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Parental Involvement and the Impact on Students' Literacy Development

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Abstract

This study seeks to examine how parental involvement impacts students' literacy development at the adolescent level, as it pertains to seventh and eighth graders. I affirm that parental involvement inside and outside the classroom is a key factor in increasing academic success. Data was collected through questionnaires, direct observations, and teacher interviews. This study reveals that parental involvement still is prevalent at the adolescent level, only the emphasis tends to shift from an academic setting to a more social and athletic environment. The shift provides the opportunity to continue communication between the student, parent, and school while reinforcing the understated belief of students' academic achievement.

Parental Involvement and the

Impact on Students' Literacy Development

The learning process is a life long journey. From the moment a person is born until the golden years, people are continually learning. Parent involvement with a child's academic studies will result in a more successful schooling experience for the child. Parents provide a multidimensional role and are considered to be their child's first teachers and socializing agents (Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2006a). They are caregivers that provide a nurturing environment where a child can feel safe, while providing the essential needs that motivate active learning within the child. Therefore, parental involvement is vital in supporting a child's literacy development (Aronson, 1996).

Parental involvement in education has a profound effect on a child's ability to become a successful adult (Aronson, 1996). According to the No Child Left Behind Act, parental involvement is defined as

> the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities including: assisting their child's learning, being actively involved in their child's education at school, and serving as full partners in their child's education and being included, as appropriate in decision making to assist in the education of their child. (Parental Involvement: Title I, 2004, p. 31).

As a result, for parent involvement to be meaningful, parents must be willing to embrace a two way communication between their home and school.

The importance of literacy development is directly related to a child's success into adulthood as "the soil in which the roots of literacy grows has significant impact on each child's development" (Goodman, 1980, p. 317). Parental involvement greatly impacts a child's learning and literacy experiences. Parent involvement not only effects students achievement in a positive way but it also leads to better performance as the child progresses into the higher education settings (Aronson, 1996). Compton-Lily (2009) she-states that "many forms of family and community involvement influence student achievement at all ages" (p.126). Students have a more positive attitude towards school and learning when parents become more involved in their child's education. As children grow out of the elementary years and begin a new stage at the middle school, parental involvement is still critical in a student's success. Parents who seek assistance from teachers help ensure their child is performing at or above grade level. Involved parents are able to offer additional resources to assist in their child's learning. Parents that provide their child with various literacy events can further enhance authentic learning experiences (Ingram, Wolfe & Lieberman, 2007).

Much research has been conducted on parental involvement in regards to its importance in supporting a child's development of learning (Aronson, 1996). Compton-Lily (2009) reported that more parent involvement is needed where "plans to increase parental involvement in traditional events are missing the critical connection among educators, families, and students" (p. 26). In order to close the gap, it was deemed evident that parent involvement had to relate to their child's academic learning in one form or another (Compton-Lily, 2009). Goodman (1980) states that children develop notions about literacy in the same way they develop other significant learning. Theories have been developed that interpret the parent role as including involvement

when the parent believes they have the ability, skills and knowledge to influence their children (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).

      This study examines how parent involvement impacts a students' literacy development at the adolescent level. Three forms of data were collected including questionnaires, direct observations, and teacher interviews. The findings indicate that parent involvement in the school setting begins to decrease at the adolescent level as students become more independent in their academic studies. Furthermore, the type of involvement begins to shift from an academic setting to an extra-curricular setting. Parent involvement is an important factor to a student's literacy development and academic achievement.

Theoretical Framework

Literacy can be viewed as the ability to read and write as well as listening and speaking but can be redefined and looked at from different perspectives. One definition of literacy can be defined as "literacy is a control of secondary uses of language" (Gee, 2001, p. 23). Gee (2001) looks at literacy as a discourse, or "a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network'" (p.18). He argues that literacy is considered to be a secondary discourse because it is both acquired and learned after primary discourses which are acquired within the family and community. In contrast to Gee, Delpit (2001) defines literacy as the ability for anyone to acquire a dominant discourse and the set values that may not be the one they were born into. It is Delpit's belief, that anyone can acquire a dominant discourse, regardless of the environment they were born into.

Children acquire literacy through a variety of factors including the culture in which they are raised into. Heath (1982) draws on the sociocultural theory and takes the stance that different

cultures have different ways of using language through immersion and learning. In her studies

Heath observed two nearby communities, Roadville and Trackton. Roadville's ethnic make-up

was predominately a white, working class in which parents believed that participating in literacy

events are a necessity to become proficient in reading and writing (Heath, 1982). The family

setting provided guided learning in activities to children including simplified retellings, picture

books, and the alphabet (Heath, 1982). In contrast, Trackton was predominately a black,

working class community. Parents did not provide reading materials or read with children and

left it to the children to learn to perform the language from experiences (Heath, 1982). Both

communities care for their children, however, it is evident that the cultures of the respective

communities do play a significant role the children's literacy development. It is evident that

Heath concludes a child's culture and environment play a significant role in the learning process.

Another way children can acquire language is through a social process. According to

Kucer (2009), "parents also sponsor language learning in children" (p. 282) by taking on various

roles. A parent-acts as a demonstrator, mediator, and guide in supporting his/her child's literacy

development. "Parents are actively involved, demonstrating the dimensions of language to and

for the child as well as mediating and supporting the child's attempts to use language" (Kucer,

2009, p.282) both in a formal as well as informal setting. By participating in literacy events, both

the parent and child are able to express their thoughts and build relationships with one another.

Therefore, "family involvement influences student achievement" (Compton-Lily, 2009, p.126)

allowing for growth to occur during their literacy development.

It is important to understand issues in diversity especially as they relate to parental

involvement and its impact on a child's literacy development. One issue in diversity is focused

on the role of culture in literacy acquisition and learning. Culture provides the framework of

how language is structured based on the experiences children are exposed through their home environment. Cultural differences among children may have a significant impact of literacy acquisition and learning. As mentioned above, Heath (1982) explored how different cultures have different ways of using language in which it was acquired through immersion and learning. Although both communities had a high regard of children, it was apparent that the culture of each community dictated the children's literacy development.

Parental involvement theories and frameworks have been developed including educational activities parents engage in at home and school (Epstein, 1990, 1996), the frequency these parents do these academic activities and the attitudes parents have towards their children's school and education (Kohl, Lengua, & McMahon, 2000). Models have been developed that focus on the behaviors and the relationships of parent involvement. Older theories focus on behaviors that parents engage in such as attending school functions and interactions with teachers. Later models of parent involvement not only focus on the activities parents engage in but the attitudes that parents have toward education and school (Kohl, Lengua, & McMahon, 2000).

Epstein's model (1990, 1996) consisted of six types of parent involvement that mainly focused on the collaboration between the home and school environment. This framework provided a broad view of parent involvement and later served as the basis of other conceptualization models such as the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) one. In the Epstein model the first type of involvement focuses on programs centered on their child's health and safety, the second type on communication from school to home, third includes allowing parents to partake in an active volunteer role in the child's classroom and school event, four denotes parents monitoring and assisting their children's academic progress at home, fifth reaches to

decision-making opportunities, and lastly, the sixth type of involvement focuses on the

collaboration between the school and community (Epstein, 1990, 1996).

      Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) further refined the Epstein model to explore

a look at parents' perspectives. This model is made up of five levels that correlate with a parent's

initial decision to become involved with the child's outcome. Level one pertains to the parents'

initial decision-making in becoming involved with their child's schooling and learning, Level

two of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) model focuses on the form of parental

involvement and why this type was chosen, Level three of the model indicates that once a parent

is involved with their child's education, they will continue to do so by various functions such as

modeling, reinforcement and instruction, Level four where the focus is on the parent becomes

more engaged and uses appropriate strategies to support their child's learning and Level five, the

final level, focuses on specific student outcomes that are influenced by the parent's involvement.

(Hoover-Dempsey, Walker & Sandler, 2005).

      Walker et al. further refined the framework to be a two-level theoretical model. The

model has a strong theoretical foundation and builds on a variety of empirical studies (Hoover-

Dempsey et al., 2005). The model refers to limited studies with preschool age children as well as

elementary and secondary age children (Reed, Jones, Walker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2000). All

variables contained within the model have empirical support of the importance and influence on

parental involvement.

