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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ITS EFFECTS ON STUDENT ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENT

By
Kevin G. Pinkett

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
4/16/02

Approved by _____

Date Approved 5/1/02

ABSTRACT

Kevin G. Pinkett
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ITS EFFECTS ON STUDENT
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT
2001/02
Dr. John Klanderman
Dr. Roberta Dihoff
Masters of arts in School Psychology

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of parental involvement on student academic achievement. Parental involvement using forty-nine fifth graders and twenty-five sixth graders from an inner city public school in Wilmington Delaware was measured by monitoring agenda book signatures and parent-teacher conferences attendance. Reading test scores of students with high parental involvement were compared to students with low parental involvement using a comparison of test score means and Pearson correlations. Results indicated that there was no significant difference between the reading test scores of students who had high parental involvement and the students who had low parental involvement. The following are the major conclusions of the study: (a) There are many dimensions of parental involvement. (b) The parental involvement dimension of communication has no significant effect on student reading achievement. (c) Ethnicity may have a correlation with parental involvement.

MINI-ABSTRACT

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The effect of parental involvement on student academic achievement was investigated. Results indicated that there is no significant difference between the reading test scores of students who had high parental involvement and the students who had low parental involvement. The notion that parental involvement has many different dimensions was reinforced.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Need

Where as parental support was once deemed crucial only for children with special needs popular sentiment has changed. “No longer is the push for parental involvement directed primarily toward children with a high risk of educational concerns, health problems, disabilities, neglect, or possible abuse. All children need the support of family involvement in their education” (Berger, 2000). Both public opinion and professional literature insist that parental involvement in schools has a positive effect on student academic achievement. The Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, (Harris and Associates, 1987) documented public sentiment of the importance of parental involvement by conducting a study that randomly selected 1,002 teachers and 2,011 parents nationwide. This study revealed that seventy-five percent of teachers expressed a sentiment for parents to be more involved and seventy-four percent of parents expressed a sentiment to be more involved. The notion that parental involvement is important is expressed in professional literature as well. In the Journal for a Just & Caring Education Carolyn Wanat (1997) wrote, “The benefits of parental involvement in learning are beyond dispute.” Even are former president William Jefferson Clinton in his question and answer session at the national PTA legislative conference (1995) stated “At a time when many of our important citizenship organizations have been suffering and civic

institutions generally are often in decline, the PTA has grown as parents have come back in droves to understanding that they had to do more to make their children's education work and that they had to be involved." Today schools attempt to design elaborate programs that foster and promote parental involvement. There are a plethora of books that push the envelop for parent involvement as well. These books provide ideas and suggestions that promote parental support. Programs such as the Saturday School, Parent As Teachers (PAT) program, and Comer's Programs in New Haven are all examples of recent pushes for parent involvement (Berger, 2000). All of these books and implementation of programs are with the assumption that parental involvement increases academic performance. There has been research conducted that reinforces this theory but this research is limited. When considering the amount of time and money devoted to parental involvement it should be a topic that is researched extensively and thoroughly.

Purpose

The theory that parent involvement effects student performance gained more and more support towards the end of the twentieth century. Going into the new millennium the campaign for parental involvement has reached an all time high. While this investigation is not the definitive answer, the purpose of this study was to test the notion that parental involvement has an effect on student academic achievement. This study provides evidence to discount the notion that parent involvement is essential in today's schools.

Hypothesis

A positive relationship exists between agenda book and parent-teacher conference parental involvement in schools and children's academic reading achievement.

Theory

Diana Baumrind created a typology of four parenting styles: indulgent, authoritarian, authoritative, and uninvolved. A child's social competence, psychosocial development, problem behavior, and academic performance can be predicted by a particular parenting style. Of the four parenting styles there is a high correlation between parental involvement and authoritative parenting (Paulson, 1994).

Indulgent parents are considered permissive and nondirective parents. They are more responsive which is "the extent to which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to children's special needs and demands" (Baumrind, 1991) then they are demanding which is "the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys" (Baumrind, 1991). They can be considered lenient. Indulgent parents do not require mature behavior. They try to avoid confrontations and they allow a considerable amount of self-regulation. Children who have indulgent parents usually have high self-esteem and good social skills. They are usually high in individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion. The drawbacks of children who have indulgent parents are that they tend to have low levels of maturity and are undisciplined. They can be a

behavior problem in school and they tend to have low levels of achievement academically.

Authoritarian parents are the complete opposite of indulgent parents. They are more demanding than responsive. They require obedience expecting their instructions to be carried out without an explanation. They provide a structured and well-ordered environment where the rules are clearly stated. Authoritarian parents exercise psychological control, which “refers to control attempts that intrude into the psychological and emotional development of the child” (Barber, 1996). They expect their children to comply with their judgments, values, and goals without question. Children with authoritarian parents tend to perform moderately well in school. They exhibit a high sense of control and tend not to be a behavior problem. On the downside however children from authoritarian families tend to be low in individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion. They tend to have poor social skills and low self-esteem. These children are prone to have higher levels of depression.

Authoritative parents are demanding like Authoritarian parents. However, they differ from them in the regard that they are low in psychological control and high in responsiveness. They designate clear standards for their children’s conduct and they monitor these standards. They are assertive but not in away that is intrusive or restrictive. When dealing with discipline they are supportive instead of punitive. Authoritative parents want their children to be assertive, socially responsible, self-regulated, and cooperative. Children who have authoritative parents are usually socially competent and exhibit solid psychosocial functioning. They are usually not a behavior problem. They

are prone to be self-reliant and intrinsically motivated. Children from authoritative households demonstrate solid levels of academic achievement.

Uninvolved parents are low in the domain of responsiveness and behavior control. They do not place high demands on their children and they do not have high expectations for their children to behave appropriately. In severe cases uninvolved parents can be neglectful. Children who have uninvolved parents tend to perform poorly socially and academically. Their psychosocial development is prone to be low and they tend to engage in problematic behavior.

By definition an authoritative parent would have to be involved in their children's school. Authoritative parents set clear concise standards of what they expect from their children and monitor these standards to ensure they are being met. To do this they must communicate and interact with teachers. Parents who are authoritative also demonstrate responsiveness. Parents who are responsive are warm and supportive. To be supportive parents would have to attend school functions such as assemblies, concerts, and sporting events to show their support. Supportive parents are there for their children when they need help with their homework. The two qualities are intertwined. It is not possible to be an authoritative parent without being involved. Research has indicated that this is true. Paulson (1994) indicated a high correlation between parent involvement and authoritative parenting. Because research has proven that an authoritative parenting style can predict student academic achievement in theory it should be safe to conclude that parental involvement can predict student academic achievement. This is the notion the current study will attempt to reinforce.

Definitions

Academic Achievement-To succeed or do well in school by obtaining high marks on assignments and tests.

Acquiescent-The act of agreeing or consenting without argument (Webster, 1996)

Demandingness- Parents control of their children's behavior it is "the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys" (Baumrind, 1991).

Grade equivalency score-Score obtained on the STAR test that explains a student's reading proficiency in terms of grade level.

Parent involvement-Refers to parents being involved in their children's education through communication with teachers, helping with homework, attending school functions or being directly involved in the school itself.

Parenting style- "The construct of parenting style is used to capture normal variations in parent's attempts to control and socialize their children" (Baumrind, 1991). Parenting style refers to the level of responsiveness and demandingness parents' use in rearing their children.

Psychological control-"refers to control attempts that intrude into the psychological and emotional developmental of the child" (Barber, 1996)

Psychosocial development- Social tasks to master at each level of development.

Responsiveness- Parental supportiveness and warmth it is "the extent to which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to children's special needs and demands" (Baumrind, 1991)

Self assertion- bold in putting forward or insisting on one's own rights, claims, or opinions (Webster, 1996)

Self regulation- The act of regulating the self.

