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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ITS IMPACT  
ON STUDENT PERFORMANCE  
IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

by  
Charlene G. Bundy

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree in the Graduate Division  
of Rowan University  
May 1, 1998

Approved by

Professor

Date Approved 5/12/98

## Abstract

Charlene G. Bundy

Parental involvement and its impact on student performance in the primary grades  
1998

Dr. John Klanderman, Advisor  
School Psychology

The purpose of this study was to determine if parental involvement increased the school performance of students in the primary grades. Research shows that parents who are supportive, monitor their child's activities, help their child, and participate with their child's school positively impact their child's school performance. The independent variable was parental involvement and the dependent variable was school performance. The sample consisted of 20 students in first, second, and third grade. A parent questionnaire was completed by parents who also provided their child's school grades in math and reading. The questionnaire asked parents to rate the frequency that they exhibited certain behaviors as they related to their child. A point system was used to determine an acceptable level of parental involvement and school performance. A descriptive study was used to determine if a relationship existed between parental involvement and school performance.

The results of this study does lend support to the hypothesis that parental involvement increases student performance in the primary grades. It was found that 67% of children whose parents were involved with them performed well in school. It was also discovered that most children whose parents were not involved received poorer grades in school.

## Mini-Abstract

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## Chapter 1 - The Problem

Many of our children are in dire straits socially and economically. Over 48% of youth in the United States are living in non-traditional families marked by divorce, single parenthood and alternate families (Ryan et al., 1995). Twenty percent are living in poverty. Studies show that the level of education is related to future economic attainment (Ryan et al., 1995). By obtaining a higher education, it is possible to increase one's income level. The question remains "What will it take for children to make it to the appropriate level of education?" Ryan et al. refers to the 1994 Census and notes 24% of black and 41% of Hispanic youth do not complete their high school education (1995).

Few would debate the need for improvements in education. The debate centers around what types of improvements will work. Much research has been conducted in this area (Epstein, 1987; Fitton & Gredler, 1996; Lareau & Shumar, 1996; Mau, 1997) and as children continue to drop out or do not attend class enough to learn the basics, it appears additional research is needed. Some believe it is the administration's job to formulate plans to properly educate students. Others feel that 'good' teachers will solve the problem. Ultimately, communities seek changes from their educational system. Unfortunately, the existing structure can no longer respond to the needs of the children. As Fitton and Gredler note "school psychologists, teachers and reading specialists have only a limited amount of time and resources to give children the individualized attention they may need." The authors add that "students are in dire need of alternative educational support" (1996).

Parental involvement has been an alternate means of student support for some time. Teachers and parents differ in what they think parental involvement is and also the level of involvement that is appropriate for their school or children. Parents are, in recent years,



more often encouraged to make sure their child can perform certain skills before they enter Kindergarten. Also, teachers have complained that parents seem to expect the school system, specifically teachers, to act as disciplinarians leaving no time for teachers to instruct.

Parental involvement has been defined in many different ways. Generally, the term is used to explain any interaction between parent and child or parent and school which promotes the child's development (Fitton & Gredler, 1996). In research literature participation, family-school relations, and numerous other terms are used to describe the interaction that promotes achievement.

Many parents still feel their part in the education of their child is related to paying tuition or providing for their basic needs. While other parents feel they are not qualified to participate in the education of their children. Parents can not continue to limit their involvement in their children's education for any reason. It is important for both parents and teachers to better understand the types of parental behaviors that will contribute to better educational outcomes for children. This study is important in that it will add to the research relevant data that can impact the attitudes of teachers and parents. This study can provide information to contradict the beliefs of parents by pinpointing behaviors that can positively impact the school performance of primary school children.

## Purpose

By reviewing the results of math and reading grades of students in the primary grades and results of a caregiver survey it is hoped that a determination can be made regarding which types of involvement impact school performance. The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of parental involvement on the academic performance of students in the first, second, and third grade. By studying the degree of monitoring, supporting, helping, and participating behaviors that a parent engages in, it is hoped that parents and educators can develop a process for all to use to work with children to produce better school results.

Also, for some parents it will be important to just know that their input can alter the course of their child's educational attainment.

## Hypothesis

The intent of this study is to show support for the positive impact of parental involvement on school performance. In this study of primary grade students in two areas of the United States, the attempt will be made to show that parental involvement increases the student performance of students in first, second, and third grades. This increase should be evident even in families in which caregivers are not highly educated or of a high socioeconomic status. Parental participation, such as; monitoring the child's activities, providing support, helping with homework and establishing good relationships with the school will positively impact the child's school performance.

## Theory

There are two theories that speak to the issue of how the family impacts educational outcomes (Lam, 1997). The first theory is the family process model and the second is the family status or social address model. The family process model proposes that parenting styles, parental involvement and parental discipline impact a child's level of achievement. The family status model accounts for differences in achievement by pointing out differences in family structure, ethnic background, socioeconomic status and family size. An integrated model has been created which combines the family process and family status models to create a more realistic picture of the family's impact on achievement.

Those in favor of the family process model outline parental behaviors that are believed to impact the achievement of students:

- meeting basic needs - shelter, food, clothing.
- providing a positive home environment - establishing expectations, encouraging curiosity, discussing activities.

- setting rules - limiting TV and time with friends, disciplining.
- providing support - helping with homework and decision-making.
- participating at school and in the community - volunteering, serving on boards.