      The first level of the Walker et al. (2005) model incorporates parents' motivational

beliefs, including parent role construction, sense of efficacy and parents' perceptions of

involvement opportunities. These opportunities could pertain to the general school or be specific

teacher invitations. It is believed that parents are more likely to become involved if they

interpret the parent role as directly impacting their child's education, they believe they can make

a difference and they perceive the school and classroom environments are welcoming (Hoover-

Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997). The parent role construction is believed to be the most

significant contributor to the parent's decision to become involved. Without a strong role

construction, parents will not see out any type of involvement regardless of their efficacy or

opportunities presented (Walker et al.). In addition the Walker et al. model Level one addresses

the demands on time and energy coupled with the parents' believed skills and knowledge may

impede parent involvement from occurring.

Research Question

Given that parents play an important role in one's primary discourse as they acquire

literacy (Gee, 2001) and that literacy is a social process, this action study asks how does parental

involvement impacts the literacy development in children at the secondary level, as it pertains to

seventh and eighth graders?

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to examine the impact parental involvement has

on a child's literacy development and subsequent academic success. Examination will begin first

focusing on the factors that impact parent involvement. The focus will then shift to how parent

involvement effects students' development at the birth through elementary level. In addition,

further examination will explore the impact of students' development at the secondary level.

Lastly, children and adolescents perceptions as to the effects of parent involvement will be

investigated. Research indicates that as students move up into higher grade levels, the level of

parent involvement decreases (Ingram et al., 2007).

Factors that Impact Parent Involvement

Parent involvement has become an important factor of a child's academic achievement (Englund, Luckner, Whaley&Egeland, 2004). Research has found there are a number of factors that affect the level of parental involvement in their child's education (Watkins, 1997). The three most notable demographic factors include ethnicity, education level, and socioeconomic status (SES) (Trivette& Anderson, 1995).

Race and ethnicity has been researched as it relates to a child's GPA. Examination of a parents' ethnicity showed that it had a direct affect on their level of involvement in education. GPAs were also evaluated; regardless of ethnicities, GPAs were higher when parents were involved in the educational process (Keith, Keith, Quirk, Sperduto, Santillo& Killings, 1998). Minority parents who had the belief that homework was a means of improving their child's education were more likely to help their children with homework (Stevenson, Chen &Uttal, 1990). Parent involvement was a good indicator for European American and Asian American populations than their Hispanic and African American counterparts (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Lee et al. discovered that European American parents were more involved in their child's school, less involved with their child's time management at home, and took part in more parent-child educational discussions than Hispanic/Latinos (2006). Asian parents had lower levels of engagement in home discussions, engagement with the school community, and participation in school than did European Americans; they did demonstrate a higher level of engagement with home supervision (Sui-Chu &Willms, (1996), Sui-Chu et al. also found that Hispanic parents engaged in more home supervision than European Americans (1996). Seyfriend and Chung also found differences in the type and level of involvement between African and European Americans; European Americans had higher expectations involving their child's academic performance (2002).

Research is varied on the impact of socioeconomic status (SES). Studies have found that parents with higher SES are more likely to be involved in schools (Grolnick, et. al, 1997). Other studies have found that SES was significant and positively related to parent involvement (Sui-Chu, et al., 1996). Yet, other studies found that SES was not an influencing factor in determining the level of parent involvement (Shaver & Walls, 1998). Results also indicated that parents with less education were less likely to help their children with homework due to lack of necessary skills to do the job (Baker & Stevenson, 1986).

Parents have the delicate balance of maintaining the family outside of school. Demands on time and energy, such as employment hours, the number of children including step children in the family, and marital status may decrease the availability or create barriers to parent involvement at the school. The number of children and step children in family can impact parent involvement actions. As parents need to divide their time between children, the demand for their time increases. Parents may find they are not available to help with homework if they are helping another child. Parents may also find that they cannot attend all school activities and events if they overlap with another child's event. The responsibilities form constraints on the level a parent is able to be involved in (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Marital status has shown to have a positive influence on parent involvement based on the resources available in a two parent household. Fantuzzo, Tighe and Childs (2000) and Grolnick et al. (1997) reported that married parents were more involved in home-based and school-based activities and involvement than single parents. Walker et al. (2005) found that parent involvement was significantly related to having two parents in the home. Those households with two parents were able to share responsibilities, allowing for parent participation in activities for their children's education. Single parents may have to work longer hours due to one income and

have increased family responsibilities thereby limiting their availability to participate. In addition, single parents may also experience more difficulties in decision making in regards to their child's academic learning as they do not have a spouse to help buffer and provide support during difficult times (Grolnick et al., 1997). It is a conclusion that if parents are unavailable for involvement, it can also be concluded that a child's literacy development may also be impacted.

Employment demands have the opportunity to offer possibilities and restrictions on the rate of parent involvement activities (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Walker et al. (2005) reported that employment can be a barrier to parent involvement while Fantuzzo et al. (2000) found the opposite. Fantuzzo administered a multivariate survey entitled the family involvement questionnaire. Three categories were assessed including school-based involvement, home-based involvement, and home-school conferencing. The results indicated that 50% of parents who are employed are more involved in school-based activities whereas there are only 48% of parents who are not employed involved in school-based activities (Fantuzzoet al., 2000). The number of hours worked and the time of day, the proximity of employment and the ability to shift the work schedule all contribute to the range of parent involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). If the parent works long hours during the day and is unable to take time off for school related events, parent involvement will likely be negatively impacted. The child may interpret the parent's lack of involvement as an indication that school is not important and may lose motivation. Parent involvement may increase if the parent works for the school or close to the school and has flexible hours allowing them to take time off for school related events (Ingram, 2007).

A parents' perception of their specific skills and knowledge, heavily impacts the type of involvement they might choose. Hoover-Dempsey and Sander (1995, 1997) found that a parent's

perceived skills and knowledge can be identified through the types of activities they participate in with their children. These include the materials they have in their home and attitudes they have towards particular topics. As indicated earlier, parents' beliefs and perceptions influence how they interact with their children. In contrast, Weigel et al. (2006b) reported that when parents who place value and importance on reading will more likely be frequently engaged in literacy related activities.

Several studies delved into parent education, skills, and knowledge. The studies concluded that parents with a lower education were less involved than those with a higher education (Dauber & Epstein, 1991). Epstein (1986) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) reported that there were no differences between a lower education and higher education parent in relation to level of involvement. Education has been proposed as having an impact on the type of involvement that a parent chooses. Fantuzzo et al. (2000) and Walker et al., (2005) reported that parents with a lower education participated in more home-based than school-based activities. It was suggested that parents with a low education might feel less comfortable in a school setting due to fewer positive educational experiences, the lack of ability to communicate with the teacher and the feeling of inadequacy when in the company of other parents with a higher education.

Other studies have analyzed the effect of student related factors such as gender and age, with mixed findings. One study found that the level of parent involvement differed from boys to girls (Stevenson, et. al, 1987). Grolnick et al. (1997) found that parent involvement was lower for boys than from girls because the boys appeared to be more independent. Keith et al. (1998) found that parent involvement had a strong effect on a student's grades for both boys and girls.

Parent Involvement at the Birth through Elementary Level

As noted earlier, parent involvement can be viewed as a social process across many different contexts. It is also an important aspect of the interaction between a home and school environment that can lead to increased academic performance (Hill & Craft, 2003). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) identified that parents become involved in their child's learning process for three reasons. The first reason is that the parent believed their role included involvement. Second, the parent possessed a personal sense of efficacy to help their children succeed in school, and third, the parent accepted the opportunities and invitations presented to them by school, the teacher, and their children

Parents are more likely to become involved when they believe their role as a parent includes involvement; parents take responsibility for what they believe is necessary for their child's schooling. Parents who hold the belief that they are a critical component of their child's learning will strive to support their child's learning process whether it is at home or at school. The parent will take on a higher role providing greater support in their children's education, which results in more positive outcomes (Grolnick et al., 1997).

A parent's sense of efficacy or the parent's belief that they can make a difference in their children's academic success (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997) is a vital factor in their decision to become involved in their children's education. Their beliefs are heavily influenced by experiences, expected outcomes and consideration of personal capabilities. Efficacy helps influence parental goals and beliefs about what they should do (Walker, et al., 2005). This concept is derived from Albert Bandura's theory of self-efficacy which is defined as "a person's belief that he or she can act in ways that are likely to produce desired outcomes" (Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010, p. 344). The framework behind this theory refers to parents making involvement decisions based on the knowledge and skills they possess in order to provide adequate support

for their children (Deslandes et al., 2005). Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) suggested that mothers tended to evaluate their success as a parent from their involvement with their children. As such, parents are more likely to become involved with their child when they believe they have the ability to influence their children's learning process and achievement (Grolnick et al., 1997). Reed et al., (2000) who studied parents of students ranging from pre-k to sixth grade found that sense of efficacy was positively related to children's grades and achievement when parents were involved.