Assumptions

There were four major assumptions that must be considered. 1). The first assumption is that the instruction and curriculum of the three teachers in this study were fairly equivalent. 2). The second major assumption was that the STAR test, which is a test that measures student reading level, was an accurate measure of student academic achievement. 3). The third major assumption was parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences and parent signatures in the agenda book were an accurate measure of parental involvement. 4). A fourth major assumption is that the measures of parental involvement and the STAR test grade equivalency scores obtained during the four week period were reflective of students' parental involvement and reading level overall.

There were also a few minor assumptions to consider. 1). It is assumed that all parent signatures were indeed their signatures and not a student's attempt to avoid the consequences of not having their agenda book signed. 2). It is also assumed that the three teachers records of who was and was not getting their agenda books signed were accurate.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was the sample. The sample size was small and not a good representation of a normative sample. The sample consisted of three classrooms all

from the same school with approximately thirty students in each class. After students were eliminated for various reasons there were only thirty-seven students for each test group. Geographical concerns limited the study as well. Using only one location reduced the range of students possible for the study. Also each class was primarily comprised of Caucasians and African American students. There was little to no representation of any other ethnic groups. Another limitation of the study was the method used to assess student academic reading achievement. Students' reading levels were obtained using the administration of only one test.

Overview

In chapter two several studies on parental involvement will be presented. Research relevant to the current study will be assessed. A deliberation on the possible implementation of practices utilized in previous studies will be noted. Finally chapter two will end with a discussion on the previous research done on parental involvement.

In chapter three an outline of the study will be presented. This will include demographic information about the sample. The instruments used to measure parental involvement and academic achievement will be described as well. After that the overall design will be provided. Finally testable hypotheses will be presented followed by an analysis of models used to test this hypothesis

The results of this study will be investigated in chapter four. In this chapter data will be presented with the assistance of tables and figures. This chapter will provide evidence to support or disprove the notion that parental involvement supports student academic achievement.

Chapter five will analyze the results. The chapter will begin with a brief summary of the study. Then data from chapter two will be combined with results from chapter four and conclusions will be drawn. Finally implications and recommendations for future research will be given.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

Many researchers argue that the term parental involvement is too broad. They argue that parental involvement can encompass many different things. The broad scope of the term may account for the inconsistency of research pertaining to parental involvement due to the possibility of researchers assessing different aspects of the term. Many researchers have broken parental involvement down into many different components (Anderson & Trivette, 1995; Epstein, 1987, 1992, 1994; Fan 2001). Several studies support the notion that parental involvement effects student academic achievement (Fehrmann, Keith & Richards; Griffith, 1996; Keith & Keith, 1993). However, there are also several studies that discount the notion that parental involvement effects achievement (Reynolds, 1992; White, Taylor & Moss, 1992; Zellman & Waterman, 1998). Research relevant to parental involvement will be reviewed in chapter two. There are several studies considered. Research dealing with breaking parent involvement down into components is reviewed first. Research supporting parent involvement is reviewed next followed by research that discounts the notion that parental involvement effects achievement. Finally, research that indirectly supports the belief that parental involvement effects academic achievement is presented. A brief discussion follows concerning their importance and its implication on this particular study.

Dimensions of Parental Involvement

Epstein (1987) initially identified four types of parental involvement that became widely recognized: basic obligations, school-to-home communications, parent involvement at school, and parent involvement in learning activities at home. Epstein (1992, 1994) later revised and expanded her typology to include six levels: assisting parents in child rearing skills, school-parent communication, involving parents in school volunteer opportunities, involving parents in home based learning, involving parents in school decision making, and involving parents in school community collaborations. Although Epstein's typology is widely recognized and accepted Epstein views are mainly from the perspective of teachers and the school. Epstein's views focus mainly on what teachers and the school can do to stimulate parental involvement.

Fan (2001) used exploratory factor analysis to empirically examine the dimensions of parental involvement. Fan used the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 to obtain data. This data contains a nationally representative sample of over twenty-four thousand, five hundred students who were in the eighth grade. Questionnaires were given to the students, parents, and teachers about multiple items of parental involvement. Fan ran factor analysis on data obtained from the student and parent questionnaires. Factor analysis of the student data identified four dimensions of parental involvement: communication, education aspiration (for children), participation, and supervision. Factor analysis of the parent data came up with seven dimensions of parental involvement: TV rules, communication, contact with school, PTA, volunteer, supervision, and education aspiration.

Ho and Williams (1996) believe one of the weaknesses in parental involvement research is the tendency of parental involvement to be used as a global measure instead of assessing its multidimensional effects. Ho and Williams used factor analysis to identify four dimensions of parental involvement using data from the National Education Longitudinal Study (1988). These four dimensions are home discussion, school communication, home supervision, and school participation. Home discussion involvement encompasses discussion about the child's social and academic life. Home expectation involvement deals with the supervision of things such as when to be home, how late to stay up, household duties, TV time, and TV shows. Home-school communication involvement includes communication with the school on students' schoolwork. The final dimension volunteer work for school involves participation in school activities.

Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) hypothesized that there are three forms of parental involvement. Parents' behavioral involvement is classified as the first. Parents' behavioral involvement includes visiting the school and taking part in educational affairs. Behavioral involvement provides information that is useful to help in their children's schooling. The second dimension is listed as parents' personal involvement. Parents' personal involvement is showing that they care about their child's affective experiences in and out of school. Personal involvement refines the affective characteristics of the child and creates a positive attitude towards school as well as the self. The final dimension of Grolnick and Slowiaczek's three categories is parental intellectual involvement. Intellectual involvement encompasses children's exposure to cognitively stimulating activities such as reading books and discussing current events.

Heymann and Earle (2000) claim that parental involvement comes in several different forms. Heymann and Earle identify six different forms, which include developing and using skills to support effective learning, engaging in home-to-school communication about student progress, volunteering at school, assisting their children with homework, becoming involved in school governance issues and decisions, and coordinating and integrating community services that will enhance the learning experience. Heymann and Earle conclude that no matter how you define parental involvement it is an important factor in children's school success.

Anderson and Trivette (1995) identified four components of parental involvement by observing and analyzing previous research completed on parental involvement. In viewing previous research on parental involvement Anderson and Trivette noticed that the definitions of parental involvement primarily fell under four major categories. These four major categories were used to create four dimensions of parental involvement: parental academic aspirations and expectations for children, participation in school activities and programs, home structure that supports learning, and communication with children about school.

Flaxman and Inger (1992) identified three unique ways that parents, with the assistance of the school, can be involved. The first form of parental involvement is direct involvement in the school. Flaxman and Inger claim that the greatest power parents have is their ability to select the school their children attend. This makes schools more accountable and more responsive due to fear of parents removing their child and placing them in a more competitive school. Another form of direct parental involvement in the school is having parents becoming involved in the governance of their local schools.

Here parents work with principals and teachers to manage the school and solve its unique problems. The second form of parental involvement is a parent-training program. This form of parental involvement deals with parents playing a role reinforcing or improving school-related skills at home. School districts can actually provide parents a variety of special training programs that help parents develop communication skills to work with their children. School districts can also provide activities to help parents develop self-discipline and an achievement orientation. The final form of parental involvement is family resource and support programs. Many schools have added a range of activities that provide direct services to parents. They include home visiting services, job counseling and training, health clinics, substance abuse treatment, support and discussion groups, and before and after school programs for children of working parents. The purposes of these programs are to prevent physical and emotional problems, to make life safer and happier for children, and to make life less stressful for their parents. This gives parents the confidence and the capabilities to become directly involved with their child's schooling and the ability to positively promote their child's development.

There are several other researchers (Dimmock & O'donoghue; Fehrmann, Keith, & Reimers) who have recognized several different dimensions of parental involvement. The variety of these different types and dimensions of parental involvement exhibit that there is a great deal of uncertainty in terms of defining parental involvement. Each individual research study constructs its own definition of parental involvement and what it entails. In a sense, each study is measuring a different aspect of parental involvement. The previous studies have attempted to identify different aspects of parental involvement.