In support of this theory, Joyce L. Epstein concluded “the evidence is clear that parental encouragement, activities, and interest at home and participation in schools and classrooms affect children’s achievements, attitudes, and aspirations, even after student ability and family socioeconomic status are taken into account (Ryan et al., 1987).”

Those in support of the family status model focus on the socioeconomic status of the parents and in some cases, the institution, to determine the child’s educational possibilities (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Financial position seems to play a large part in education, but not the only factor. As Lareau and Shumar discovered, middle class parents have more resources (social as well as financial) available to them and feel in a greater position of power when dealing with teachers and administrators than do lower class families (1996).

## Definitions

As noted here **parental involvement** is the degree to which the parent or caregiver monitors, supports and helps the child. And the degree to which the parent or caregiver participates in the activities of the school.

**School performance** will be considered on the basis of math and reading grades as reported by parents.

**Monitoring** includes keeping track of the child after school and exercising control over the child’s after school activities.

**Supporting** means discussing school activities and grades.

**Helping** incorporates helping with homework and checking to make sure all homework is complete.

**Participating** measures the degree of interaction with the school and includes volunteering, attending conferences and otherwise communicating with teachers and

administrators.

**Primary grades** are first, second, and third grades.

The term **grade score** will be used to denote the score derived from two marking periods of math and reading grades.

The term **parental involvement score** will be used to denote the score derived from the responses to the parent questionnaire.

### Assumptions

It is assumed that socioeconomic status will not be a major factor when equal levels of parental involvement is employed. A major assumption that is made here is that the parents will answer the questions in the questionnaire honestly and provide a true report of the child's grades. In addition, it is assumed that the data that will be collected is relevant.

### Limitations

The sample size is small. The sample was drawn from two locations in the Eastern United States and is not representative. Also, the data is based on a self-report measure of grades and behaviors which may result in an inaccurate report by the parent of the child's grades as well as the behaviors the parents demonstrate. The questionnaire was adapted from three sources and was not standardized.

### Overview

In Chapter 2, a review of the existing research on the topic of parental involvement and its impact at various ages is noted. In Chapter 3, the design of the study will be explained. In Chapter 4, the findings of the study will be presented. As the research will show, parental involvement as a means of fostering educational achievement has been of great interest to researchers for years.

## Chapter 2 - Review of Research

The research on parental involvement and its impact on student achievement incorporates numerous variables to show that parents who are involved with their child and their child's school can have both positive and negative effects on their child's educational achievement. Most of the work cited here examined students in the middle grades and beyond, although there are a few studies that investigated preschool and elementary school children (Revicki, 1981; Clark, 1993; Scott-Jones, 1987). Much of the work done uses parental involvement as a singular independent variable measured in various ways. There are many additional studies that examine parental involvement as a mediator between variables such as parenting styles and socioeconomic status, for example. Whether parental involvement was an independent variable or a mediating variable, involvement was, in most cases, found to have an impact on student achievement.

The dependent variable of academic achievement varies in its measurement. Some studies used school records of the student's grade point average (GPA) over a specified period (Lam, 1997; Bronstein, 1996). Other studies measured achievement by scores on standardized tests such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (Reynolds & Gill, 1994; Shumow, 1996). Still others used student self-report measures of grades (Paulson, 1996; Gonzales, 1996). Many employed a combination of the above measures.

In this chapter the literature will first be used to explain the variables most often used in research. Then the research which relates to parental involvement as the only independent variable will be reviewed. Finally, the other variables which have been tested with parental involvement as the mediator will be briefly noted. These variables include parental attitudes and values, parenting styles, and family structure.

Diane Scott-Jones (1995) believes that parent involvement and its impact on

achievement depends on the type of parent-child interaction. Epstein and Lee (1995) proposed six categories of parental involvement that emphasized participation between school, family, and community. These types are as follows:

Type 1 - Basic - parenting and home environment

Type 2 - Basic - communications from school regarding programs and progress

Type 3 - School - volunteers and audiences

Type 4 - Home - learning activities that are informational and motivational

Type 5 - School - representation and participation

Type 6 - Community

In an earlier work Epstein (1987) listed “Basic Obligations of Parents” as providing food, clothing, shelter, health, and safety; and providing child rearing, home training, school supplies, and a positive environment for learning. As we are looking at the home-school relationship, Type 1 (basic) and Type 6 (community) will not be included in the discussion. Many of the characteristics used to define parental involvement within the research overlap, but most can be put into the categories of supporting, monitoring, helping, and participating roles outlined below. Figure 2.1 outlines the four dimensions studied along with some of their associated behaviors.

## Supporting

A supportive environment has been linked to achievement (Gonzales et al., 1996; Bronstein et al., 1996; Henderson & Berla, 1995, p. 33). Behaviors in the following areas have been considered supporting: discussion (Henderson & Berla, 1995, p. 144; Muller, 1995), planning (Mau, 1997; Henderson & Berla, 1995, p. 59), providing tools (Hanson, 1996), providing other experiences, valuing (Fuligni, 1997; Henderson & Berla, 1995, p. 35), and having high expectations and aspirations (Fuligni, 1997; Heiss, 1996). Parents who frequently discuss their child’s school activities, grades, and school programs show their child they are interested in education. Planning and preparing for the SAT and college

Figure 2.1  
Parental Involvement  
Types of parental behaviors which are proposed to increase  
academic achievement.