Opportunities and invitations play an important role in regards to parent involvement and can be defined as "invitations from the child and the school, which indicate the parents' involvement is desirable and valued" (Anderson & Minke, 2007, p. 312). Parental involvement will vary depending on the type of invitation, implicit and explicit, prompted by the school and child (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997). Parents have the tendency to become more involved when they perceive the school and classroom is welcoming through teacher invitations and positive attitudes (Baker et al., 1996). By performing the act of presenting an invitation to the parent, the school and teacher convey the message that they value and appreciate parent involvement (Walker et. al., 2005). Dauber and Epstein (1991) studied elementary and middle school students and parents. Their study found that teacher invitations and parent involvement based school programs were strong predictors of parent involvement at home and in school. If a child was supported at home, he/she was most likely to spend more time on homework.

Weigel et al., (2006b) further supports the concept of parents taking an active role in their child's development in regards to literacy. Their study indicated parents who viewed themselves as teacher as well, not simply a caregiver, placed strong importance on their children's literacy and language development. The parent engaged in more frequent literacy-based activities at

home with their children. Their study identified mothers, labeled facilitative mothers, who took

an active role in teaching and who believed that reading books to children was fundamental for

vocabulary development even at the preschool level. Mothers who believed it was the

responsibility of the school and teachers were classified as conventional mothers. The

facilitative mothers read, sang songs, told stories, and played games more than the conventional

mother. As a result, the children of a facilitative mother scored higher in print knowledge,

reading interest and emergent writing skills than their conventional counterparts.   It was found

that facilitative mothers also tended to create a more stimulating environment for their child.

Since parent roles consists of motivating and interacting with their children, it is logical that

parents who place a high value on literacy would pass this value onto their children (Weigel et al.

2006b).

Literacy-specific parent involvement promotes the act of literacy development. The home

literacy environment is composed of literacy-based experiences, attitudes and resources from

which the child learns from (DeBaryshe et al., 2000). Earlier observations of the home literacy

environment concentrated solely on the level of frequency of storybook reading interactions

between the parent and child. Later views have now identified literacy to be multifaceted

consisting of magazines, newspapers, library use, drawing and writing activities, as well as book

reading (Weigel et al., 2006a). The parent's positive attitude along with expanding the literacy

environment to include other vehicles help generate a child's enthusiasm for literacy learning

(Weigel et al., 2006a) and will play a crucial role in the child's development of reading, language

and cognitive skills. A parent plays a critical role in the home environment to create an

interactional context in which children's reading interest and motivation is encouraged (Roberts,

Jurgens & Burchinal, 2005). Since a parent is a child's first teacher, it is logical to conclude that

the importance placed on the contributions to the home environment is due to this is where a

child has his first encounter with literacy (Evans, et al., 2000). It can also be said that the home

environment is critical to children's literacy development because it provides the opportunities to

observe literacy activities with others, engage in joint literacy activities and independently

explore literacy materials and behaviors (DeBaryshe et al., 2000).

It can be derived that children are able to achieve increased literacy skills when they have

a positive home literacy environment. Weigel et al. (2006a) reported based on preschool

children, that literacy enhancing activities in the home such as singing songs, playing games,

reciting rhymes, and drawing pictures improved literacy and language outcomes. This same

study also reported that the frequency of joint book reading was positively related to outcomes as

well as children's interest for reading. Other studies have found that only looking at the

frequency of book reading or exposure to books is not a reliable predictor of literacy outcomes,

but interactions might be the true indicator (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). Thus, parent beliefs

directly influence the types of home experiences and interactions that they provide to their

children (DeBaryshe et al., 2000).

Parent Involvement at the Secondary Level

The benefits from parental involvement do not end at the elementary level. Several

studies have reported that "when parents are involved, secondary students obtain better grades,"

(Deslandes et al., 1997, p.225). Another finding indicated that secondary students whose parents

continue to be involved showed higher aspirations (Trusty, 1996) and have fewer disciplinary

problems (Deslandes et al., 2002). Parent involvement at this level is a difficult balancing act

because adolescents are trying to take on more responsibility and slowly distance themselves

from their parents (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986) while increasing their self-reliance (Deslandes,

2005). What involvement may have been appropriate when their child was younger may no longer be appropriate as they mature.

It is not necessarily easy for parents to determine which activities they should partake in at the middle and high school levels. Parents want to help their child strive for more independence, and at the same time, adolescents might be resistant to their parent remaining involved (Epstein & Connors, 1995). Recent studies have supported the premise that supportive parenting correlates with students' academic achievement (Jeyes, 2007), social competence (Bugental et al., 2006) and physical health (Arredondo et al., 2006). Research has indicated that parent involvement was also associated with lower rates of high school dropout, increased ability to complete high school on time, and the highest grade completed (Barnard, 2004). Parents want to be involved only if they are wanted. (Deslandes et al., 2005). The types of general school opportunities available to parents, but not limited to, include encouraging parents to participate in school board meetings and the decision making process, holding school-wide family centered events such as open houses, and sending a weekly newsletter. Specific teacher invitations also contribute to parent beliefs regarding their involvement by indicating they do have a role in their child's education. Teacher to parent involvement can include interactive homework, online class events, planning parent-based activities in the classroom or even simply calling the parent (Epstein, 1986). Each time a teacher reaches out to the parent, the parent perception of the classroom will increase (Baker et al., 1996). Parent involvement in the classroom also allows parents and teacher the opportunity to learn while incorporating activities for a cohesive literacy environment. Griffith (1996) also found that increased communication between teachers and home also let to a higher rate of satisfaction with the school. Keeping parents informed allowed them to discuss school related activities at home, strengthening the

home-school connection. As earlier noted, Dauber and Epstein (1991) studied middle school students and parents. It is critical that when teacher invitations are given at the secondary level it resulted in a strong predictor of parent involvement at home and in school.

A number of studies have demonstrated an association between students' involvement with extracurricular activities and their grades (Broh, 2002) up through high school. Typically, parent involvement at the higher grades includes attendance at teacher conference and school activities such as open houses. Parents may also establish relations ships with teachers for a monitoring regarding academic performance. In addition, parents work to establish new relationships with administrators through participation in parent-school organizations and booster clubs. Participation in these venues demonstrates the importance parents attach to school and academic achievement and should positively continue to influence student achievement (Stewart, 2007). Stewart (2007) suggests that the research indicates that parental involvement is vital to a child's success whether it is part of the academic setting or as part of an extracurricular activity. At the middle school and secondary levels, parental involvement in any form translates into increased academic success.

As in the elementary level, general parent involvement at the secondary level can be broad in nature and can take on several different forms that are based on home-based and school-based practices. Home-based practices include, but are not limited to, helping a child with homework, cooking with a child or even talking about what happened that day. School-based practices directly involve going to the school location and include actions such as, but not limited to, going to a school sporting event, chaperoning a field trip or dance, and volunteering in the classroom (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler; 1995, 1997). As such, it is vital to recognize and understand that parent involvement is multidimensional process.

As earlier noted parent involvement has been linked with increased academic motivation, success and enhanced social skills in children (Fantuzzo et al., 2000). Parent involvement does not have to have an educational underlying belief, but might include such activities such as eating dinner, playing games or even watching television can have an impact on a child's development. By communicating with their child, parents become aware of the child's needs while demonstrating to the child that they are important. These acts increase a child's motivation and help solidify the child's social skills that will transfer to experiences and relationships out of the home (Weigel et al., 2006a).

Children and Adolescent's Perceptions of Parent Involvement

The prior sections of this literature review have focused on the factors affecting parent involvement and the impacts of parent involvement at the Birth through Elementary and Secondary levels. It pointed out the studies that have found that parent involvement is tied to a child's well-being, socially (Bugental et al., 2006) and academically (Jeyes, 2007). Children whose parents were involved were likely to achieve higher grades in school and master higher levels of academia (Deslandes et al., 1997). With this being the case, it can be understood that parent involvement would have a positive impact on a child's literacy development.

Understandably, the forms of parental involvement that might be acceptable for a six year old will most likely drastically differ for a thirteen year old. Limited studies have been performed looking at parent involvement through the eyes of children and adolescents'. This section will focus solely on the adolescent population in the middle school level.