The following will attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of parental involvement on academic achievement.

Evidence Supporting Parental Involvement

Griffith (1996) used parent perceptions and structural characteristics of one hundred, twenty-two elementary schools in Montgomery county Maryland to examine the relations of parental involvement and empowerment with student academic performance. The sample of elementary schools was heterogeneous in socio demographic characteristics to allow generalizability. Students used were in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade because elementary school is where the relationship is believed to be the greatest. Griffith used a survey consisting of forty-one questions taken from national and regional surveys of school climate and satisfaction to measure parental involvement. Questions were asked about parents' participation in volunteer activities at the school, attending parent teacher meetings, and school activities. Scores on standardized achievement tests were used to measure academic achievement. Griffith found that the measure of parental involvement and empowerment could reliably predict academic achievement. Parental involvement produced a correlation of 0.56 $p < 0.01$, two tailed with student academic achievement.

Keith & Keith (1993) investigated whether or not parental involvement improves students' academic performance. The data used to conduct this study was obtained from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) of 1988. The NELS was a large study of well over twenty thousand nationally represented eighth grade students. The NELS base-year includes data from students, parents, two teachers, and their school

administrators. Students completed a forty-five minute questionnaire designed to collect information about various aspects of students' lives. An eighty-five minute series of achievement tests were administered as well. To develop the parental involvement variable Keith & Keith observed student and parent file items that fit common definitions of parental involvement from research literature. Academic achievement was created using scores on the four short standardized test of reading, mathematics, social studies, and science. "The results suggest that parental involvement in students' academic lives is indeed a powerful influence on eighth-grade students' achievement"(Keith & Keith 1993). Results also suggest that parental involvement influenced all four areas of academic achievement having the strongest influence in math and social studies. Keith and Keith suggest that parents become more involved when their children perform well in school rather than becoming more involved when they do poorly. These results suggest that previous achievement effects parental involvement and parental involvement effects current achievement. Results also suggest that parents of higher social economic status are more involved than parents who are of lower economic status.

Xin (1999) used the Longitudinal Study of American Youth (LSAY) to examine the effects of different types of parental involvement on students' advanced mathematics participation in grades eight to twelve. The LSAY was a six-year panel study of American public middle and high schools with a focus on mathematics and science education. Data in the panel was collected from a national representative sample of three thousand, one hundred, sixteen students in fifty-two schools randomly selected from across the United States. Data was obtained for the LSAY by using student questionnaires. The LSAY is strongly regarded for it's coverage of variables pertaining

to students' achievement, attitudes, family background, and variables describing school characteristics. Xin used Ho and Willms (1996) four dimensions of parental involvement, which are home discussion, home expectation, home-school communication, and volunteer work for school as the four levels of parental involvement. Mathematics are often referred to as the "critical filter" in that students with inadequate mathematics preparation lose many career choices made available to them (Sells, 1973). Participation in advanced mathematics can be considered a form of academic achievement. The results of Xin's study found volunteer work for school as the most significant parental involvement predictor of student participation in advanced mathematics in grades eight to ten. Home discussion was the most significant parental involvement predictor of student participation in advanced mathematics in grades ten and eleven. Home-school communication parental involvement had a strong effect on student participation in advanced mathematics in the ninth grade. Home expectation parental involvement did not have a significant effect on advanced mathematics participation rates. Xin's study is relevant because the possibility of different forms of parental involvement effecting student academic achievement was explored using student participation in advanced mathematics to measure academic achievement. This study also demonstrated that different types of parental involvement have different effects. This study also suggests "that not only may different types of parental involvement have different effects at a each time point, but also they have different effect patterns over time"(Xin, 1999).

Faires et al. (2000) conducted a study using a heterogeneous mixture of twenty, first grade boys and girls from a variety of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Faires created a control group and an experimental group. The experimental group was

given a home reading program to be administered by the parents. The control group was not. A pre-test and a post-test were administered to determine the subjects reading level before and after the experiment. The level of achievement was measured by the improvement in the subjects reading level during the five-week period. Although her sample was small, Faires was able to find a significant level of improvement in the experimental group. Fairs study supports the notion that parental involvement has a positive effect on student academic achievement.

Fehrmann, Keith & Reimers (1987) studied the effects of parental involvement on grades. They used a sample of twenty-eight thousand, fifty-one high school seniors taken from the first wave of the National Center for Education Statistics' High School and Beyond Longitudinal Study (1980). Parental involvement was measured by asking students' questions about the degree to which parents influenced their plans for after high school, monitored their daily activities, and checked school progress. Students' grades were measured simply by asking students what grades they usually earned. Parental involvement was found to influence grades. "The results suggest that parental involvement does have an important direct effect on grades"(Fehrmann, Keith & Reimers 1987).

Anne T. Henderson and Nancy Berla (1994) conducted a review of relevant research pertaining to parental involvement and concluded that there are several positive effects of parental involvement. The research suggests that educators hold higher expectations of students whose parents collaborate with the teacher. Research also suggests that there is improvement in disadvantaged students' achievement almost to the point where it can reach levels that are standard for middle-class children. Another point

the research suggests is that junior and senior high-school students whose parents remain involved make better transitions, maintain a higher quality of work, and develop realistic plans for their future. In contrast students whose parents are not involved are more likely to drop out of school. The review of literature not only found parental involvement to improve student academic achievement but it also found it to improve teacher morale. Henderson and Berla concluded “The research has become overwhelmingly clear; parent involvement – and that means all kinds of parents—improves student achievement”(Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Silvino (1975) derived ten postulates about parental involvement. He claims that these ten postulates do not function independently of one another but rather in cooperation with one another. He concluded that these ten postulates provide substantial support and justification of parental involvement. These ten postulates are as follows:

1. Involved parents can do a great deal toward providing support systems for one another. They may assist one another with knowledge, skills, encouragement and the strength in numbers necessary to combat immutable bureaucracies, insensitive social systems, and recalcitrant social service agencies.
2. Parental involvement may serve as a partial solution to the shortage of competent and dedicated paraprofessionals in the helping professions—a situation, which is likely to continue so long as generalists are trained to fill roles requiring specialized (but sometimes mundane) functioning.
3. Parental involvement and activism in educational systems should serve to maximize intrinsic consumer satisfaction at a time of widespread public dissatisfaction with governmental and educational agency functioning.

4. Educational strategies and technologies now exist, although at a rather embryonic stage of development, which can be implemented by supervised parents to move principles developed in educational laboratories into homes and communities.
5. Parental involvement seems to decrease the financial cost of education to society in the long run. To illustrate, longitudinal studies have shown that children oppositional to the school and social requirements with parents who are unable to assist in modifying such difficulties frequently do not become productive citizens in maturity. Rather, they are prone to develop psychiatric disturbances.
6. The discipline of applied behavior analysis has provided the insight that the behavior of children is shaped and maintained to meet the requirements of an environmental context. Moreover, naturalistic observers in psychology have reliably reported that young children spend most of their time at home, with parents. Therefore, if educators wish to modify attitudes, dispositions, habits or other areas of performance, the logical place to intervene is with the individuals most pervasive in children's lives—namely parents.
7. A substantial body of research has shown that the period of development from eighteen months to three years is of profound and lasting developmental significance. In order to provide comprehensive educational and stimulatory activities to children of that age, parents necessarily need to be involved, at least under our current system of public education.
8. Parents who learn to teach their children at an early stage of development have been shown to retain their skill and apply it over extended periods of time and with other children, particularly if continued support is provided by professional educators.

9. Parents who develop skill in instructional and interpersonal interaction with their children have proven likely to share their knowledge with fellow parents. Thus, a “diffusion effect” occurs, increasing still further the cost effectiveness of parental involvement.

10. Parental involvement in the education of their children is further justified, since, from our society’s perspective, parents are both morally and legally responsible for their children’s performance, behavior, and development. This principle, of course, is particularly true in relation to preschool and primary age children.