## Supporting

- discuss grades and school activities
- discuss plans for college
- provide tools for learning
- provide other learning experiences
- encourage curiosity
- have high expectations and aspirations

## Monitoring

- limit TV and game time
- limit going out after school
- parent home between 3:00 & 5:00 p.m.
- provide direction and guidance
- control activities
- have knowledge of child's friends
- control time spent on homework

## Helping

- help with homework
- check for homework completion
- parent available for child
- identify other sources of help

## Participating

- attend conference
- volunteer at school
- make telephone contact
- attend school event
- become active member in PTA
- vote in school elections

entrance also show support for the child's well-being. Also, providing the proper tools for learning such as a computer shows the student that the parent believes learning is important. Hanson (1996) studied women and men in the science field and found that having a pocket calculator in the home was related to achievement in science. Attending cultural activities and events also has been viewed as supportive behavior (Downey, 1995). As noted in Henderson & Berla (1995, p. 144), Walberg, Bole & Waxman found that parents who were "intensively" involved gained 1.1 grade equivalents.

Some authors have looked at valuing instead of support as a category (Scott-Jones, 1995). Parents who value education, encourage curiosity and have high expectations and aspirations (Heiss, 1996; Marjoribanks, 1972; Fuligni, 1997) for their children are also playing a supportive role in their child's education. The fact that parents value education can be seen in the other behaviors noted above. Parents who value education will provide resources above those required (Scott-Jones, 1995).

## Monitoring

Monitoring can be thought of in various ways based on the degree of involvement. Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) use the category of home supervision instead of monitoring to measure the amount of time parents limit TV time and limit going out after school. Also, whether the parent is home after school (usually between 3 -5 p.m.) to monitor their child's activities is of importance. Scott-Jones (1995) adds the time the child spends on homework as a consideration. Many parents have specific rules regarding these activities; others may only attempt to keep abreast of the child's behavior. Bronstein et al (1996) prefers the term guidance and notes the term "refers to parents providing direction, information, guidelines, and limits for their children so that they learn culturally appropriate behaviors and values, as well as life skills and good judgment."

Mau (1997) extends this idea by measuring the parent's 'control' of the child. Control includes requiring work or chore completion and the degree to which privileges are limited



because of poor grades. "Control over children's activities" was used by Benson, Buckley, and Medrich (Henderson & Berla, 1995) to determine if rules regarding bedtime, chores and freedom were made by parents. Parenting styles - authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive - have been used to show both a negative and positive relationship to academic achievement (Bronstein et al, 1996; Paulson, 1996; Henderson & Berla, p. 57-58, p. 127). In general, monitoring measures parents' involvement in the daily at-home activities of their children.

### Helping

This category is what most parents consider first when thinking of being involved with their children. It is also the category that can create much concern. Many parents feel they are not equipped to help their child (Lareau, 1987; Lareau & Shumar, 1996). According to Mau parents who help their children, help with homework, check for homework completion and give privileges for good grades (1997). Dauber & Epstein (1993) investigated parental involvement with homework to measure the frequency of assisting with and monitoring homework. Scott-Jones (1995) noted some important aspects of helping such as tutoring, learning together, and identifying other sources of helping the child if parent is unable to help. A reading remediation study by Fitton & Gredler (1996) discovered that parental involvement, especially after parents are taught a particular method of instruction, increases academic performance.

### Participating

Participating is used to explain the parent-school relationship in its purest form. Many studies have been done which use parent-school interactions as the primary definition of involvement (Marcon, 1993; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Parents who participate are members in the PTA and volunteer at school events (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996), attend school meetings and events and volunteer (Mau, 1997). Brody et al. (1995) suggests that

parental involvement includes attending parent/teacher conferences, open houses and other social activities. They go on to note that “through such participation, parents demonstrate the importance they attach to schooling and academic achievement” (the supporting function). “Intermittent contact with teachers also serves as a monitoring function that allows parents to receive feedback about their children’s academic performance and self-regulatory skills.”

Teachers are more likely to be involved themselves with students that have parents eagerly involved. Dauber & Epstein’s 1993 study found that teacher’s practices to involve parents positively impacted the connection between home and school. Parents involved with their children’s schools get invited to attend school functions by the school, attend school council meetings and have voted in school council elections (Reynolds & Gill, 1994).

A 1979 study by Irvine showed that parental involvement in a New York State Experimental Pre-kindergarten Program increased the children’s general reasoning skills, school related knowledge and skills and knowledge of verbal concepts. Children performed better once parents were involved even when involvement is narrowly defined as school visits, home visits by personnel, meetings, employment in the program, and other contacts.

Brody et al (1995) also narrowly defined parental involvement by asking teachers the following questions:

- “Have you ever met [child’s] mom/dad?”
- “Has [child’s] mom/dad visited your school?”
- “Does [child’s] mom/dad attend parent-teacher conferences?” and
- “How involved would you say that [child’s] mom/dad is in school

activities such as PTO?” [5-point Likert scale]

Parents were asked:

- “Have you visited your child’s school?” and

- “Have you met your child’s teachers?”

Limited maternal involvement as in participating with the school was found to correlate positively with academic competence (.15) (Brody et al, 1995).

## The Studies

### Parental Involvement

Parental behaviors that have been found to directly impact academic performance are supporting, monitoring, helping, and participating. The authors of the first two studies use all four variables to make a connection between parental involvement and academic achievement. The additional studies use some of the variables or behaviors that are related to supporting, monitoring, helping, and participating.