A child's perception of parent involvement may differ based on a variety of factors. One question that has been raised asks if there is a difference in parental involvement based on gender. Some studies have indicated that parents of girls with their approval are more likely to

be involved (Bogenschneider, 1997) but other studies did not find this to be the case. Deslandes et al. (2002) performed a study to help identify adolescents' expectations and attitudes toward parental involvement with the objective to help parents as well as schools document strategies for parent involvement. Deslandes et al., (2002) found that not only were parents equally involved, girls tended to have more self-reliance or self-determination than their boy counterparts. It also concluded that although girls rated higher in other categories they were equal with their boy peers in work orientation. Work-orientation can be defined as the measure of the adolescent's work skills, aspirations for competent work performance and capacity of experiencing pleasure in their work (Deslandes et al., 2002).

Epstein and Connors (1995) found that many fifteen year olds still looked for parental involvement opportunities at home where most did not want their parents on a class trip or volunteering in their school. They also found that the majority of students indicated their parents reinforce that their education and schooling is needed for the future. Deslandes et al. (2002) also found that a majority of both boys and girls agreed to ask for help from parents including ideas for a school related project. The adolescents also wanted to share with parents when they did well, keep parents informed by bringing home newsletters or class communications and have parents attend activities at school (Deslandes et al., 2002). More than half of the adolescents reported they were willing to work with their parent at home, outside of the school environment, focusing on tasks including reviewing their writings, helping prepare for tests, helping to increase grades, discussing course selection for the following year and general communication such as current events (Deslandes et al., 2002).   In contrast, Epstein and Conners (1995) found more than half the students indicated they would not invite their parents coming into their class to be involved. Not having parents directly involved in the school may be driven by the finding

that boys, more than girls, have a more negative attitude when parents tell them what to do

(Vyverman & Vettenburg, 2009). It was also found that girls had a higher liking in discussing

school related information with their parents, and were more willing to have their parents attend

meetings with teachers (Vyverman & Vettenburg, 2009). Girls also reported that their parents

were satisfied when the child works hard in school whereas, more boys indicated their parents

and school worked together to make school better (Vyverman & Vettenburg, 2009). In relation

to both boys and girls, both groups were amendable to having parents help with homework.

(Vyverman & Vettenburg, 2009).

As literature indicates, many factors affect a student's success including parent

involvement. Research suggests the level of parent involvement varies based on demographic

factors such as race and ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Parent engagement at home is tied

to a student's academic achievement. The rates may vary between demographic groups, but

student achievement results are higher with increased parental involvement. Parent involvement

in education has been widely regarded as a best practice. The No Child Left Behind Act includes

specific requirements that hold state and local education agencies accountable, resulting in

policies at the school level that encourage parent involvement. Parents who want to see their

child achieve academic success provide a supportive environment that embraces learning.

Method

Context

The research study was conducted in the town of Greystone (pseudonym), located in

Moore (pseudonym) County. Greystone Central School District (GCSD) is the ninth-largest

district in New York State and the largest in Moore County. The district is comprised of twenty

different schools: three high schools, one 6-12 school, three middle schools, and thirteen

elementary schools (GCSD, 2012). The community in which the school is located in is targeted

towards the middle class with approximately 35, 665 residents (Public School Review, 2012)

where 37% of the community's population holds a college degree with the age of twenty-five

years or older. This compares to the New York State average of 32% percent (Public School

Review, 2012).

Specifically, the study was administered at Greystone Arkon (pseudonym) Middle

School. Arkon is approximately made up of 804 students ranging from grade six to grade eight

(Public School Review, 2012). The diversity of the school is very limited in the make-up of the

student body. 83 % of the students are of white decent. The remaining make-up of the school

includes Black or African American (9%), Hispanic or Latino (7%), and Asian or Native Pacific

Islander (1%). Of the students attending the school, 24% are eligible for free lunch and 12% for

reduced-price lunch (Public School Review, 2012). 1% of the middle school student population

is considered to be limited English proficient (NYS School Report Card, 2012).

Arkon Middle School has a total of 62 teachers, creating a 1:13 teacher to student ratio

which is equivalent to New York State school average (Public School Review, 2012). The

average class size is approximately twenty students. Furthermore, the staff make-up of the school

includes six other professional staff (administrators, counselors, nurses, etc.), two assistant

principals, and one principal (NYS School Report Card, 2012).

The study consists of four sections of American Sign Language classes including two

seventh grade classes and two eighth grade classes. From the four sections, 79 out of 113

students desired to participate in the study. Of the 79 students, only 41 parents provided the

necessary consent for their child to take part; therefore the sample size will consist of 41 students

and parents. The class sizes ranged from 26 to 32 students; seventh grade orange (32), seventh

grade yellow (26), eighth grade blue (26), and eighth grade pink (29). There is one teaching assistant present in the seventh grade orange class and one teaching assistant present in the eighth grade pink class.

Participants

Participants will be involved in a two stage process for this study. First, the total number of participants' in stage one part taking in this study is 41. The ethnic make-up of the participants is limited in its diversity. The ethnic make-up of seventh grade orange includes two black students where the remaining class is white. Seventh grade yellow consists of one Asian, one Hispanic, and one mixed race with the remaining students of white decent. Eighth grade blue consists of one black student with the remaining students being white and eighth grade pink has one Hispanic, one black, and one mixed race and the remaining white. Secondly, in stage two four students will be selected from the total number of participants. I have taught these participants in ASL for the last month. The participants range from twelve to thirteen years of age and receive varying degrees of academic support from their parents.

Claire (pseudonym) is one of the students participating in this study. I have taught Claire in ASL for the past month. She is a twelve year-old, white female, in the seventh grade. She lives with her mother, who is very supportive in her learning at school. In addition to supporting her daughter's learning, she also participates in her extracurricular activities that she is involved in at school. Claire is well liked by her peers and participates fully when required to. She completes class work to her best of ability as well as advocates for herself when need be. Claire is not receiving any support services as she attends grade level courses. Her academic grades continue to be high as she is currently at an A grade range.

Kristen (pseudonym) is another student that will take a role in this study. I have also

taught Kristen in ASL for the past month. She is a thirteen year-old, white, female, in the eighth grade. She lives her mother, father, brothers, and sisters. Her family takes an active role in supporting her education. Kristen's mom provides extra support in her homework on a weekly basis, and participates in clubs and organizations at the school. Kristen is enrolled in grade level classes and excels academically. In class, Kristen is outgoing and gets along with her peers. She is willing to help classmates when they are in need of help. Her grades are consistently high, which reflect high level of effort she puts in towards her school work. She currently stands at an average of an A.

Hillary (pseudonym) will be a third student participating in this study. I have provided ASL instruction for her for the last month. She is a thirteen year-old, white, female, in the eighth grade. She lives with her mother, brothers and sisters who provide minimal support in her learning. Hillary is diagnosed with a Learning Disability (LD) which provides her with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The current services she is being provided are testing modifications such as separate location and extended time. She also receives daily support from her consultant teacher in her core classes. Lastly, she attends resource room where extra assistance is provided once a week. During class, Hillary is attentive for most of the time but can become easily distracted by others. Her level of engagement is seen as minimal as she does not participate to her full extent. Hillary's academic grades tend to be slightly high as she is currently at an average of an A.

Allison (pseudonym) is the final student that will take an active role in the study. I have provided ASL instruction to her for the last month. She is a twelve year-old, white, female, in the seventh grade. She lives with her father, mother, brothers and sisters who provide some support including helping with homework on a daily basis. Allison is currently receiving no services to

support her academic learning. During class, Allison is able to get along with others as she rarely

displays disruptive behavior. Her contribution to class is seen as minimal but will participate

when asked to. Academically, Allison's grades have fluctuated throughout her schooling as she

is currently sitting at a D average.

Ms. Andrews (pseudonym) is a white, female who is in her mid-thirties. Her

certifications are in American Sign Language 7-12 and Deaf Education K-12. She has worked in

the Greystone Central District for eight years but has taught at Arkon Middle for seven years.

Ms. Andrews holds the position of an American Sign Language Teacher and Teacher of the

Deaf. She teaches level 1a and 1b for seventh and eighth grade classes. As the ASL teacher, she

is responsible for teaching and covering the curriculum through creating lessons and activities

that will help prepare students for the state exam as well as gain confidence in their signing

abilities. She also keeps open communication with all parents through various forms to let them

know what is being learned in class and what is expected of their child. The Teacher of the Deaf

(TOD) requires much more responsibilities that need to be fulfilled. The primary responsibility is

to work one- on- one or in small group settings with students on a weekly basis to provide extra

support in their academic learning. She also provides in-service support and collaborates with

teachers to ensure her students are receiving appropriate accommodations and maximum support

as needed. Furthermore, Ms. Andrews provides test modifications for those students who are

diagnosed with a disability and have proper documentation. Lastly, she keeps in contact with the

students' parents to keep them informed on how their child is progressing.