Evidence Discounting the Notion of Parental Involvement

McNeal (2001) investigated four different measures of parental involvement to see what effects they had on student cognitive and behavioral outcomes. McNeal used data obtained from the first two years of the National Educational Longitudinal Study. To be included in his analysis subjects had to be attending public school, taken the battery of achievement tests at the baseline and first follow-up, and had parent level data. The sample used to examine various behavioral outcomes consisted of eleven thousand, four hundred, one cases. The sample used to examine parent involvement’s effect on dropping out consisted of fifteen thousand, six hundred sixty-three cases. McNeal used Principal Component’s factor analysis with a promax rotation to measure parental involvement. The analysis yielded the four dimensions of parental involvement. The four-weighted factor scores were then included in ordinary least squares and logistic regression models to determine parental involvement’s effect on student academic achievement, truancy, and dropping out. McNeal found that parental involvement is not

a consistent factor in terms of improving student academic achievement. “The only dimension of parental involvement that is remotely consistent in terms of improving achievement and reducing problematic behavior is parent-child discussion”(McNeal 2001). McNeal concluded that, “parental involvement has little direct effect on achievement because it is essentially a cognitive outcome and parental involvement predominantly affects behavioral outcomes”(McNeal, 2001).

Okagaki and Frensch (1995) conducted a study attempting to identify underlying factors that may be related to school achievement in Mexican American children. Their sample consisted of eighty-two Hispanic parents of fourth and fifth grade students in three neighboring suburban school districts in northern California. High and low achieving students were identified using their scores from their achievement test (Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills reading, math, and language tests). Parents were given The Home-School Connection Questionnaire, which was developed to assess parents’ beliefs about education, school achievement, and self-reported parental behaviors. Okagaki and Frensch were primarily concerned with parental beliefs and practices that distinguish high achievers from low achievers. However, their parent practices section included a parental involvement section. In this section parents reported the frequency with which they helped their child with schoolwork, provided general enrichment activities, and modeled literacy skills at home. Okagaki and Frensch found “Hispanic parents of high and low achievers did not differ on how frequently they report helping children with their schoolwork, or doing general enrichment activities with their children”(Okagaki & Frensch, 1995).

Anderson and Trivette (1995) produced mixed results in their study on parental involvement and its effects on student academic achievement. A national sample of twenty-one thousand, eight hundred thirty-five eighth grade students and their parents were used to obtain data. Parent and student self-reports were used to obtain measures of parental involvement. Students' grades were used to measure achievement. They discovered that different components of parental involvement have different effects on student achievement. Of the four components educational aspirations had the most powerful influence on academic achievement. High communication about school and high participation in school activities did not have a significant effect on achievement. Home structure had a small correlation but it was negative. Home structure is classified as strong parental control and rules. Anderson and Trivette suggest that the negative correlation was because rigid rules and structure about schoolwork, TV, and GPA may be imposed when students' academic performance is less than satisfactory.

Reynolds (1992) produced a low to moderate correlation. His study was a longitudinal study that measured perceptions of parental involvement and their correlation with reading and mathematics test performance. His sample consisted primarily of low-income minority students. Reynolds used a twenty-one-item scale to be filled out by the students, parents, and teachers assessing the frequency of parent behaviors in the school. Achievement was measured using a reading and a mathematics test. Reynolds did find a correlation but he found that student and parent perceptions of parental support had the lowest correlations. Teacher perceptions had the highest correlation. Reynolds concluded "despite its presumed positive influence, there is no

consistent evidence that parental involvement... has a significant influence on academic outcomes" (Reynolds, 1992).

Zellman & Waterman (1998) used one hundred ninety-three second and fifth grade children to observe the impact of parent school involvement on children's educational outcomes. Parental involvement was broken into two components, parent school involvement and homework involvement. Parent school involvement was measured by asking the mother how many times they visited their child's school in the past year for a series of reasons. These reasons included attendance at school events, participation on a school council board, regular volunteer activity, employment at school, and PTA meetings. Homework involvement was measured by asking the child and the mother how much each parent helped with homework. The correlation between the mother's and the child's responses were low so they went with the mother's responses. The child's grades were obtained to measure achievement. Student's were also administered the Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test (K-BIT) to measure intelligence. Zellman & Waterman also videotape the child and the mother working through a problem they both earlier described as being problematic. This was used to assess parenting style. Fourteen percent were authoritative, thirteen percent were permissive, nine percent were indifferent, twenty-six percent were authoritarian, nine percent were crazy making, nine percent were unclear, and the rest did not fit into a category. Finally parent enthusiasm was measured by asking mothers three questions. Zellman & Waterman found that school site involvement was unrelated with homework involvement. Results found that parental involvement was related to achievement. However, they also found that adding parenting enthusiasm and parenting style into the equation for parental involvement

improved prediction of reading scores and that removing parental involvement all together had a rather minimal effect on the correlation. This suggested that student academic achievement was being effected by other causes.

Related Studies

Paulson's study (1994) analyzed a combination of parenting styles and parental involvement to see what effects these variables have on achievement. Paulson's study is important because she studied these two concepts together. It tests the theory that authoritative parents are indeed parents who are involved in the school. It also investigates the notion that parental involvement does effect student academic achievement. Paulson's sample consisted of two hundred forty-seven ninth grade students and their parents. Paulson broke parental involvement down into three components: values, interest in schoolwork, and involvement in school functions. The three components were measured using student and parent self-reports. Parent demandingness and responsiveness were also measured using the information obtained from the self-reports. Achievement was measured by students' self-reported grades from their most recent grading period. Paulson's results do support the notion that authoritative parents are parents who are involved. The results also support the notion that parental involvement has a positive effect on achievement. "As expected, adolescents' (both boys' and girls') reports of both maternal and paternal demandingness, responsiveness, and parental involvement in achievement predicted significant proportions of the variance in achievement outcome"(Paulson, 1994). Paulson found that

of the three levels of parental involvement parent values toward achievement seem to be the most significant contributor to student achievement.

Parenting style and its correlates by Nancy Darling (1999), involves Baumrind's parenting styles and how it influences children's social competence, academic performance, psychosocial development, and problem behavior. Parenting style and its correlates is relevant to the current study because it investigates an authoritative parenting style. An authoritative parenting style is synonymous with parental involvement because the characteristics of the two are the same. Parenting style and its correlates demonstrate that authoritative parenting is one of the most consistent family predictors of competence from early childhood through adolescence. The areas of competence are listed as social competence, psychosocial development, problem behavior, and academic performance. Parenting style and its correlates concludes that an authoritative parenting style, which is synonymous with a parent who is involved, is a consistent predictor of student academic achievement.

Berner (1993) investigated the possibility of extrinsic factors, such as the active involvement of parents, affecting the condition of public school buildings, and that building condition in turn effecting student achievement. This study was done in the District of Columbia. The District of Columbia school system is made up of elementary and secondary schools with a wide variety of building ages, student population compositions, and building conditions. There are also a wide array of socioeconomic groups ranging from wealthy and poor areas and a variety of racial compositions in the population in different areas of the city. The Committee on Public Education (COPE) organized groups of volunteer maintenance workers, engineers, architects, and other

professionals to visit the schools and produce a report on the buildings conditions and the facilities' adequacy. Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) budget and membership were used to measure parental involvement. Berner (1993) found that "The size of a public school's Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) budget is positively related to the school building's condition." Berner (1993) also found that "An improvement in the school's condition by one category, say from poor to fair, is associated with a 5.5 point improvement in average academic achievement scores". Evidence suggests that the PTA, which is a form of parental involvement, is positively related to the condition of the building. The condition of the building is positively related to the level of student's academic achievement scores, which indirectly suggests that parental involvement positively effects student academic achievement.