Mau (1997) investigated the impact of parental influence on the achievement of white Americans, Asian immigrants, and Asian Americans. Parental behaviors were categorized as helping, controlling, supporting, and participating. Helping included checking on homework, helping with homework and rewarding good grades. Controlling included limiting privileges for bad grades, requiring chores, limiting TV or video game time, and limiting time out with friends on school nights. Supporting behaviors covered selecting courses or programs, attending school activities and events, discussing studies and grades, and being involved in post high school plans. Finally, participating included attending school meetings or events and volunteering. Support and participation were found to have a positive relationship for white Americans; with coefficients of .15 and .20 respectively. Helping and controlling resulted in a negative relationship for all groups. In a study by Sui-Chu & Willms (1996) NELS (National Education Longitudinal Study - 1988 sample of eighth grade students) data was used to determine the impact of parental involvement and parental background on academic achievement. Home discussion, school communication, home supervision, and school participation were the dimensions used to assess the level of parental involvement. Home discussion consisted of talking with mother and father and

discussing school programs and activities. School communication involved the school contacting the parent and the parent contacting the school. Home supervision was defined as limiting TV time, monitoring homework, limiting going out, and the parent being home after school. School participation required volunteering at school and participating in the PTO [PTA].

The results showed that the “most important parental involvement factor at the individual level is home discussion.” The coefficient for mathematics and reading was  $.124, p < .01$ . School communication resulted in a negative relationship which the authors attributed to the higher probability of the parents of “at risk” students communicating with the school more frequently.

Bradley, Rock, Caldwell, Harris, and Hamrick studied black elementary school children to determine the effects of home environment on school performance (1987). Thirty-five third and fourth graders in public school were administered the Science Research Associates Achievement Test battery. Their families were administered the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME) Inventory to “measure the quality and quantity of cognitive, social, and emotional support for development available in the home.” The HOME Inventory consisted of 59 items and 8 subscales:

- Emotional and verbal responsivity
- Encouragement of maturity
- Emotional climate
- Growth fostering materials and experiences
- Provision for active stimulation
- Family participation in developmentally stimulating experiences
- Paternal involvement with child, and
- Aspects of the physical environment

Parental responsivity (.43) and emotional climate (.34) correlated significantly with the measure of achievement. Paternal involvement produced a negative (-.34) correlation with

achievement. The remaining variable showed low correlations.

A 1994 study by Reynolds and Gill examined the “role of parent attitudes and behaviors on the cognitive achievement and social adjustment for a longitudinal sample of low-income black children in the inner-city.” The parents of 729 low-income black children in kindergarten programs in 1986 were surveyed in 1990 and 1992. Parents responded to the following inquiries in order to access parental behaviors which influence achievement: parental encouragement - “How often do you praise child for improving in school?” “How often do you encourage child to do well in school?” “How often do you encourage child to behave in school?”; parent-child interactions - “How often do you limit your child’s TV time?” “How often do you take child to a museum, zoo, planetarium, or aquarium?”

Parental school involvement was measured by responses to items such as participation in school activities, talking to teacher about child’s progress, and membership in the PTA or other school group. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills was used to access math and reading achievement. Reynolds and Gill found that although correlations were in a positive direction, they were never higher than .12.

In another study completed by Baker and Stevenson (1986) 41 mothers of eighth graders were interviewed regarding knowledge of school performance, homework strategies, actions taken in the previous year, and knowledge of and contact with the school. It was found that parents were actively involved and used many strategies to improve their child’s performance.

In a recent study by Lam (1997) the effects of family on academic achievement was studied. 181 eighth graders were selected. A broader framework was used which included family structure and socioeconomic status. Parental involvement was measured by parental monitoring, parental supportiveness, and psychological autonomy; academic achievement was measured by grade point average. High and medium parental monitoring resulted in higher GPAs; significant at .166. The high parental supportiveness group showed higher

GPA's as well; significant at .114. In addition, high parental autonomy produced higher GPA's; significant at .127

## Involvement as a Mediator

### Parental Attitudes and Values

Parental attitudes were reviewed by Ritter et al. (1993) who found that minority parents, even low-income parents, are concerned with their children's education.

Some studies (Henderson and Berla, 1995, p. 35; Fuligni, 1997) have made the connection between family values and achievement. Some of the values noted were love of learning, emphasis on education, value of academic success, and educational aspirations. The concept of the individual as the master of their own destiny is also presented as mind set for high achievers.

### Parenting Styles

Parenting styles have been used as the independent variable in numerous studies (Paulson, 1996; Henderson & Berla, 1995, pp. 57 & 127). In these studies, parental involvement was the mediating variable or inclusive in the definition of the style was behaviors related to supporting, monitoring, helping, and participating. In Paulson's study, responsiveness and demandingness and parental involvement as mediators between maternal employment and adolescent achievement. High levels of achievement were related to the parental involvement factors of value toward achievement (.27), interest in schoolwork (.20), and involvement in school functions (.20).

### Family Structure

Number of siblings and parent status - intact/non-intact are considered part of family structure. Family structure impacts many of the variables which will be investigated. In a study by Downey (1995) stepparent families were shown to have an impact on achievement

based on interpersonal resources available to the children. Heiss (1996) found that a relationship existed between family structure and the school attitudes and performance of African-American high school students. Heiss found that family structure (intact families and mother-only or single-parent families) was less important than parental involvement (parent-child conversation, mother's hopes and aspirations, and parent's knowledge of child's whereabouts) in student achievement. The author found that "parental involvement has consistently stronger effects."

### Summary

The research shows that parental involvement affects the achievement of children from childhood through adolescence. Parental involvement in the form of supporting, monitoring, helping, and participating behaviors has been shown to increase grade point average and scores on achievement tests. Behaviors such as discussing school and plans for college, monitoring after school activities, and being involved with the school have been shown to increase school performance in children of all ages. Parental involvement as a mediator in many cases showed greater effects than the independent variable.

