	.278	.301	.714	.112	.146	.088
29	.187	.118	.713	.154	.215	.142
30	.138	.133	.623	.371	.175	.207
38	.249	.124	.454	.120	.428	.175
15	.134	.118	.231	.784	.089	.084
44	.030	.235	.102	.763	-.010	.114
1	.236	-.049	.147	.634	.263	.152
37	.038	.085	.244	.131	.795	.114
17	.141	.185	.076	.055	.773	-.055
39	.087	.162	.091	.109	-.028	.824
22	.275	.033	.149	.135	.059	.673
45	.215	.055	.395	.218	.266	.496

Table 26

Varimax Rotated Factor Pattern with Four Factors Rotated for 25 Items (N=945)

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
18	.821	.247	.135	.057
8	.796	.290	.199	.119
13	.794	.177	.200	.110
2	.783	.211	.127	.177
41	.782	.345	.211	.079
7	.778	.354	.101	.140
23	.761	.180	.308	.073
21	.756	.328	.206	.035
32	.751	.329	.259	.115
6	.696	.363	.053	.182
46	.649	.267	.434	.104
25	.590	.483	.188	.125
34	.543	.440	.254	.070
48	.376	.726	.184	.082
28	.388	.715	.217	.089
35	.407	.692	.260	.084
40	.276	.676	.182	.165
12	.328	.631	.098	.157
29	.186	.131	.790	.172
9	.312	.180	.731	.097
47	.250	.328	.730	.131
30	.142	.147	.663	.413
15	.112	.138	.221	.795
44	.006	.237	.082	.762
1	.255	-.031	.186	.688

Appendix D

Final Survey

Parent-Teacher Relationship Survey

Please respond by darkening in the appropriate circle	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1. My child's teacher makes me feel welcome at school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2. I believe my involvement in my child's education will significantly impact my child's success in school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
3. I respect my child's teacher.	①	②	③	④	⑤
4. My child's teacher is fair.	①	②	③	④	⑤
5. My child's teacher provides opportunities for me to be involved in my child's education at school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
6. I believe I am an involved parent.	①	②	③	④	⑤
7. My child's teacher encourages me to be involved in my child's education.	①	②	③	④	⑤
8. I trust my child's teacher.	①	②	③	④	⑤
9. My child's teacher is a good communicator.	①	②	③	④	⑤
10. I have enough time and energy to attend special events at school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
11. My child's teacher provides me opportunities to volunteer in the classroom.	①	②	③	④	⑤
12. I am glad my child has his/her current classroom teacher.	①	②	③	④	⑤
13. I feel comfortable in talking with my child's teacher about a concern.	①	②	③	④	⑤
14. My child's teacher involves me in educational decisions.	①	②	③	④	⑤
15. My child's teacher cares about my child.	①	②	③	④	⑤
16. My child's teacher helps me understand how I can be involved in my child's education.	①	②	③	④	⑤
17. I believe maintaining regular contact with my child's teacher positively impacts my child's success in school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
18. My child gets enough attention from his/her classroom teacher.	①	②	③	④	⑤
19. My child's teacher is friendly.	①	②	③	④	⑤
20. I have enough time to volunteer in the classroom.	①	②	③	④	⑤
21. My child's teacher cares about my child's education.	①	②	③	④	⑤
22. I believe it is important to maintain regular contact with my child's teacher.	①	②	③	④	⑤
23. I have enough time to help my child with homework.	①	②	③	④	⑤
24. My child's teacher is doing a good job educating my child.	①	②	③	④	⑤
25. Overall, I have a positive perception of my child's teacher.	①	②	③	④	⑤
26. My child is getting a good education at this school.	①	②	③	④	⑤

VITA

Tim Majerus was born November 15, 1965 in Monroe, Wisconsin. He was raised in Cedar Falls, Iowa, where he graduated from high school in 1984. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in English Education from the University of Northern Iowa in 1989. Continuing his education, Mr. Majerus earned Master‟s and Educational Specialist Degrees in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia in 1997 and 2001, respectively. He completed his Doctor of Education from the University of Missouri-Columbia in 2011.

Mr. Majerus‟ professional career began as an English and journalism teacher at Fulton High School, where he taught for three years. He then taught elementary physical education and health for five years in the Russellville and North Callaway School Districts. Mr. Majerus began his administrative career as the principal of Williamsburg Elementary School in Williamsburg, Missouri from 1997-2001. He has served as the principal at Blue Ridge Elementary School in Columbia, Missouri since 2001.

Mr. Majerus and his wife, Mary, live in Columbia, Missouri with their three children, Tom, Claire, and Luke.