Leik and Chalkley (1990) evaluated the Head Start Family Impact Project to investigate the benefits of parental involvement. The Head Start Family Impact Project was a program funded by the Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, and the University of Minnesota. The program began in nineteen eighty-six. The purpose of the program was to study the family system and to investigate the notion that joint parent-child interaction in the context of Head Start would be the most beneficial form of parental involvement. Only families headed by single mothers were included in the sample. Eighty-one single Head Start mothers and their children participated in assessments held early in the Head Start year and again at the end of the Head Start year. Finally, twenty-one mothers and their children who were on the waiting list also participated in the assessments as control families. In all forty-two were white, forty were black, and twenty were Native American. The assessments

measured the parent, the family, and the child. Mothers answered questions that supplied most of the data. The Head Start families were placed in one of two groups: enriched or regular. Mothers placed in regular groups were free to participate in Head Start as they wished with no specific requirements or encouragements. The enriched group had the same privileges as the regular group but also participated in special activities throughout the Head Start year. The special activities included two support groups for the mothers, computer games designed to encourage interaction between the mother and child; and two parent-child group activities focusing on role-playing and games to play together. There were thirty participants in the enriched group, fifty-one in the regular group, and twenty-one in the control group. On the average the Head Start children showed an increase in their sense of their own competence and social acceptance. Parents in both the enriched and regular groups increased their estimate of their children's competence and social acceptance to the point that by the end of the year the children and their parents were in basic agreement. In comparison the mothers in the control group did not exhibit an increase in accurateness of their evaluations of their child's abilities. Control group mothers' assessments actually declined slightly with mothers ending the year with an even greater underestimation of their own children than they had in the first assessment. These results suggest that involving mothers in Head Start helps them to view their children more positively and more as the children actually view themselves, which can have great long-term success by encouraging the child to aspire to greater achievement.

Discussion

The review of research has several implications for future research. All though an extensive amount of research has been done on parental involvement and its' effects on student academic achievement the results are inconsistent. There are studies that support the belief that parental involvement effects student achievement; studies that do not, and still others that have produced mixed results. Inconsistent findings suggest the need for further research. Another implication for future research is the possibility that different aspects of parental involvement effect student achievement differently. The theory that there are different dimensions of parental involvement provides an explanation of the inconsistent results typically displayed in the research of parental involvement. Finally parent, student, and teacher self-reports seem to be the dominant tool used to obtain information to measure parental involvement and at times even student achievement. This is very subjective. Student, parent, and teacher self-reports contribute to inaccuracies and should be eliminated.

Chapter Three

Design of Study

Introduction

In this study it was proposed that students who have parents with high parental involvement produce better grades on an academic reading achievement test. Chapter three will describe the sample population. Chapter three will also describe the instruments used to measure parental involvement and academic achievement. The procedures necessary to accomplish the study are described as well.

Sample

The sample consisted of seventy-four fifth and sixth grade boys (n=36) and girls (n=38). Subjects were recruited from three classrooms in an inner city public school in Wilmington Delaware. Students and their parents were notified of the study. If they preferred not to participate they were excluded from the study. There were forty-nine fifth graders and twenty-five sixth graders. Students had a wide-ranging socioeconomic status. Forty-nine of the students were Caucasian, twenty-two were African American, two were Latino, and one was of Asian decent.

Measures

There were two variables used to measure parental involvement in this study. At the school the study was conducted, students have agenda books. Agenda books are student planners. Students must bring agenda books back and forth to school every day. Students are to write homework assignments and test dates in their agenda books. Parents are supposed to sign their child's agenda book on a daily basis. Parent signatures in the agenda books were the first variables used to measure parental involvement. Parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences was the second variable used to measure parental involvement. Student achievement was measured by the STAR test. The STAR test is a test that measures student's reading level. Students take the STAR test several times a year.

Design

Parental Involvement and its' relationship with student reading achievement was a correlational study. Students were monitored for four weeks. Every morning as students come in they showed their teacher their agenda book. Teachers recorded whether or not their parents or caregivers signed their agenda book. At the end of the four-week period the results were tallied. The tallied results were entered as agenda book parental involvement. Parents and caregivers who signed their child's agenda book fifteen to twenty days were classified as having high parental involvement. Parents who signed the agenda book zero to fifteen days were classified as having low parental involvement. The high and low parental involvement groups were be used to measure overall parental

involvement. The parent-teacher conference parental involvement was measured by parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences held at the end of the first marking period.

Testable Hypotheses

1. Null

Parental involvement has no correlation with student reading achievement.

Alternate

Parental involvement is correlated with student reading achievement.

2. Null

Agenda book parental involvement has no correlation with student reading achievement.

Alternate

Agenda book parental involvement is correlated with student reading achievement.

3. Null

Conference involvement has no correlation with student reading achievement.

Alternate

Conference involvement is correlated with student reading

4. Null

Ethnicity has no correlation to parental involvement.

Alternate

Ethnicity does have a correlation with parental involvement.

Analysis

Once all of the data was gathered, comparing means and conducting Pearson correlations were used to analyze it. The means were compared of the high and low parental involvement groups. A Pearson correlation was conducted to determine if there was a significant correlation in the STAR test scores and the parental involvement groups. Then the mean test scores of all the different levels of agenda book parental involvement were compared. After that a Pearson correlation was conducted to investigate the possibility of agenda book parental involvement being correlated with student academic reading achievement. Next the mean test scores were compared of students whose parents attended parent-teacher conferences with the test scores of students whose parents did not attend parent-teacher conferences. A Pearson correlation was conducted to investigate the possibility of parent-teacher conference involvement being correlated with student's STAR test scores. Finally, the means of Caucasians, Africans, and Other (Latino and Asian) were compared. A Pearson correlation was run to investigate the possibility of there being a correlation between parental involvement and ethnicity.

Summary

This study investigated the possibility of parental involvement being predictive of student reading achievement. Parental involvement was measured using parent's agenda book signatures and attendance at parent-teacher conferences. These forms of parental involvement were chosen because they are direct forms of parental involvement. A

comparison of means and a Pearson correlation were used to analyze the relationships of the different forms of parental involvement with student reading achievement.

Conclusions were made on the basis of the results and will be discussed in chapter five.

Chapter Four

Analysis of Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a significant correlation between parental involvement and student academic achievement. Specifically, the study addressed the following areas 1). If agenda book parental involvement is related to student reading achievement, 2) If parent-teacher conference involvement is related to student reading achievement, and 3) If ethnicity has any relation to parental involvement.

Chapter four relates first the means and standard deviations of the high and low parental involvement group test scores, agenda book parental involvement test scores, and parent-teacher conference parental involvement test scores. Next the data, which pertains to correlations of the parental involvement groups, agenda book parental involvement, and the parent-teacher conference parental involvement with student reading achievement is presented. Then data, which pertains to the correlation of ethnicity to parental involvement, is presented. Finally data, pertaining to grade level and its relation to STAR test scores are presented.

Presentation of Results

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation test scores of the high parental involvement group and the mean and standard deviation test scores of the low parental involvement group. The means of the high parental involvement and the low parental involvement group were relatively the same with the high parental involvement producing a test score grade equivalency mean of 5.1914 and the low parental involvement producing a test score grade equivalency mean of 5.0667. Figure 1 also shows the means of the high and low parental involvement groups. Group one is the low parental involvement group and group two is the high parental involvement group.