## Chapter 3 - Design of the Study

This study was performed to investigate the impact that parents have on their children's academic ability. Particular parental behaviors were studied to determine if one or more behaviors affect reading and math grades in students in the primary grades. It is proposed that parental involvement increases the school performance of students in grades one through three.

### Sample

The sample was drawn from two locations on the east coast of the United States - Southern New Jersey and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The sample consisted of 20 students in first, second, and third grade. The subjects were between the ages of six and ten. Fourteen were boys and six were girls.

The sample was drawn from a group of parents who agreed to participate in the study. The parents were chosen based only on the criteria that they have a child in first, second, or third grade; and they were willing to disclose their child's grades and complete the questionnaire.

### Variables

The independent variable is parental involvement. Parental involvement will be measured on four dimensions: supporting, monitoring, helping, and participating. Figure 3.1 outlines the four dimensions and the associated behaviors considered in this study. The supporting behaviors measured were the degree to which the parent discussed grades and the child's general performance and whether the child was provided with additional after-school activities. Monitoring was related to parental control of television and game



Figure 3.1  
Parental Involvement  
Types of parental behaviors investigated in this study

<b>Supporting</b>	discuss grades and general performance discuss activities provide additional experiences
<b>Monitoring</b>	limit TV and game time control after-school interactions parent home after school
<b>Helping</b>	help and guidance with homework parent available to child
<b>Participating</b>	attend conference volunteer at school make telephone contact attend school event

time, limiting the time the child was allowed outside of the home during weekdays, and whether the parent is home after school. Helping was considered providing the appropriate amount of guidance with homework as well as being available to the child when needed in general. The degree of participation was determined by parental attendance at school conferences and other school events, volunteering at the school and the parent making telephone contact with their child's school.

The dependent variable was school performance. School performance was measured by letter grades in the first two marking periods beginning in September and ending in January. Points were given for each letter grade - A+ through F. A composite of the math and reading score was tallied to obtain one score as a measure of school performance. A score of 38 or above denotes high school performance. The score of 38 was derived from a combination of two As and two Bs or a percentage grade of 85.

Levels of parental involvement were measured using parental responses to a questionnaire (see Appendix A). The questionnaire consisted of questions regarding all four dimensions of parental involvement. The questionnaire was adapted from three sources (Lam, 1997; Sui-Cho & Willms, 1996; Mau, 1997). All questions were reworded for response by parents instead of children due to the ages of the children involved in this study. Questions one through six were adapted from a study of eighth-grade students by Lam. Lam's questionnaire was used as it provided information on the exact types of behaviors that were being investigated in this study [monitoring (coefficient alpha - .68) and supporting (coefficient alpha - .82). Question nine was adapted from a study of tenth-graders by Mau. Questions ten and eleven were adapted from a study of eighth-graders by Sui-Cho and Willms. Mau and Sui-Cho and Willms were used to investigate helping and monitoring and participating behaviors, respectively. Questions seven, eight, and twelve were arrived at based on issues dealt with in previous research.

The questionnaire consisted of twelve questions of which five had multiple parts. For example, one of the questions in the helping category asked:

How often are the following statements true?

I help my child with schoolwork if there is something they do not understand.

My child knows I can be counted on to help them out with problems.

The possible responses were:

almost always - often - sometimes - rarely - almost never.

One to five points were scored. Question twelve was not scored and was used only to determine if the parent encouraged additional activities. The total possible score ranges between a low of 23 and a high of 128. The cutoff score which will denote positive parental involvement is 96 which would require that most answers to 'positive' behaviors be 'often' and would require most answers to 'negative' behaviors be 'rarely'.

## Procedure

Parents were selected based on the knowledge that they had one or more children in first, second, or third grade. Parents were initially asked if they were willing to participate after a brief explanation of the study was given. The questionnaire was provided to the parent in March of 1998. Only five questionnaires were not returned. An explanation of the study was given to each parent with the questionnaire. The parent was asked to complete the questionnaire and note their child's math and reading grades for the first three marking periods. The third marking period grades were not used as some questionnaires did not include the third period grades.

The scale used for grades was A through D and F. There were twelve possible grades - A A- B+ B B- C+ C C- D+ D D- F. Three of the questionnaires noted scores which were on a different scale than noted above (outstanding through needs improvement) and were not included. One questionnaire was not used as the student's grades were not included at all. Another questionnaire was not used as it was obtained from a parent residing outside of New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

The questionnaire did not inquire about age or sex. As each questionnaire was returned the parent was questioned to verify their child's age and sex when this information was unknown.

### Testable Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis: No difference will be found between the grades of students whose parents are involved and those whose parents are not involved.

Alternate Hypothesis: The grades of students whose parents are involved will exceed the grades of students whose parents are not involved.

### Design

This study is descriptive in nature. A descriptive study was necessary as the data was collected from two geographic locations. An attempt was made to characterize the types of parental behaviors which increase student performance in math and reading. The sample consisted of 20 children in first, second, and third grade whose parents' agreed to participate in the study.

## Chapter 4 - Analysis of Results

The purpose of this study was to determine if parental involvement has an impact on student performance in the primary grades. It was proposed that supporting, monitoring, helping, and participating behaviors exhibited by parents would increase the math and reading grades of children in first, second, and third grades. The null hypothesis was rejected. The data collected showed support for the alternate hypothesis.

