

The Effect of Teacher Contact
on Parental Involvement

by

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ABSTRACT

Parental involvement has shown a strong correlation with student academic success (DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane, 2007). However, not all parents are involved in their students' academic lives. Teacher contact, a possible motivation for increased levels of parental involvement, was researched and studied. To measure the effect that teacher contact had on levels of parental involvement, a pre and post survey was disseminated to a random sampling of 105 parents at Metcalf Junior High School in Burnsville, Minnesota. The survey consisted of 18 questions using a Thurstone scale, and two open-form questions, measuring levels of parental involvement. Forty-two parents returned pre and post surveys, making up the sample group of survey participants. During the 3-month time of study, the researcher kept a journal consisting of all teacher contact with the 42 survey participants. Survey results showed that parents with higher incidences of teacher contact were more likely to contact teachers, yet less likely to monitor school sponsored online systems or attend PTA meetings. Research implies that teacher contact, as well as other factors, have an effect on levels of parental involvement.

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Chapter I: Introduction

In the teaching profession, involving parents is considered one of many keys to success. Teacher training programs encourage prospective teachers to create positive links with parents. Young teachers mentored by veteran teachers are encouraged to make phone calls home, send email updates, and keep parents abreast on the academic success of their children. Administrators encourage teachers to contact parents about student progress, and even use family communication as an evaluative tool in assessing teacher effectiveness. Yet it is more than a tool used in schools by professional teachers to reach out to parents. Research has shown a reason for promoting these actions as well (Fan & Chen, 2001).

Henderson & Mapp (2002) found there is a strong positive correlation between parental involvement and student achievement. This study found that the advantages for students with involved parents include: (a) higher grade point averages and scores on standardized tests or rating scales, (b) enrollment in more challenging academic programs, (c) more classes passed and credits earned, (d) better attendance, (e) improved behavior at home and at school, and (f) better social skills and adaptation to school (p. 24). This as well as other research supports the idea that parental involvement has a positive impact on student academic achievement.

It cannot be assumed that one study can be used to predict results. Due to variations in method of instructional delivery, effect on varying age groups, and the differences in each school district (socio-economic status, race, as well as teacher, students, and parent self-efficacy), multiple sources must be relied upon. Much research points to a positive effect that parental involvement has on student's academic success

and social activity (Anderson & Minke, 2007; DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane, 2007; Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). Yet, not all research supports this. Jordan, Orozco, & Averett (2002) argued parental involvement may only be beneficial in specific instances, noting strategies that work for one student may not work for another, or strategies that work for one age group, discipline, or behavior cannot be generalized. This has led to unreliable research results. Likewise, Driessen, Smit & Slegers (2005) also note studies have been inconclusive toward positive results between parental involvement and academic achievement.

Social and racial dynamics of school populations have been linked to differing levels of parental involvement. Anderson & Minke (2007) note lower resource families respond differently to invitations of involvement than other families. DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane (2007) also found parents' financial situations, level of education, and feeling of efficacy lead to lower levels of parental involvement. Driessen et al. (2005) continued to state "schools with numerous minority pupils appear to provide a considerable amount of extra effort with respect to parental involvement, but that a direct effect of such involvement cannot be demonstrated" (p. 509).

These inconsistencies in study results has lead to continued research as well as the deeper question of how parents make the decision to be involved in their children's academic lives. Sy, Rowley, & Schulenberg (2007) argued "parents' beliefs about early education, stemming from their larger cultural values, influence the ways in which parents become involved in their child's early education" (p. 24). This line of thought was supported by Anderson & Minke (2007), as well as the idea that "specific invitations from teachers had the largest effect on...parental involvement" (p. 311). Additionally,

Deslandes & Bertrand (2005) made the argument that student invitations had the largest effect on motivations for parental involvement. Hoover-Dempsey, Battiato, Walker, Reed, DeJong, and Jones (2001) agreed and noted that parents became involved for three main reasons: they believe they should be involved, they believe their involvement will make a difference, and they perceive invitations for involvement. These three motivators are referred to as role construction, self-efficacy, and invitations, respectively.

Invitations to be involved may come from parents or students, yet “for parents...the ways in which their beliefs about involvement (role construction) affected their involvement behaviors at home and at school varied according to their perceptions of being invited specifically to participate” (Anderson & Minke, 2007, p. 311) and “when personally invited by the adolescents, parents tended to perceive their involvement as expected and desired” (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005, p. 170).