Table 1 Means and Standard Deviation Test Scores of the High and the Low Parental Involvement Groups

GROUP	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
1.00	5.0667	39	1.7980
2.00	5.1914	35	2.1212
Total	5.1257	74	1.9449

Parental Involvement

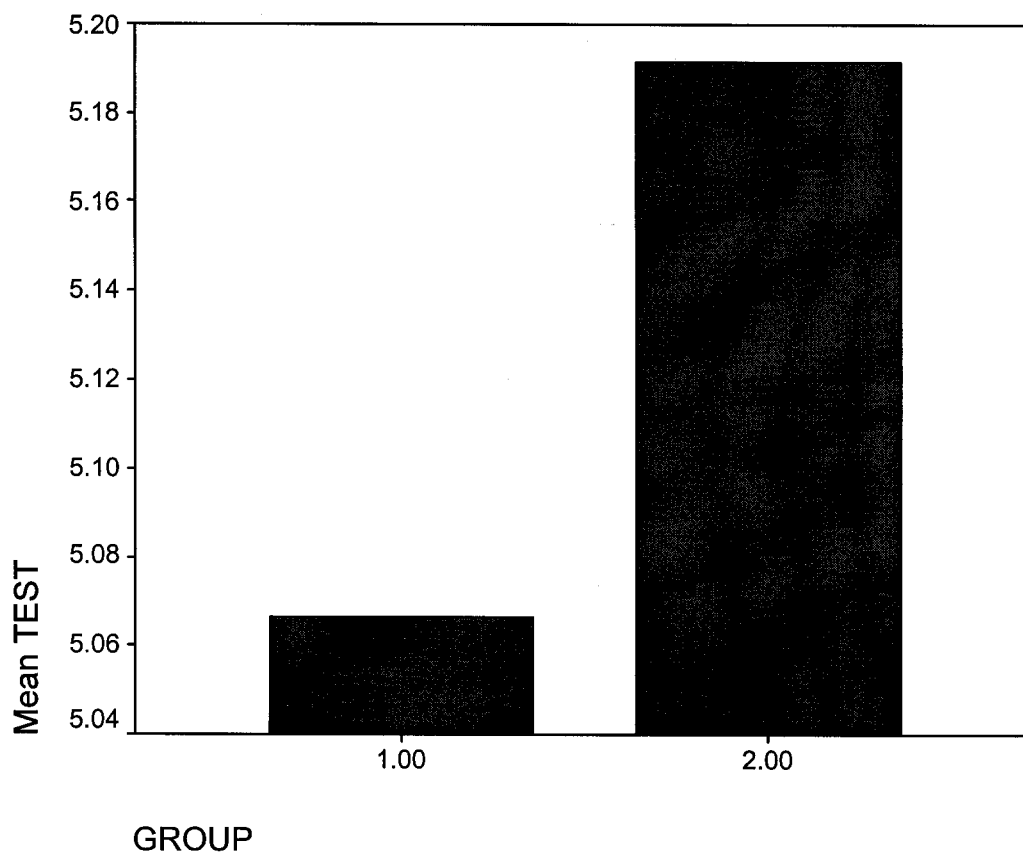


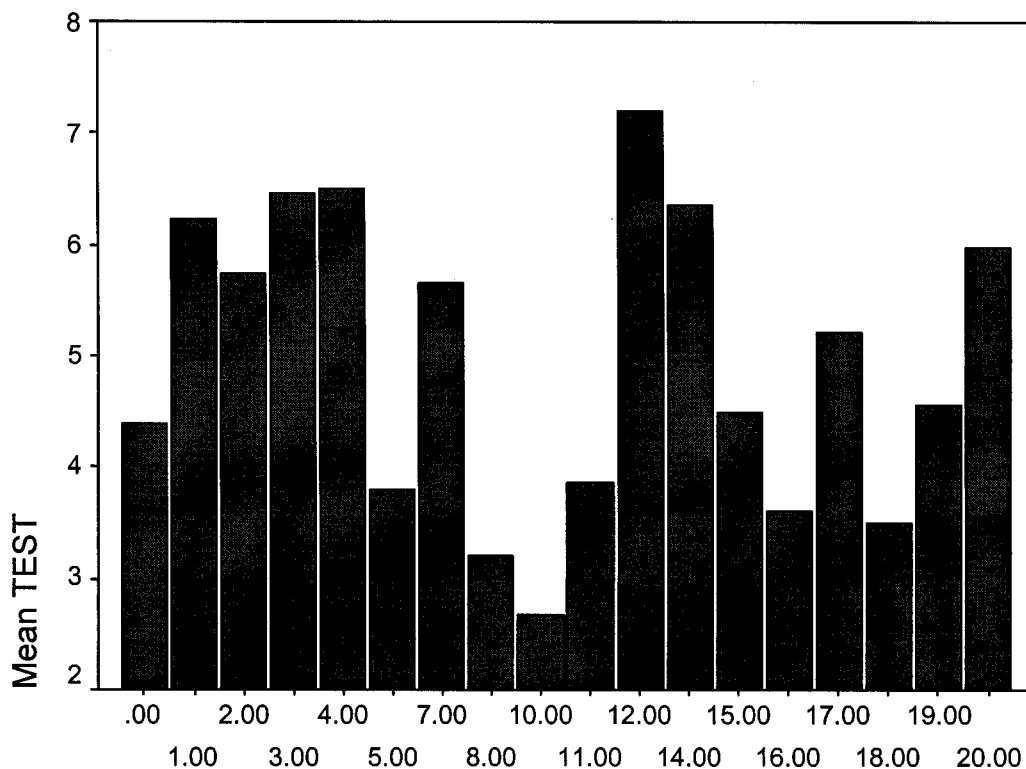
Figure 1 Low and High Parental Involvement Groups Mean Grade Equivalency Test Scores

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation test scores of the agenda book parental involvement. Means of the agenda book parental involvement were very inconsistent producing scores of 4.39 for zero signatures, 6.5 for four signatures, 3.2 for eight signatures, 7.2 for twelve signatures, 3.6 for sixteen signatures, and 5.9688 for twenty signatures. Figure 2 also shows the mean equivalency test scores of the agenda book parental involvement. Agenda lists the number of times Parents signed the agenda book and the Mean Test scores list the mean of student's grade equivalency scores for each particular level of agenda book parental involvement.

Table 2 Mean and Standard Deviation Test Scores of the Agenda Book Parental Involvement

AGENDA	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
.00	4.3900	10	1.4685
1.00	6.2333	3	.2517
2.00	5.7500	2	.9192
3.00	6.4600	5	1.1675
4.00	6.5000	1	.
5.00	3.8000	2	.8485
7.00	5.6500	2	7.071E-02
8.00	3.2000	2	.1414
10.00	2.6667	3	.7572
11.00	3.8667	3	1.6503
12.00	7.2000	2	3.3941
14.00	6.3500	4	1.6980
15.00	4.5000	1	.
16.00	3.6000	4	.6782
17.00	5.2143	7	2.7474
18.00	3.5000	1	.
19.00	4.5500	6	1.9887
20.00	5.9688	16	2.0155
Total	5.1257	74	1.9449