Table 4.1 presents the characteristics of the group studied by gender. Fourteen of the subjects were boys and six were girls.

Table 4.1  
Characteristics of group by gender N=20

<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
14	6

Table 4.2 shows the ages of the children studied. The students' ages range from seven to ten years.

Table 4.2  
Characteristics of group by age N=20

<b>Seven</b>	<b>Eight</b>	<b>Nine</b>	<b>Ten</b>
8	6	5	1

In order to examine the impact of parental involvement on performance parents were surveyed regarding how they interact with their children. Two scores were derived from the data collected. The parental involvement score was determined using a point system which ranged from 116 to 61. See Figure 4.3 for the frequency distribution of parental

involvement scores.

Table 4.3

Frequency distribution of parental involvement scores

<u>Score</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
116 - 120	1
111 - 115	1
106 - 110	0
101 - 105	3
96 - 100	7
91 - 95	4
86 - 90	1
81 - 85	1
76 - 80	1
71 - 75	0
66 - 70	0
<u>61 - 65</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>N = 20</u>	

The grade score was also calculated using a point system based on letter grades and could vary between 44 points for all As and 0 points for all Fs. The highest grade reported by parents surveyed was an A and the lowest grade was a C-. Grade scores ranged from 44 through 26. See Table 4.4 for the frequency distribution of the grade scores.

Table 4.4

Frequency distribution of grade scores

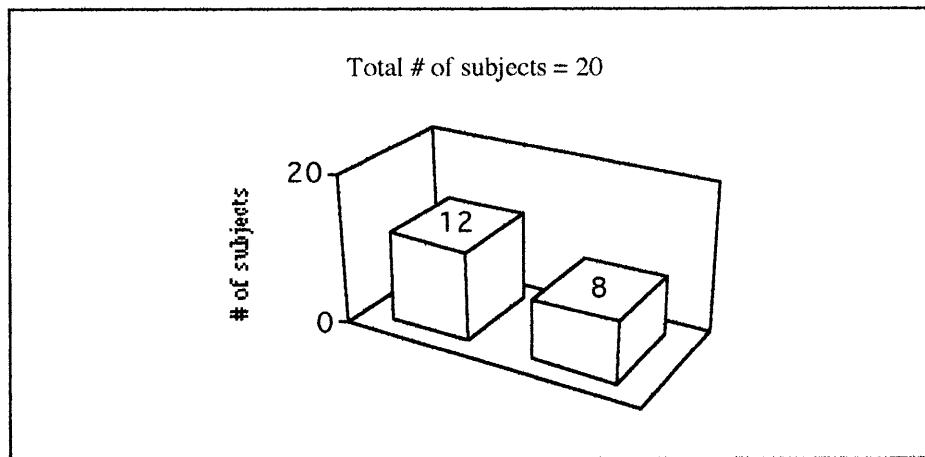
<u>Scores</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
44 - 46	8
41 - 43	1
38 - 40	2
35 - 37	2
32 - 34	1
29 - 31	3
<u>26 - 28</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>N = 20</u>	

Appendix B charts the subjects' parental involvement scores and grade scores.

The mean of the parental involvement score was 94.95 with a standard deviation of 11.70. The mean of the grade score was 37 with a standard deviation of 6.90. As noted the cutoff score used to define appropriate parental involvement was 96, while the cutoff score denoting good school performance was 38. Twelve parents scored at 96 or above when the parental involvement score was calculated. Of those twelve parent/child couples, eight also scored at the designated grade score of 38. Figure 4.1 depicts the total number of subjects, the number of parents scoring high in parental involvement, and the number from the high scoring parent group whose children also received high grade scores.

Figure 4.1

Performance as a function of high parental involvement  
Students obtaining high grade scores when parental involvement scores are above cutoff

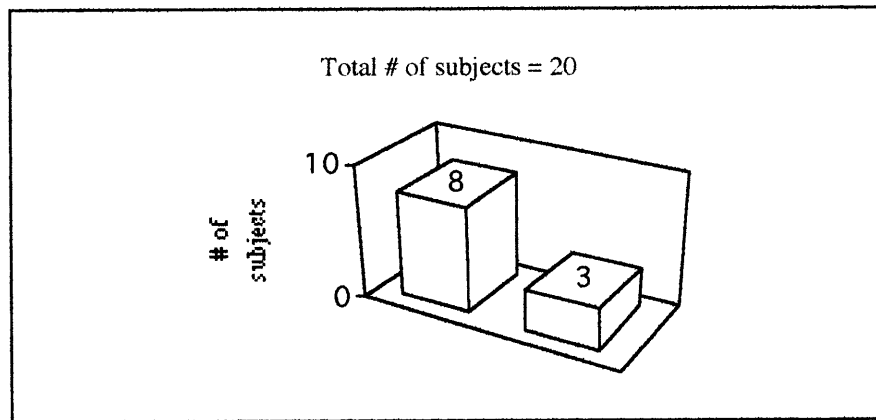


Four parents scored high in parental involvement when the child's grade score was below the cutoff score for school performance. The two lowest parental involvement scores were received by parents whose children received the lowest grade score. The parents' parental involvement score was 61 and 81, and both of their children had grade scores of 26. Figure 4.2 shows the number of parents out of the total sample which scored low in parental involvement while their child achieved high grade scores.