Researcher Stance

My background is in Childhood Education and Special Education in grades one through

six. Additionally, I have obtained certifications in Early Childhood and Special Education Birth-

2. Since obtaining my Bachelor's Degree, I have been a substitute teacher in the Greystone

Central School District for over eighteen months. I have also had a few short term substitute

positions at the secondary level in American Sign Language and Special Education. I am

currently obtaining my Master's Degree at St. John Fisher College while being enrolled in the

Literacy Birth-12 program. During this study, I take on the roles of the privileged, active

observer and the active participant observer role (Mills, 2011). This will be evident through my

observations as I will be able to observe specific students during class as they work

independently or with others to complete work. During this time, I will also be "actively engaged

in teaching" (Mills, 2011, p.75) as well as providing assistance to those students when in need of

help. Times like these "provide opportunities for teachers to work as a "teacher's aide," while at

the same time allowing to watch a particular teaching episode" (Mills, 2011, p.75). These roles

will allow me to gather accurate and concise observations as I examine the students'

participation in the class.

Method

While conducting my action research, many forms of data will be collected to ensure an

accurate sampling. My first method is a questionnaire that will be given out to both students and

parents of the seventh and eighth grade classes. The student questionnaire will focus on

questions relating to reading habits and interests as well as their perceptions of parent

involvement. Similar to the student questionnaire, the parent questionnaire will focus on the

parent's reading habits and interests as well how frequent they are involved in their child's

schooling and learning. The student questionnaires are to be administered during their weekly

ASL class time, whereas the parent questionnaires will be brought home by the students and

returned within a one- week timeframe. I will assist those students who need help by reading

questions to clear up any confusion they may have. The anticipated time in completing the questionnaire will be about fifteen minutes, which provides students enough time to complete it to their best of ability.

A second method that will be conducted is observations on student participation. Specifically, four students will be selected, two students from eighth grade class and two students from seventh grade class. Students will be chosen based on the level of involvement their parent provides towards the student's learning as well as input provided from the teacher. The two students from the eighth grade class are seen as having low parent involvement whereas the two students from the seventh grade class are seen as having high parent involvement. Observations and field notes will be taken over a two -week period for approximately 20 minutes each class. In addition to field notes, a rubric will be completed at the end of observing. The rubric is rated on a one to four scale with one being the least involved and four being the most involved. The criteria will be measured based on a variety of factors. These include attendance/promptness, level of engagement in class, listening skills, behavior, and preparation. To support my observations, student grades will be obtained from previous and current marking periods to see how students have done academically.

A final method that will be used for my research study is conducting a direct interview of the ASL permanent teacher. At least ten questions will be asked pertaining to student and parent involvement. The interview will be administered in the classroom and take approximately twenty minutes per student. The interview will provide me a further analysis of how the teacher perceives each of the four student's work ethic and the impact parental involvement has on their individual learning.

Quality and Credibility of Research

        In conducting this action research, it is important to be aware of the factors that play a role in the quality of the study. One factor that contributes to the quality of a study is the credibility. Credibility is defined as "the researcher's ability to take into account the complexities that present themselves in a study" (Mills, 2011, p. 104). Credibility was assured by conducting continuous observations on the same students over week's period within the same setting. Furthermore, triangulation was practiced where many forms of data were collected (Mills, 2011). A second factor that plays a role in this study is transferability which can be defined as "researchers' belief that everything in the study is context bound and work is not to develop "truth" statements that can be generalized to larger groups of people" (Mills, 2011, p. 104). Transferability is achieved in this study by recording observations that are descriptive and detailed allowing for judgments to be made within the context (Mills, 2011). A third factor involved is dependability which "refers to the stability of the data" (Mills, 2011, p. 104). Similar to the triangulation process, Mills refers to Guba's (1981) "overlap methods" which depict the use of at least two or more methods that provide enough strength that can balance out the weakness of another method (Mills, 2011). Within the study, multiple components of data will be collected to further the dependability. Lastly, confirmability will be used which is defined as the "objectivity of the data that has been collected" (Mills, 2011, p. 105). Confirmability will be evident through my study by practicing reflexivity in which observations and data will be referred to for an accurate analysis (Mills, 2011). The factors contributed in this study, will allow for an in-depth look on how parent involvements impacts a students' literacy development.

Informed Consent and Protecting the Rights of the Participants

        Before beginning the action research, it was vital to ask for informed consent to the

participants who would be willing to take part in the study. Both verbal and written assent was

asked to ensure full agreement from each child. The written assent form provided a brief

explanation of the study, purpose, length as well as permission and signature to confirm

authorization to perform research. In addition to students participating, parents were also

provided with informed consent individually as well as approval to work with their child as

many of the participants in the study are considered a minor. Furthermore, it was mentioned that

names would be anonymous and that identifying marks would be removed from all data used

throughout this study. Lastly, data will only be used from those participants who have given full

commitment and approval to part take in this study.

Data Collection

As previously stated up above, this study will contain three different forms of data to

ensure triangulation. First, questionnaires will be given out to each section of American Sign

Language, two seventh grade classes and two eighth grade classes. Students will be asked to

voluntarily participate upon their own choosing. For those students who have provided verbal

and written assent will be given a questionnaire that pertains to a variety of questions. The

number of questionnaires that were given was 113. The student questionnaire had a total of

thirteen questions whereas the parent questionnaire had a total of sixteen. The first few questions

focus on background information including age, gender, ethnicity, language, and living status.

The next set of questions will relate to the students' reading habits in and out of school and lastly

the students' perceptions of how they feel about their parents being involved in their academic

learning. When students complete the questionnaire, a written consent form will be handed to

give to their parents. Once receive approval from students' parent then a parent questionnaire

will be given to the student to take home and return within a week time frame. The parent

questionnaire has similar questions to those found on the student questionnaire. A slight

difference between the two is the parents' perception on their involvement currently with their

child's learning. The questionnaires will provide insight as to students' opinions on literacy

activities as well as what types of parents are more or less involved with their child's academics.

A second method of data collection was direct observations. Four students will be

chosen: two from seventh grade and two from eighth grade. Students were selected based on the

degree of involvement their parents provide them. Observations will be conducted over a two-

week period for twenty minutes each time. The observations will ensure accurate and consistent

data is being recorded. During the two-week period, the observer will watch the four students

selected on a variety of criteria. These will include level of engagement, behavior, listening

skills, and promptness. These criteria also correlate with a rubric that will be completed on each

student after all observations have been made. In addition to the observations, student grades will

be collected to examine the students grade average based on the criteria presented. First and

second marking period grades will be obtained as well as their current grade within the class.

Finally, an interview will be conducted to the permanent ASL teacher, Ms. Andrews.

The interview will consist of at least ten questions pertaining to each of the four students

selected. Each interview will take approximately twenty minutes to ensure enough detail is

gathered from the teacher's perception. The questions will pertain to the student's involvement in

class as well as how she views parent involvement within her own class. The interview will

provide an in-depth analysis on the teacher's viewpoints of how parent involvement impacts

students' learning.

Data Analysis

After collecting all the necessary data, it was essential to organize, examine, and interpret all components of the data collected. First, I recorded into a spreadsheet the responses of the questionnaires that were completed by both the students and their parents. The data was organized by grade level and class sections. Names were kept anonymous as they were not included in the spreadsheet, only that they were received along with the accompanying consent forms. Next, the four teacher selected students were observed in the general education classroom setting over several weeks. These students were chosen by the teacher based on the level of involvement that their parent(s) provide at school. The observations focused on student behavior, class performance and participation as it correlated with parent participation. In addition to observation notes, a rubric was completed for each student by the classroom educator. Criteria on the rubric contained student traits and skills ranging from a score of one, indicating the least involved in class, to four, being the most involved in class. The rubric provided further evidence and support as it allowed an in-depth analysis to the observations gathered. Lastly, a face-to-face teacher interview was conducted pertaining to each of the four students with questions relating to the student's level and type of parental involvement, the student's work ethic in class, and their academic grades. The interview process helped enable me to gain the teacher's perspective of each student.

Following the all the data was collected and recorded, I began the process of organizing by coding the data into similar categories, helping to identify any emerging patterns (Mills, 2011). In looking through the student and parent questionnaires, the observation notes, the classroom educator rubrics, and teacher interviews, I was able to label and code for several traits. From the observations and interviews, patterns emerged in the areas of classroom behavior, level of parent involvement, and academic progress. Furthermore, the questionnaires exhibited areas

of background information, reading interests, and perceptions from adolescents and parents.