Although role construction, self-efficacy, and invitations are the leading motivators for parental involvement, variation among studies makes it hard to generalize these findings. Encouragement, be it from a teacher, child, or other family member, may have an effect on a parent’s decisions to become involved. These invitations as a possible motivation can be looked at specifically through teacher invitations. Teachers have complete control over one aspect of encouragement toward parents becoming involved. That aspect is teacher contact. Teacher contact may loosely be defined as any teacher initiated communication with parents. This may include face-to-face contact, email, or phone communication. Although the research on parental involvement as a predictor of academic success is extensive, research regarding teacher contact as an encouragement toward parental involvement is still lacking.

Within the Academics Standards section of the Minnesota Department of Education website, the ever changing and increasing academic rigor of the Minnesota state standards is highlighted (Minnesota Department of Education, 2008). With expectations mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act, states are making decisions that affect every student in the United States. Many of these decisions include increased standards and expectations on student academics, higher graduation standards, and increased importance placed on standardized tests. If parental involvement truly does increase academic performance of students, and parents can be encouraged to be more involved, then researching teacher contact is one of many vital aspects toward success in the schools of today.

Machen, Wilson, & Notar (2005) noted levels of parental involvement decrease as students move into secondary school systems. Hoover-Dempsey, Battiato, Walker, Reed, DeJong, and Jones (2001) found that parents tend to become involved because they perceive the invitation from a teacher or child, and feel needed or expected to be involved. As students become adolescents, a sense of autonomy emerges and less dependence on parental support develops. This coupled with the societal expectation for adolescents to start taking more responsibility for their actions has led to decreased levels of parental involvement as students progress through secondary school (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005). Parents tend to shift from a role of volunteering in the classroom and at school, to working in a capacity related more to extra-curricular activities, Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO's), and with students at home. Simply put, "students' invitations emerge as a function of their age" (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005, p.165).

Increasing academic standards and continually decreasing rates of parental involvement show the need for a study on parental involvement at the secondary level. This study focuses on students in grades 7 through 9, to address these issues.

Statement of the Problem

Not all parents are involved in their children's academic lives. Research has shown that parental involvement in students' academics lives is beneficial to the academic success of students (DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane, 2007) across disciplines and ages. In an age of increasingly rigorous state and national standards, student academic success is imperative for students to lead prosperous lives. To help students achieve academic success, parent involvement should be encouraged. Teacher contact with parents is one avenue toward encouraging parental involvement.

Purpose of the Study

Using the aforementioned research as a base, this study seeks to provide insight into parents' decision-making processes regarding involvement in their child's academic life. This study will explore the effect teacher contact has on this decision making process. This study will explore what effect increased levels of teacher contact have on parental involvement among families in Minnesota. A positive, negative, or neutral correlation will be noted.

Research Questions

The desired information will be attained using teacher initiated research and by answering the following questions:

1. How does teacher contact effect specific types of parental involvement?

2. How does teacher contact effect levels of *at-home parental involvement*?
3. How does teacher contact effect levels of *at-school parental involvement*?

Definition of Terms

Parent. A parent is the adult figure that lives at the primary residence of the student, and is legally responsible for the student. This may be a legal guardian, parent, stepparent, relative, or other specified adult. This person is usually identified as legally responsible for the student by the school district in which the student is enrolled.

Student. Persons enrolled at Metcalf Junior High School in Burnsville, Minnesota are classified as students in this study. The student will be enrolled in one of the researcher's mathematics classroom during the 2008-2009 academic school year.

Parental Involvement. Contact with the student or school by the parent, that has the opportunity to affect the academic role of the student. See table 1 for specific examples.

Teacher Contact. Contact of the parent initiated by the teacher in any of the following forms: telephone call, email, face-to-face conversation/meeting, or written note.

Assumptions

Based on previous research stated above, the following assumption will be made concerning this study. First, it will be assumed that teacher contact has an impact on parental involvement

The second assumption made during this study is the understanding that parents can be encouraged or influenced to increase the level of parental involvement in their

children's academic lives. As stated above, influences vary from family values to teacher-initiated contact for a motivation regarding levels of parental involvement.

Limitations

The monitoring of parents practice in honesty will be a limiting factor for this study. All responses to surveys and interview questions will be assumed to be true and taken at face value. The questioning of the idea that survey respondents automatically have a higher level of parental involvement by returning a completed survey will be another limiting factor. A final limitation to this study will be the specificity of the study as research has shown that studies involving parental involvement and academic achievement are hard to generalize across cases (Jordan, Orozco, & Averett, 2002). Due to these limitations, this study may not be easy to generalize, but will give insight into one aspect of reasoning behind the motivation of parents to become involved in their student's academic lives. This will give a basis for future research and further study.