The individual dimensions were studied to determine if significant trends were found in the data to link any of the specific dimensions to a high parental involvement score or a

Figure 4.2

Performance as a function of low parental involvement  
Students obtaining high grades scores when parental involvement scores are below cutoff



higher level of school performance. Appendix C shows the parental involvement score with the individual scores for the supporting, monitoring, helping, and participating dimensions. The helping dimension was the only one that did seem to relate to a higher parental involvement score. Of the eight children who earned a grade score of 44, five scored a 20 (the highest possible score) on the helping dimension.

There was consistency in responses for many of the questions. Questions four and six were answered the same way by five of the involved parents whose children scored high in school performance.

Question #4. When your child gets a poor grade, how often do you...

- .1 get upset with your child?
- .2 encourage your child to try harder?
- .3 ground child?
- .4 offer to help child?

Of the above group of students with high school performance, "almost never" was



answered to question 4.1 and 4.3 and “almost always” was answered to question 4.2 and 4.4. by parents.

Question #6. How often are the following statements true?

.1 I help my child with schoolwork if there is something they do not understand.

2 My child knows I can be counted on to help them out with problems.

The same parents as above answered “almost always” to both questions.

### Summary

Parental involvement and its impact on school performance was studied. The data collected supports earlier research and suggests that the grades of students whose parents are involved will exceed the grades of students whose parents are not involved.

## Chapter 5 - Summary and Conclusions

In this study the impact of parental involvement on school performance of children in first, second, and third grades was investigated. Research has shown the parental involvement increases academic achievement for children in all grades and more specifically for younger children. In this study four specific behaviors were examined. It was proposed that supporting, monitoring, helping, and participating behaviors exhibited by parents would increase the math and reading grades of children in the primary grades.

### Summary

An attempt was made to determine if parental involvement had an impact on the school performance of students in the primary grades. Research shows that parents who are supportive, monitor their child's activities, help their child, and participate with their child's schools positively impact their child's school performance. The independent variable in this study was parental involvement and the dependent variable was school performance. The sample consisted of 20 students in first, second, and third grade. A parent questionnaire was completed by parents who also provided their child's school grades in math and reading. The questionnaire asked parents to rate the frequency that they exhibited certain behaviors as they related to their child. The questions were scored on a five point system and a cutoff score for high parental involvement was determined. The math and reading grades were assigned a score based on a 12-point system and a composite score was tallied. A cutoff score was also determined for the composite grade. A descriptive study was used to determine if a relationship existed between parental involvement and school performance.

## Discussion

Sixty percent of the parents scored at or above the cutoff score for good parental involvement. Sixty-six percent of those parents had students that received good grades in school. Fifty-five percent of the students scored at or above the cutoff score for good student performance. Seventy-three percent of those students had parents that were involved. The above percentages seem to support the hypothesis that parental involvement increases the performance of students in the first, second, and third grades.

As noted those parents who scored high in the helping category seemed to score high in overall parental involvement. In general, the parents studied received relatively high scores in helping while their participating scores varied widely. This is in contrast to Mau's (1997) finding of a negative relationship between helping and achievement. In this study it would appear that parents understand that they should help with homework and check for homework completion, but do not see the importance of attending school events and volunteering at school.

Earlier research shows that involvement in additional activities may impact school performance. This study contradicts the earlier research and suggests that the students' involvement in extracurricular activities such as sports or music lessons did not seem to affect school performance. Question #12 which asked about the child's involvement in organized activities after school was answered by 95% of the parents polled and included such activities as piano, gymnastics, and sports while only forty-five percent of the subjects scored above the cutoff score.

## Conclusions

The results of this study do lend some support to the hypothesis that parental involvement increases student performance in the primary grades. In general, the parental involvement scores were at an acceptable level. Given that the cutoff score was arbitrarily chosen, it is important to note that only 20% of the parental involvement scores were below

90, while 81% of the scores were above 90. It was found that 67% of children whose parents were involved with them in the areas of discussing grades, helping with homework, setting limits, and interacting with the school performed well in school. It was found that most children whose parents were not involved received poorer grades in school.

### Implications For Future Study

A major limitation of this study was the manner in which the data was collected. Data was collected from various locations instead of one school district or school. The various locations allowed for other variances as a cause of high school performance. Another limitation is that the questions were not carefully designed. Proper and consistent wording could have provided a better understanding of the meaning of the responses.

Future research would require a more thorough understanding of the specific parental behaviors that may improve school performance. A clearer view may be obtained by limiting the dimensions studied while extending the number of specific behaviors examined. Earlier research has attempted to examine the dimensions of parental involvement in many different ways with many different age groups and sample sizes. Here an attempt was made to gain more insight into the impact of parental involvement on younger children. A combination of the methods used in earlier studies and the focus on the younger child may prove to provide invaluable information to parents and educators alike.

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## Appendix A

### Parent Questionnaire



Dear Parent:

I am a graduate student at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey. I am working on my Master's thesis. I am studying the affect of parental participation on the math and reading grades of students in the primary grades.

I have adapted a questionnaire which seeks to determine the types of behaviors that may impact achievement. Please complete the attached questionnaire. **There are no correct answers.**

In addition, please note your child's math and reading grades in the appropriate blank at the top of the questionnaire.

**All information will remain confidential.**

Please do not note your name or your child's name.

Thank you in advance for your help. It is very much appreciated.