Therefore the data will be presented through three distinct themes: type of parental involvement,

literacy in the home, and the degree of parental involvement.

Findings and Discussion

As earlier noted, parents play an important role in their child's primary discourse as they

acquire literacy (Gee, 2001). This research is aimed to measure how parent involvement impacts

students' literacy development particularly focusing at the secondary level. Students and their

parents both provided information for this research as well as student observations and teacher

interviews. Three themes were identified based on the data collected and will be further explored

in this section. These include type of parental involvement, literacy events in the home, and the

degree of parental involvement. Each theme will be evaluated and determined if it plays a

significant role in students' achievement.

Type of Parental Involvement

Schools and families have been working together in the education process since the start

of formalized school; however, the nature of the collaboration has evolved over the course of

time (Epstein, 1995). It is important for a parent to feel a sense of connection to their student

and school. As parents continue to be involved at the secondary level, the type of involvement

changes based on the events they attend in and out of the school setting. A total of 41 parents

had participated in this study as the data obtained was taken directly from the parent

questionnaires received back. Table 1 indicates the parents' perspective as it relates to parent

involvement when asked the question "In the past six months have you attended an event at

school that involved your child" (Appendix A). The data presented in the Table shows the

varying parental responses including the type of event attended.

Table 1

Parents View of Participation in School

Activity	Parents Response
Attended Parent Conference	22%
Met with Teacher	2%
Attended a Sporting Event	7%
Attended a School Play	5%
Attended More than one Activity	39%
Never	24%

As seen in Table1, it is easily identified that more than half of the parents participated in

some activity at school whether it being related to academics, sports, or musical. 10 out of the 41

respondents, or 24%, attended a teacher related function. Attendance at such a function would

help provide the opportunity to understand what the child will be learning in school. Compared

to information released by the National Center for Education Statistics (2007), the percentage of

6th – 8th grade parents who attended a general school or PTA meeting was 91%, and specifically

a parent teacher conference was 76%. The figure for this school is almost less than half of the

average. Furthermore, it shows that 16 parents out of the 41 respondents, or 39%, were involved

in at least one or more activities during the past six months. In contrast, 5 of the 41 respondents,

or 12%, indicated that they had attended a sporting event or school play. Of those who identified

that they attended sporting events, the parents attended multiple times to see the event. When

compared to a 72% average (NCES) it is easy to see that 6th-8th grade parent involvement at the

school level is lacking. These figures may support Epstein and Conners (1995) where parents

strive for their children to become more independent. Stewart (2007) found that parent

involvement is vital whether it is part of the academic setting or an extra-curricular activity.

Parents adapting to the age of the child by remaining involved utilizing a type of parent

involvement that is beginning to shift from being involved within the school setting to attending

extra-curricular events. Therefore, the change at this age level moves from an academic setting to

one that is based more on social or athletic events.

Similar to Table 1, Table 2 also examines the perspective on parent involvement but from

the students' point of view. 79 students participated in this study by completing and submitting

questionnaires. The data presented in Table 2 indicates the students' perspective on parent

involvement when asked "In the past six months has your parent(s) been into your school?"

(Appendix B).

Table 2

Students View of Parental Participation in School

Activity	Students Response
Attended Parent Conference	16%
Met with Teacher	4%
Attended a Sporting Event	16%
Attended a School Play	1%
Attended More than one Activity	30%

Never   32%

It was interesting to compare the parent response percentages to the student responses. In most cases the parents viewed that they participated more frequently in their child's education than the student. 24% of parents reported they had attended a school related event as compared to the students indicating the attendance was 20%. The parents' responses support Deslandes (2005) findings in that parents want to be involved only if they are wanted and seen as being of value to their child's learning and education. Even though there was not a significant difference in what parents reported as compared to the students, the students' viewpoints differed based on the individual comments. Students also were varied on their desire to have a parent help out at school during the day. The student questionnaires reported that 22 out of 79, or 29% wanted their parents to help out in the school setting whereas 49 out of 79, or 62% did not want their parents at school. Student responses ranged from "it would be weird", "embarrassed," "it's not their place" to the desire to have "parents come to assist in school twice per month." In addition, one student indicated that their parent had to come to school as a result of the student being bullied. Attending events such as teacher meetings provide parents the vehicle to increase communication about school related activities.

Although it is traditionally understood that academics tend to play a higher role in parent involvement when it comes to being in a school setting, the questionnaire responses did not support that belief. When parents were asked as to how many times they had volunteered in the classroom in the past six months, 38 of 41 respondents, or 93%, indicated never. The low attendance may be attributed to 33 of those who responded work outside of the home in a full-time capacity and supports the findings of Ingram (2007) where parent involvement would decrease if the parent works and is unable to take time off for school parent involvement at the

school. Therefore, it can be noted that a large percentage of the parents work full-time. In

addition, 27 of those who responded, or 66%, had multiple children or step-children in the

family. As Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997) reported, the number of children can have a

negative impact where multiple children may create less free-time for a parent to volunteer.

Literacy Events in the Home

Acquiring literacy is a vital factor in functioning in society. In reviewing the

questionnaires the respondents reported that they value time spent with their child on school

related activities. Table 3 identifies the type of literacy events that may occur in the home

setting. The data shown Table 3 further looks at the frequency of the activity between the parent

and child. The Table is based on 41 parent questionnaires and 79 student questionnaires. Parent

and student data was compared based on two literacy events; reading and helping with

homework.

Table 3

Literacy Events in the Home

Frequency	Parents		Students	
	Read with Child	Homework with Child	Read with Parent	Homework with Parent
Not at all	51%	12%	75%	24%
Daily	5%	34%	3%	20%
About once per week	24%	41%	11%	34%
About once per month	20%	12%	11%	22%

As seen in Table 3, 75% of the parent respondents indicated that they help their child at a

minimum of once per week on their homework and 29% indicated that they read with their child

during the same timeframe. In the literature review findings, Dauber and Epstein (1991)

reported that if a child was supported at home, they most likely were to spend more time on

homework. By providing assistance in homework, parents are able to help their child by

providing structure and help organize the assignment if needed. Parents are also able to assess

their child's grasping of material. Furthermore, this can provide a framework for problem

solving activities. Although the parent might not be physically in the classroom setting, they still

show their support of their child's education, including literacy development by being available

and providing support with homework. In addition, 68% of the parent respondents also

demonstrate their belief in literacy by setting an example by reading for pleasure at least one-

hour per week and 17% read for 5 hours or more. The reading and helping their child with

homework was not significantly impacted based on the parent's educational level. Regardless of

the parents' education, whether they completed high school or did post-graduate work, parents

provided assistance with homework. In addition, a large percentage of parents indicated they

read for pleasure. This finding is supported by Epstein (1986) and Hoover- Dempsey and Sandler

(1997) who reported they found no differences between a lower and higher education. Parents

who had a GED, high school or vocational school education as compared to those with a

Bachelors, graduate or post-graduate education showed to be nearly equal in their involvement

with their child at home based on reading and helping with homework. These actions help set

the foundation in the student that literacy based activities are important. Time must be allocated

for homework as well as pleasure type reading.

As presented in Table 3, students indicated the level of parental involvement was lower

level than what the parents had responded. Students indicated 34% of parents helped them with

homework a minimum of once per week and only 11% indicated their parents read with them

during this timeframe. This is in comparison to parents who reported 41% and 24 % respectively.

It should be noted that the reported differences were based on identical questions to the two

different populations. It should also be noted that students did report, that they felt comfortable

asking for help when needed. The fact that students felt comfortable asking for help indicates

that they are aware their parent believes in their academic achievement. This supports Epstein

and Conners (1995) finding who reported that adolescents still look for assistance from their

parents outside the school setting.

Degree of Parent Involvement

As mentioned above, four students were selected by the teacher in regards to the level of

involvement their parent(s) provided for their child's learning. Each student was categorized

either with low or high parent involvement by the teacher, resulting in two students for each

category (Claire & Kristen-high; Hillary & Allison- low). Data was collected on the four

students through informal observations, rubrics (Appendix C), and teacher interviews.