Parental Involvement



AGENDA

Figure 2 Mean Equivalency Test Scores of Agenda Book Parental Involvement

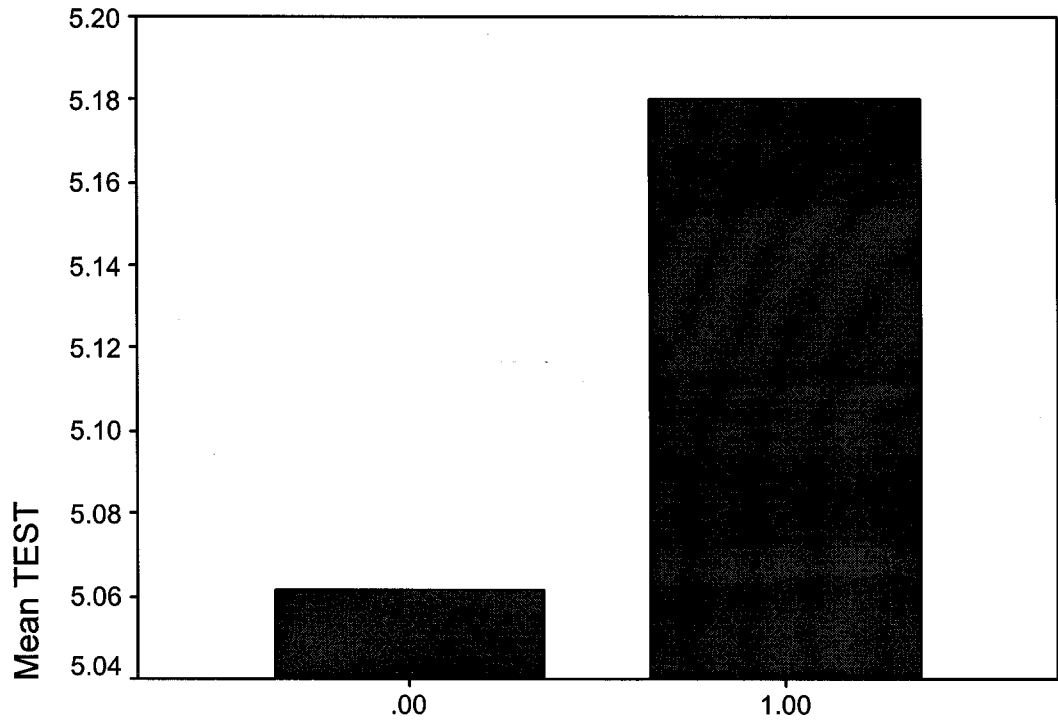
Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation test scores of the parent-teacher conference involvement. Parents who had parent-teacher conference involvement produced a similar mean to parents who did not have parent-teacher conference involvement with parents who had it producing a mean of 5.1800 and parents who did not producing a mean of 5.0618. Figure 3 also shows the mean grade equivalency scores of parent-teacher conference parental involvement. Zero is the category for parents with no

parent-teacher conference involvement and one is the category for parents with parent-teacher conference involvement.

Table 3 Mean and Standard Deviation Test Scores of the Parent-teacher Conference Parental Involvement

CONFERE N	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
.00	5.0618	34	1.8042
1.00	5.1800	40	2.0782
Total	5.1257	74	1.9449

Parental Involvement



MEETING

Parent Attendance at Parent-Teacher Conferences

Figure 3 Mean Grade Equivalency Scores of Students Whose Parents Did Not Attend Parent-teacher Conferences and Parents Who Did Attend Parent-Teacher Conferences

Table 4 and table 5 show the results of the correlation between parental involvement and student scores on the STAR reading test. Using a Pearson correlation no significant difference was indicated between the test scores of the high parental involvement group and the low parental involvement group (Pearson .032 significant 2-tailed .785 N=74). There was no significant difference using a Spearman correlation either (Spearman .006 significant 2-tailed .962 N=74). Using a Pearson correlation no significant difference was indicated between the students who had high agenda book

parental involvement and students who had low parental involvement (Pearson correlation .070 significant 2-tailed .553 N=74). There was no significant difference using a Spearman correlation either (Spearman correlation .079 significant 2-tailed .504 N=74). Using a Pearson correlation no significant difference was indicated between the students who had parent teacher conference involvement and students who had none (Pearson correlation .031 significant 2-tailed .796 N=74). There was no significant difference indicated using a Spearman correlation either (.015 significant 2-tailed .902 N=74). Therefore the hypothesis was not supported and it was concluded that there was not a significant correlation between parental involvement and the reading achievement of students in the fifth and sixth grade.

Table 4 Pearson Correlations Between Parental Involvement Groups, Agenda Book Parental Involvement, and Parent-teacher Parental Involvement With Student Reading Academic Achievement

		GROUP	AGENDA	CONFERE	TEST
GROUP	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.868	.004	.032
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.970	.785
	N	74	74	74	74
AGENDA	Pearson Correlation	.868	1.000	-.112	.070
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.343	.553
	N	74	74	74	74
CONFERE	Pearson Correlation	.004	-.112	1.000	.031
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.970	.343		.796
	N	74	74	74	74
TEST	Pearson Correlation	.032	.070	.031	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.785	.553	.796	
	N	74	74	74	74

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 Spearman Correlations Between Parental Involvement Groups, Agenda Book Parental Involvement, and Parent-teacher Conference Parental Involvement With Student Reading Academic Achievement

			GROUP	AGENDA	CONFERE N	TEST
Spearman's rho	GROUP	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.871	.004	-.006
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.970	.962
		N	74	74	74	74
	AGENDA	Correlation Coefficient	.871	1.000	-.091	.079
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.442	.504
		N	74	74	74	74
	CONFERE N	Correlation Coefficient	.004	-.091	1.000	.015
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.970	.442	.	.902
		N	74	74	74	74
	TEST	Correlation Coefficient	-.006	.079	.015	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.962	.504	.902	.
		N	74	74	74	74

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 shows the means of agenda book involvement for each ethnicity. There was a significant difference in the means of each ethnicities agenda book parental involvement. Caucasians produced a mean parental involvement of 13.44. African Americans produced a mean parental involvement of 7.36 and other (Latino and Asian) produced a mean involvement of 12.67. Table 7 shows the correlation of parental involvement with children's ethnicity. Parental involvement group produced a significant correlation with children's ethnicity (Pearson correlation .252 significant 2-tailed .030 N=74). Agenda book parental involvement also produced a significant correlation with children's ethnicity (Pearson correlation .275 significant 2-tailed .018 N=74). Parent-teacher conference parental involvement produced a significant

correlation with children's ethnicity as well (Pearson correlation .283 significant 2-tailed .015 N=74).

Table 6 Mean and Standard Deviation of Agenda Book Parental Involvement for Each Ethnicity

RACE	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
1.00	13.4490	49	7.3145
2.00	7.3636	22	6.5359
3.00	12.6667	3	11.0151
Total	11.6081	74	7.6513

Table 7 Correlation of Parental Involvement With Children's Ethnicity

		GROUP	AGENDA	CONFERE	RACE
		N			
GROUP	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.868	.004	-.252
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.970	.030
	N	74	74	74	74
AGENDA	Pearson Correlation	.868	1.000	-.112	-.275
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.343	.018
	N	74	74	74	74
CONFERE	Pearson Correlation	.004	-.112	1.000	.283
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.970	.343	.	.015
	N	74	74	74	74
RACE	Pearson Correlation	-.252	-.275	.283	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.030	.018	.015	.
	N	74	74	74	74

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Finally table 8 shows the means of fifth and sixth graders grade equivalency scores on the STAR reading test. The mean grade equivalency score of the fifth graders was 4.9653 and the mean grade equivalency score of the sixth graders was 5.4400. Using a Pearson correlation no significant difference was indicated between the student's grade and their grades on the STAR reading test (Pearson .116 significant 2-tailed .324 N=74). These results are presented in table 9.

Table 8 Means and Standard Deviation of Fifth and Sixth Graders Grade Equivalency Scores on the STAR Test

GRADE	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
5.00	4.9653	49	2.0429
6.00	5.4400	25	1.7328
Total	5.1257	74	1.9449

Table 9 Correlations of the Grade Students Are in With Their Grade Equivalency Scores on the STAR Test

		GRADE	TEST
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.116
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.324
	N	74	74
TEST	Pearson Correlation	.116	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.324	.
	N	74	74

Summary of Results

The hypothesis that there is a correlation between parental involvement and student academic achievement was not supported by the data. A significant difference was not found in the reading scores between the high and low parental involvement groups.

There was no significant difference in the reading scores of students whose parents signed the agenda book frequently and those who did not. There also was no significant difference in the reading scores of students whose parents attended parent-teacher conferences and those who did not. However, there was a significant difference between ethnicity and parental involvement. A final finding of this study was that there was not a significant difference between fifth graders STAR tests scores and sixth graders STAR test scores.

Chapter Five

Summary and Conclusions

Introduction

Chapter five summarizes the entire process of this study. Chapter five includes the problem, hypothesis, procedures, and the findings. Conclusions have been drawn based on this study and have been stated as possible implications and recommendations.