Regards,  
Charlene Bundy

## QUESTIONNAIRE

MATH GRADES: 1ST PERIOD \_\_\_\_\_ 2ND PERIOD \_\_\_\_\_ 3RD PERIOD \_\_\_\_\_ SCALE \_\_\_\_\_  
 READING GRADES: 1ST PERIOD \_\_\_\_\_ 2ND PERIOD \_\_\_\_\_ 3RD PERIOD \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO BEST OF YOUR ABILITY-**

1. In a typical week, what is the latest your child can stay outside your home on school nights?

1. not allowed out after school
2. depends on circumstances
3. before 5:00
4. before 7:00
5. no rules

2. How much do you know about what types of activities your child is involved in after school?

1. very much      2. much      3. somewhat      4. not much      5. not at all

3. How well do you know your child's friends?

1. very well      2. rather well      3. somewhat      4. not very well      5. not at all

4. When your child gets a poor grade, how often do you...

	almost always	often	sometimes	rarely	almost never
° get upset with your child?	1	2	3	4	5
° encourage child to try harder?	1	2	3	4	5
° ground child?	1	2	3	4	5
° offer to help child?	1	2	3	4	5

5. When your child gets a good grade, how often do you...

	almost always	often	sometimes	rarely	almost never
° praise your child?	1	2	3	4	5
° encourage them to do even better?	1	2	3	4	5
° tell them that other grades should be better?	1	2	3	4	5

6. How often are the following statements true?

	almost always	often	sometimes	rarely	almost never
° I help my child with schoolwork if there is something they do not understand.	1	2	3	4	5
° My child knows I can be counted on to help them out with problems.	1	2	3	4	5

7. How often have you discussed your child's performance with your child?

1. never      2. rarely      3. sometimes      4. usually      5. always

8. How often are you home when your child returns from school?

1. never      2. rarely      3. sometimes      4. usually      5. always

9. How often do you do the following?

	almost always	often	sometimes	rarely	almost never
◦ check on whether you child has done his/her homework	1	2	3	4	5
◦ help your child with his/her homework	1	2	3	4	5
◦ give your child special privileges because of good grades	1	2	3	4	5
◦ limit privileges because of poor grades	1	2	3	4	5
◦ require chores around the house	1	2	3	4	5
◦ limit TV and video time	1	2	3	4	5
◦ limit time spent with friends after school	1	2	3	4	5

10. How many times have you done the following in the past five months?

	none	once	twice	three	four or more
◦ attend a school meeting	1	2	3	4	5
◦ attend a school event	1	2	3	4	5
◦ act as a volunteer at your child's school	1	2	3	4	5

11. How often have you contacted the school about your child?

1. none      2. once      3. twice      4. three times      5. four or more times

12. Is your child involved in any organized activities after school? Please circle the ones that apply.

1. piano      2. dance      3. karate      4. sports      5. other

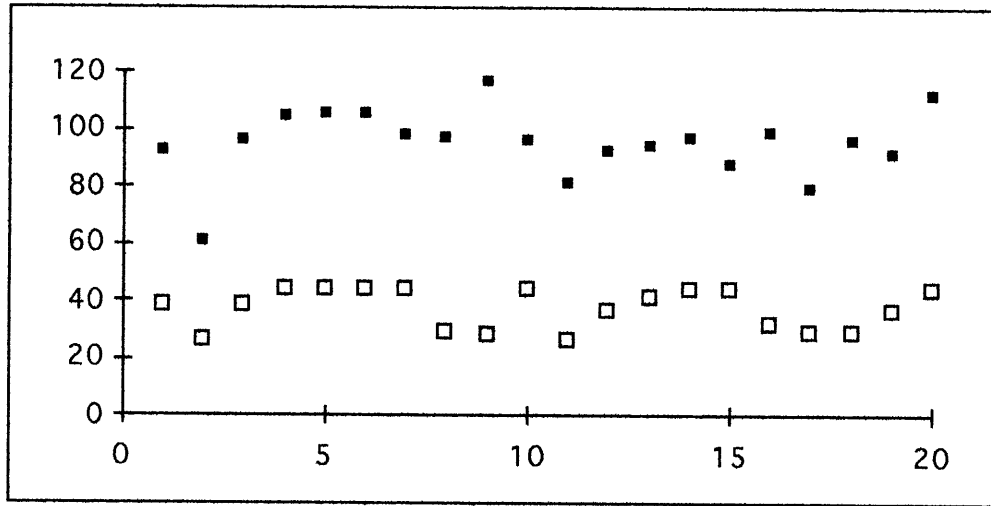
THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!!!

## Appendix B

### Parental Involvement Scores and Grade Scores

Parental involvement scores and grade scores

**Parental Involvement Scores**



Grade Scores

## Appendix C

### Parental Involvement and Scores on Individual Dimensions

Parental involvement scores with scores for individual dimensions

	Subject	PI Score	S	M	H	P
NJ	1	92	33	32	15	12
NJ	2	61	26	17	12	6
NJ	3	96	31	33	18	14
NJ	4	104	37	34	20	13
NJ	5	105	36	35	18	16
NJ	6	105	36	35	18	16
NJ	7	98	35	31	20	12
NJ	8	97	32	33	20	12
NJ	9	116	38	39	20	19
NJ	10	96	33	34	20	8
NJ	11	81	30	26	18	7
NJ	12	92	35	28	20	9
NJ	13	94	29	33	16	16
PA	14	97	34	33	20	10
PA	15	88	31	32	17	8
PA	16	99	33	34	20	12
PA	17	79	28	29	14	8
PA	18	96	24	37	20	15
PA	19	91	35	31	17	8
PA	20	112	40	36	20	16

PI Score = Parental Involvement Score  
 S = Supporting  
 M = Monitoring  
 H = Helping  
 P = Participating

NJ = New Jersey  
 PA = Pennsylvania