Observations were taken over several weeks period in the same classroom. Set criterion

was established before beginning each observation. Observation criteria focused on student

participation, student behavior, and student level of engagement. The goal of each observation

was to compare and contrast student performance based on the criterion set. After recording

down several anecdotal notes on each student, many findings arose. Both Hillary and Allison

were identified as having low parent involvement and were found to participate in class only

when asked to. Both girls displayed some disruptive behaviors and lost focus during classroom

instruction. For example, Hillary thought it would be funny to through her pencil across the room

hitting another student to get her attention. This action brought laughter to the whole class and

took time away from classroom instruction (K. Simonds, direct observation, February 7, 2012).

In addition, both Hillary and Allison needed to be re-directed in staying on task resulting in

minimal comprehension of material. As for Claire and Kristen who was identified with high

parent involvement, different results were noticed. Both Claire and Kristen participated when

asked to but also voluntarily participated frequently throughout the class. For example when

appropriate the girls shared out responses to classes without being asked to. In addition they are

willing to help out classmates when they are struggling (K. Simonds, direct observation,

February 7, 2012). Behavior was not seen as an issue or problem as I was able to notice both

girls were able to stay on task and remain focused during class time. When handing in work,

Claire and Kristen received high grades as they put in full effort and completed the work to the

best of ability. As noticed through the observations, Claire and Kristen were able to perform

better on class material than the two girls with low parent involvement. Although interesting to

correlate, parent involvement is a factor for the better performance, there is not enough data to

support this finding.

Rubrics were also another piece of data that was collected to compare the difference

between low and high parent involvement. The rubrics were completed by the teacher for each

student. They ranged from a scale of one to four with one being the lowest and four being the

highest.

Table 4

Teacher Evaluation Student Assessment Rubric

Criteria	High		Low	
	Kristen	Claire	Hillary	Allison
Attendance/Promptness	4	3	3	3

Level of Engagement in class	4	4	2.5	2
Listening Skills	3	4	3	2.5
Behavior	4	3	4	3
Preparation	4	3	3	2.5
Total	19	17	15.5	13

As seen in Table 4, similar criteria for the teacher observation was noted as those found on the classroom observations. The criteria included attendance, level of engagement in class, listening skills, behavior, and preparation. Hillary and Allison scored a 13 and 15.5 out of a possible 20 whereas Claire and Kristen scored a 17 and 19 out of a possible 20. If done in percentages, the findings would be 95%, 85%, 77.5%, and 65% respectively. The scores indicate how poor or well students do based on the criteria that were being examined. Similar to the observations, the rubrics also determined that the students with high involvement did better than their counterparts.

Lastly, teacher interviews were conducted on each of the four students. Questions pertained to the student's personality, communication with parents, students in classroom behavior, and progress. When asked about both Claire and Kristen, the teacher had stated that they are both "outgoing, very engaged and on-task" (N. Andrews, personal interview, March 13, 2012). She further stated that both "often raises hand and always responds correctly to questions" (N. Andrews, personal interview, March 13, 2012). In addition, "parents came to conferences and curriculum" (N. Andrews, personal interview, March 13, 2012). For Kristen, "mom is very involved and emails often to keep updated with her daughter's progress in class" (N. Andrews, personal interview, March 13, 2012). Both Claire and Kristen have earned a B+ or higher for the

first and second quarter of school. When asked about both Hillary and Allison, it was stated that they "tend to be shy and become silly during class" (N. Andrews, personal interview, March 13, 2012). When both in class, her teacher indicated that they "respond to questions when directly called on but does not volunteer as some other students do in the class" (N. Andrews, personal interview, March 13, 2012). The teacher has spoken with Allison's mother on the phone for conferences but Hillary's parents were a "no show." Academically, both Hillary Allison have earned a C or higher for the first and second quarter of school. In addition to having a higher level of parent involvement, both Claire and Kristen are involved in extra-curricular activities at the school. They both have their parents attend their events, school play and band, knowing their parents support their achievements. By being involved in the extracurricular activities both girls work side by side with their parents outside of the academic setting whether it is building a set for a school play, reading their lines together or working in booster club. The girls place great value on the time invested by their parents.

Implications

Through the assessment and observation of four middle school students, it has found that parent involvement may continue to play a role in a child's academic and social success. To better understand the importance of parent involvement, the four students' peers along with their parents were also assessed regarding their beliefs of parent involvement as it relates to the adolescent child. Not all students are the same, some come from lower class families to middle class, while others live in two parent families and others live in single parents household. It is important to understand the differences in students including their strengths and weaknesses.

According to the findings, many implications can be indicated. Parents at the adolescent level no longer participate in their child's classroom but branch into other non-academic areas. In

addition, school-related programs that include direct parent involvement outside school hours include PTA, music, sports, plays, and booster clubs. Even though the parent is not providing academic support in the school setting, the parent is providing academic support in the home. As educators, our role will be to reach the students in whatever reasonable mean is available to us. Spending a few nights at extra-curricular activities that you know your students are involved in may have immeasurable rewards. One significant reward is that the teacher might come in direct contact with the parent and be able to form a stronger teacher-parent relationship. Even if the parent does not come in direct contact, if the student or parent sees the teacher at the event, they may feel better equipped to approach the teacher if they are struggling with coursework or experiencing difficulties outside the classroom. Many times students come to school with issues from home that may have nothing to do with the school setting but have a huge impact on student performance. Having the teacher aware of such issues helps not only the student, but the teacher, in working to help the student attain academic success.

At home many of the parents continue their focus on academics through their participation in home related activities. Even if a parent does not understand the class material per se, they are still able to provide and support in helping their student identify the strategy to complete the assignment. Many parents are masters at organizing. Each day parents organize things such as getting their children up and ready for school, daycare, working, meals, paying bills, washing clothes, or doing work around the house. In order to accomplish all of this, parents need to manage time and organize tasks. Organization skills such as working with lists or prioritizing tasks can be observed. Those same strategies can be brought into the homework process. Many times working in the classroom I could overhear students talking about their prior evening. I would hear things similar to a student being asked by a parent how school was going

and their response was that it was fine. I also heard other students mention that their parents asked specific questions, not just something needing a yes or no answer, regarding classes such as having the student describe the experiment was done in biology lab. The communication opportunities as well as the general assistance in helping to complete homework will help assure the teacher that not only does homework get completed but careful consideration is taken when completing the assignment.

Parents also demonstrated their belief in literacy through reading. By performing the act of reading themselves, carving time out of their busy schedules to do this, the parents were setting the stage to show their child that it is important part of daily life that will carry into their future long after they finish school. For teachers, the action of having parents' value reading will increase the students' value placed on reading. Students may desire emulate their parents' actions and read on their own for enjoyment. Students may also take time to read and understand class materials. Any reading activity, even if it is something as menial as reading the nutritional information on a cereal box, will help yield results. By reading, opportunities are provided for increased literacy and comprehension of the English language. More reading opportunities can translate into increased vocabulary for class materials and comprehension of class work.

For this study, it was found that parents were provided and participated in several venues to understand what their child was learning. Their attendance at teacher related events and their assistance in homework helped lay the framework for them to understand the curriculum the student is being taught. Of the four girls who participated in the study, two admitted their parents helped them on a regular basis where the other two indicated the parents provided minimal support. When delving deeper with the two who received support, it was not so much as help in doing the homework, but more in reviewing what was being done. Helping with homework was

an important event in that it provided the parent opportunity to assist their child in problem-solving techniques and conceptual help. It also enables parents the opportunity to provide assistance for helping their student define the structure and organization in completing their homework assignment as well as assessing their child's grasping and understanding of their learning. Perhaps, most importantly, the act of helping with homework reinforces to their child the belief of their student's academic achievement and boosts the student's self-esteem. For teachers, increased self-esteem will help ensure the students have a better conceptual knowledge of how to perform homework and classroom activities. It will also help ensure that the students' have a sound organizational strategy when tackling class work.

As teachers, it is important to keep parents involved and included in all aspects of their child's education. Teachers need to keep open communication with parents. In doing this, both the teacher and parent are able to collaborate with one another and make sure all parties are at the same level of understanding. Communication comes in many different vehicles to the parents including school website denoting school monthly newsletter, email updates (by request), and individual teacher updates to parents. Parents that did not participate in school-related activities indicated that they did not have any concerns or issues with the school or their child's academics. Teachers are also able to play a critical role in helping a parent become involved in student homework. In providing ideas with homework involvement with parents, teachers are able to increase the at home support for student learning.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine how parent involvement impacts students' literacy development at the adolescent level. The literature review is supported by Walker's (2005) model of parent involvement as well as the theoretical framework of the socio-cultural

theory. In addition, the research and my findings indicate that parent involvement in the school setting begins to decrease at the adolescent level as students become more independent in their academic studies. Furthermore, the type of involvement begins to shift from an academic setting to an extra-curricular setting. Given that parent involvement is an important factor to a student's literacy development and academic achievement, it also provides increased communication and helps to raise a student's self esteem.