Summary of the Problem

Public opinion and professional literature feel parental involvement is essential in today's schools. There are numerous books in print that encourage and promote parental involvement. Programs such as the Saturday School, Parent As Teachers (PAT) program developed in Missouri, and Comer's Programs in New Haven are all examples of recent pushes for parent involvement. The writing of books and implementation of programs are with the assumption that parental involvement increases academic performance. There has been research conducted that reinforces this theory but this research is limited. When considering the amount of time and money devoted to parental involvement it should be a topic that is researched extensively and thoroughly.

An exhaustive review of the literature has shown that all though an extensive amount of research has been done on parental involvement and its' effects on student

academic achievement the results are inconsistent. There are studies that support the belief that parental involvement effects student achievement; studies that do not, and still others that have produced mixed results. The review of literature also suggests the possibility that different aspects of parental involvement effect student achievement differently. The theory that there may be different dimensions of parental involvement provides an explanation of the inconsistent results typically displayed in the research of parental involvement.

The theory that parent involvement effects student performance gained more and more support towards the end of the twentieth century. Going into the new millennium the campaign for parental involvement has reached an all time high. While this investigation was not the definitive answer, the purpose of the study was to test the notion that parental involvement has an effect on student academic achievement.

Summary of the Hypothesis

This study investigated the relationship between parental involvement and student academic achievement. The research hypothesis stated: A positive relationship exists between agenda book and parent-teacher conference parental involvement and children's academic reading achievement.

Summary of the Procedure

The sample consisted of seventy-four fifth and sixth grade boys (n=36) and girls (n=38). Subjects were recruited from three classrooms in an inner city public school in Wilmington Delaware. There were forty-nine fifth graders and twenty-five sixth graders.

Students had a wide-ranging socioeconomic status. Forty-nine of the students were Caucasian, twenty-two were African American, two were Latino, and one was of Asian decent. Parent signatures were used to measure one form of parental involvement. Parent's attendance at parent-teacher conferences was used to measure the other form of parental involvement. Student achievement was measured by his or her grade equivalency test score received on the STAR test. Parental Involvement and its' relationship with student reading achievement was a correlational study. Students were monitored for four weeks. Every morning when students came in they showed their teacher their agenda book. Teachers recorded whether or not parents/guardians signed the agenda book. At the end of the four-week period the results were tallied. Parents and caregivers who signed their child's agenda book fifteen to twenty days were classified as having high parental involvement. Parents who signed the agenda book zero to fifteen days were classified as having low parental involvement. Parent signatures determined the agenda book parental involvement and attendance at conferences determined the parent-teacher conference involvement. Student scores on the STAR test determined reading achievement. The data was analyzed by comparing the means and using a Pearson correlation.

Summary of the Findings

The hypothesis that there is a correlation between parental involvement and student academic achievement was not supported by the data. A significant difference was not found in the reading scores between the high and low parental involvement groups. There was no significant difference in the reading scores of students whose

parents signed the agenda book frequently and those who did not. There also was no significant difference in the reading scores of students whose parents attended parent-teacher conferences and those who did not. However, there was a significant difference between ethnicity and parental involvement. A final finding of this study was that there was not a significant difference between fifth graders STAR tests scores and sixth graders STAR test scores.

Conclusion

The hypothesis that there is a correlation between parental involvement and student academic achievement was not supported by the data. Possible reasons for a lack of significance include the STAR test scores and grade level.

The STAR test was only administered once for the majority of the students. In some cases scores were obtained for multiple administrations of the STAR test. In these cases the November administration of the test was the score recorded. Administrating the test three times and recording the average of each score may have produced more accurate reading test scores.

Another reason a correlation between parental involvement and reading achievement was not found may be due to the difference in grades. There were forty-nine fifth graders compared to twenty-five sixth graders. The majority of the sixth graders (twenty-three) belonged to the low parental involvement group. In contrast a greater majority of fifth graders (thirty-three) belonged to the high parental involvement groups. It is expected that students in the sixth grade would obtain significantly higher STAR test scores than the fifth graders. Sixth graders have a year of extra schooling and

this huge advantage may have offset the influence of parental involvement, which in turn may have produced insignificant results. The fact that the data between the STAR test scores and the two grade levels also produced insignificant results further supports this conclusion. The sixth graders, who primarily had low parental involvement, had a mean grade equivalency score of 5.44, which is .56 below the norm of a sixth grader starting the sixth grade. The fifth graders, who primarily had high parental involvement, had a mean grade equivalency score of 4.97, which is only .03 below the norm of a fifth grader starting the fifth grade.

Despite these possibilities, the hypothesis that there is a correlation between parental involvement and student academic achievement was not supported by the data. Conclusions can be drawn as a result of this data:

First, certain types of parental involvement do not effect student's academic achievement. Agenda book parental involvement and parent-teacher conference involvement do not effect student academic achievement. These forms of parental involvement both can be classified under the dimension of communication. These findings are similar to the findings that Anderson and Trivette (1995) found about the dimension of communication. They found high communication about school and high participation in school activities did not have a significant effect on achievement. Parents may or may not sign a student's agenda book and attend parent-teacher conferences for several reasons. Parents may deem it necessary to sign his or her child's agenda book on a daily basis and attend conferences only if their child is struggling in school. In this event stepping in and becoming involved may directly effect the child's achievement. However, if a child is a straight A student they may not deem it necessary to check up on

them on a daily basis and thus may not sign his or her student's agenda book or attend parent-teacher conferences.

Secondly, there are several different dimensions of parental involvement. As Anderson & Trivette, 1995; Epstein, 1987, 1992, 1994; and Fan, 2001 suggested there are many different forms of parental involvement. A parent communicating with the school using an agenda book or a parent-teacher conference is not the same type of parental involvement as helping his or her child with their homework.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

There are several implications and recommendations for future research that may be drawn from the current study. The following is a list of recommendations for future research:

1. The sample of the current study was limited to one school. Geographical concern limited the study in that only one location reduced the range of students possible for the study. The non-randomization of the sample could have severely affected the results. Future research should attempt to increase the sample size and include a larger variety of schools, which would increase randomization and may lead to significant results.
2. In this study student academic achievement reading achievement was determined by the administration of one test. This may have also produced inaccurate results. Future research should consider using a variety of assessments to determine academic achievement.

3. This study produced a small correlation of parental involvement with ethnicity (Pearson .252). Further research should increase the sample to include a greater number of students from different ethnicities. Increasing the ethnicities of the sample would provide an opportunity to thoroughly investigate the relationship of ethnicity with parental involvement. If indeed different ethnicities do have different levels of parental involvement attempts should be made to eliminate the gap between the different ethnicities.
4. Parental involvement is a broad topic. There are many different forms of parental involvement. Future research should concentrate on standardizing the different dimensions of parental involvement. Future research should concentrate on identifying four or five widely accepted terms for the different dimensions of parental involvement. If there were four or five dimensions of parental involvement that researchers, administrators, teachers, and parents all accepted as the dimensions of parental involvement then everyone would be discussing the same concepts. Researchers could research the different dimensions of parental involvement and determine which aspects of parental involvement effect achievement and which aspects do not. Researchers who follow could conduct studies measuring the same dimension of parental involvement and reinforce or discount previous studies with the knowledge that they are measuring the same concepts rather than different parts of the same term. Uniformity will also allow administrators, teachers, and parents to gain a more in depth understanding of parental involvement and more specifically what it is they need to do to increase parental involvement.

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Appendix

Dear parents/guardians

My name is Kevin Pinkett. I was a teacher at Bancroft for two years. I am currently at Rowan University where I am enrolled in the school psychology program. I am writing my thesis on parental involvement and how it effects student academic achievement. A great deal of literature now exists for teachers on the importance of parental involvement in today's classroom. However, research proving this theory has produced mixed results. I would like to use your child's class to assess whether or not parental involvement has a correlation with academic achievement. This study does not require you or your child to do anything that you normally do not do. Names will be replaced with numbers as well so each child will remain anonymous. If however you would **not** like your child to participate sign this form and return it to his or her classroom teacher tomorrow and they will be remove from the study. I thank you in advance for your support and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Kevin Pinkett