After the completion of the study, I believe that the study was a success; however there are some modifications that could be made should this study be performed again. One modification would include using a smaller sample size of participants. Conducting a study with a large sample size made it challenging as approval was needed from all participants. A second modification would be to include additional choices to some of the questions asked as it may have changed the results significantly and added more to my findings. For example, when asking a question related to type of materials read, I should have incorporated electronic resources which would include venues such as Facebook and the Internet. Lastly, I would have included an additional question pertaining to how satisfied the respondent was to the school. By having a better understanding as to the parents' satisfaction and confidence in the school, I would have had a better basis to compare the correlation between satisfaction and the parent level of involvement at the school.

Although this research was carefully planned, I am still aware of its limitations. First, the research was conducted in four different classrooms which had lasted for six weeks. Six weeks was not enough time to observe students' performance in class, therefore it would have been better if more time had been available to perform the observations. Having more time would provide a more accurate and better validation of the results. The increased time might better

allow for the identification of outlying results which might be taken for actual results in the shorter time period. Second, performing the study at only one school, which has its own culture and influences, could yield limited results. If the study involved multiple schools in unique settings such as suburban, as well as urban and rural, a more representative data might have been collected.

Through this research, I have been able to explore many facets of parent involvement and its impact on students' literacy development, but still have remaining questions that could be further explored. It would be interesting to further explore how different ethnicities and cultures may impact the level of parent involvement as it relates to their child's education. In addition, further exploring whether an age range of the parent, younger versus older, impacts the degree of involvement provided to the child. This information would help me determine what factors play a significant role in providing a positive outcome for their child's learning.

In conclusion of the research, much can be said about parent involvement at the secondary level. The level of parent involvement begins to decrease during this time but is still prevalent. Although parents may not be participating in the classroom, a walk out to the football field, baseball diamond or auditorium will show a different picture. A parent does want to remain involved in their child; however, the type of involvement begins to shift from an academic setting to a more extra-curricular and social setting. While sitting on the sidelines, parents can be overheard discussing goings-on in school relating from everything from their child's assignments due the next day to carpool arrangements for an upcoming event.

Parents, teachers, and the school play an integral part in a student's learning. By understanding the broader opportunities for parent of involvement at the school level, along with

the expectations of the teachers and parents for involvement, help create a more rewarding and

cohesive learning environment for students.

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Appendix A

Parent Involvement Questionnaire

Please complete these questions about your child

1. **Your age**:   ____

2. **Your gender**: ____Male   ____Female

3. **Your racial/ethnic status**:
   __American Indian   __Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
   __Asian   __White
   __Black or African American   __Other
   __Hispanic

4. **What language is most spoken in your home**?
   __English
   __Spanish
   __Other (specify) _____
   __Equal English and other language

5. **In your home, who does your child currently live with**?
   __Mother   __Stepmother or father's partners
   __Father   __Stepfather or mother's partners
   __Brothers and sisters (step siblings)   __Other co-parent
   __Grandmother   __Other relatives
   __Grandfather   __Boarders
   __Live in help

6. **What is the highest level of education you have completed**?
   __Less than high school
   __High School/GED
   __Vocational School/Some College
   __Bachelor's Degree
   __Graduate or professional school
   __Post-graduate work

7. **Relationship to the child**:
   __Mother/Stepmother   __Grandmother/aunt
   __Father/Stepfather   __Grandfather/uncle
   __Guardian

8. **Do you work outside the home**?
   __No   __Yes, part-time   __Yes, full-time   __Yes, seasonal

9. **Do you read with your child**?
   __Not at all   __Daily   __About once per week   __About once per month

10. **Do you help your child with their homework**?
    __Not at all   __Daily   __About once per week   __About once per month

11. **What reading materials do you read for pleasure or information**?
    Rank in order 1-5 (1 is most frequent and 5 is least often)
    __Books   __Magazines, Comic books
    __Newspaper   __Brochures or pamphlets
    __Letters & other mail   __Professional journals
    __Telephone & address books   __Labels (food cans & boxes)
    __Owner's manuals, cookbooks   __Educational materials & workbooks

12. **How often do you read for pleasure or information**?
    __Daily   __Twice per week   __Weekly
    __3-4 times per month   __Once a month   __Hardly every

13. **In a given week, how much do you read for pleasure**?
    __Don't have time   __Between 1-4 hours
    __About an hour   __5 hours or more

14. **In the past six months have you been into your child's school? Check all that apply**:
    __Parent conference   __Sporting event
    __Meet with teacher   __School play

15. **In the past six months have you volunteered in your child's class**?
    __Never   __Between 1-4 times
    __Once   __5 times or more

16. **In the past six months have you attended an event at school that involved your child**?
    __Never   __Between 1-4 times
    __Once   __5 times or more

    If so, what was the event(s)? _____

Appendix B

Student Perception on Parent Involvement Questionnaire

Please complete these questions about you

1. **Your age**:   ____

2. **Your gender**: ____Male   ____Female

3. **Your racial/ethnic status**:
   __American Indian   __Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
   __Asian   __White
   __Black or African American   __Other
   __Hispanic

4. **Do you read with your parents?**
   __Not at all   __Daily   __About once per week   __About once per month

5. **Do your parents help you with homework?**
   __Not at all   __Daily   __About once per week   __About once per month

6. **What type of reading materials do you read for pleasure or information?**
   Rank in order 1-5 (1 is the most frequent and 5 is the least often)
   __Books   __Magazines, Comic books
   __Newspaper   __Brochures or pamphlets
   __Letters & other mail   __Professional journals
   __Telephone & address books   __Labels (food cans & boxes)
   __Owner's manuals, cookbooks   __Educational materials & workbooks

7. **How often do you read for pleasure?**
   __Daily   __Twice per week   __Weekly
   __3-4 times per month   __Once a month   __Hardly ever

8. **In a given week, how much do you read for pleasure?**
   __Don't have time   __Between 1-4 hours
   __About an hour   __5 hours or more

9. **What type of reading material do you most enjoy?**
   __Humor   __Science Fiction
   __Romance   __Mystery
   __ Adventure   __ Historical
   __ Autobiography   __ Other_____

10. In the past six months has your parent(s) been into your school?
Check all that apply:
__Parent conference   __Sporting event
__Meet with teacher   __School play
__Other _____

11. In the past six months has your parent(s) volunteered in your school?
__Never   __Between 1-4 times
__Once   __5 times or more

12. If you answered question11 with Never, would you want your parent(s) to volunteer in your school?
__Yes   __No, never
        If yes, how often? _____

13. In the past six months has your parent (s) attended an event at school that involved you?
__Never   __Between 1-4 times
__Once   __5 times or more

If so, what was the event(s)? _____

14. If you answered question 13 with Never, would you want your parent(s) to attend an event at school?
__Yes   __No, never
        If yes, how often? _____

        If yes, what event(s)? _____

Appendix C

Name: _____   Teacher:

	Criteria				Points
	4	**3**	**2**	**1**	
Attendance / Promptness	Student is **always** prompt and regularly attends classes.	Student is late to class **once every two weeks** and regularly attends classes.	Student is late to class **more than once every two weeks** and regularly attends classes.	Student is late to class **more than once a week** and/or has poor attendance of classes.	____
Level Of Engagement In Class	Student proactively contributes to class by offering ideas and asking questions **more than once** per class.	Student proactively contributes to class by offering ideas and asking questions **once** per class.	Student **rarely** contributes to class by offering ideas and asking questions.	Student **never** contributes to class by offering ideas and asking questions.	____
Listening Skills	Student listens when others talk, both in groups and in class. Student **incorporates or builds off** of the ideas of others.	Student **listens** when others talk, both in groups and in class.	Student **does not** listen when others talk, both in groups and in class.	Student **does not** listen when others talk, both in groups and in class. Student often **interrupts** when others speak.	____
Behavior	Student **almost never** displays disruptive behavior during class.	Student **rarely** displays disruptive behavior during class.	Student **occasionally** displays disruptive behavior during class.	Student **almost always** displays disruptive behavior during class.	____
Preparation	Student is **almost always** prepared for class with assignments and required class materials.	Student is **usually** prepared for class with assignments and required class materials.	Student is **rarely** prepared for class with assignments and required class materials.	Student is **almost never** prepared for class with assignments and required class materials.	____
				Total---->	___