Chapter II: Literature Review

In today's schools, parental involvement is almost an assumption of good parenting to support student academics. Fortunately there is also research that encourages the perception that parental involvement increases academic success (Deplanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane, 2007; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Before making this broad statement, however, the question of what constitutes parental involvement must be explored. There is not one single definition being used. Furthermore, to understand parental involvement, the motivations and reasoning behind parental involvement must be researched. Within these motivations and reasoning, and the available scope of this research, teacher contact specifically will be explored. The understanding that many variables control all situations involving human subjects has led to the study of teacher contact, as well as the knowledge of the ability teachers have to fully control this aspect of influence on parental involvement. Research (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Sy, Rowley, & Schulenberg, 2007; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005) has been done on the motivations and reasoning behind parental involvement. Teacher contact may be one of these motivations or influences that aid in increased academic success for students. Using this research as a base, a look toward the effect of teacher contact on levels of parental involvement was explored.

What Parental Involvement Is

Parental involvement includes "parental behaviors aimed at promoting or enhancing children's educational development" (Sy, Rowley, & Schulenberg, 2007, p. 2). This definition is simple and succinct, yet does not give a full understanding to what is and has been considered parental involvement. Parental involvement encompasses actions from parents as well as students and teachers. Parental involvement includes

specific actions taken by parents on the behalf of their children at school and at home. Parental involvement may include serving on the school board, reading to your child, or anywhere in between. Yet parental involvement also involves parents' reactions to students and teachers, and the ideals regarding education that the parent(s) may hold. Past experiences in schooling effect the reaction and perception that parent's have regarding teachers, schools, and education, in turn affecting the decisions parents make for their children toward education. As simple as being involved sounds, a complexity of experiences, perceptions, attitudes, and understanding determine much of the parental involvement seen in schools today.

At-school and at-home parental involvement. Recently parental involvement has been divided into two main categories: *at-home* parental involvement, and *at-school* parental involvement. *At-home* parental involvement generally consists of parents working directly with their children, while *at-school* parental involvement usually sees the parent as an advocate or volunteer within the school. Table 1 shows how specific types of parental involvement have been divided into *at-home* parental involvement and *at-school* parental involvement. The table includes many common instances of parental involvement used in recent research (DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane, 2007; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Jordan, Orozco, & Averett, 2002; Sy, Rowley, & Schulenberg, 2007).

Table 1

Types of At-school and At-home Parental Involvement

At School	At Home
Parent teacher conferences	Parenting with educational values
Curriculum nights	Talking with children about school
Open Houses	Helping with schoolwork
Phone calling/Contacting teachers	Checking in about schoolwork
Tutoring	Using online resources
Teaching special skills	Collaborating on school decisions
Clerical/Supervisory aide	Rules created with academics in mind
Guest speaking	Structuring of home environment
Field trip chaperoning	Monitoring out of school activities
Coaching	Developing general cognitive skills
Parent teacher organizations	
School committees	
Volunteering on site	

Note. Adapted from: K. Anderson and K. Minke, 2007; S.Sheldon and J. Epstein, 2005; X. Fan and M. Chen, 2001.

Abstract ideas of parental involvement. More abstract ideas of parental involvement have also been researched. The conclusion that alternate and subtle actions may also influence students' academic success has taken on the role of parental involvement as well. Examples of alternate types of parental involvement may include: (a) parental aspirations for their children, (b) relationship building between parents and

children, (c) role modeling, and (d) community involvement and its relationship to, and effect on, academic parental involvement (Jordan, Orozco, & Averett, 2002; Fan & Chen, 2001; Sy, Rowley, & Schulenberg, 2007; Driessen, Smit, & Slegers, 2005). Driessen et al. (2005) stated:

The manner in which the parents in such families function as a role model, the manner in which the parents and children interact with each other and the interests and activities of the parents outside of school all exert a positive influence on the achievements of children. (p. 513)

Parent roles in parental involvement. The idea of parents being involved in their children's lives (explicitly or implicitly) led Driessen, Smit, & Slegers (2005) to categorize parents into four levels of involvement. These levels consist of parents as partners, participants, delegators, or invisible parents. The first two categories represent parents who are highly involved to moderately involved in their child's academic lives, including *at-school* and especially *at-home* instances of parental involvement. The third and fourth type of parents, are typically well-intentioned parents who do not exhibit the follow through, ability, or preparedness to be as involved. Delegators are parents who are less involved due to a belief that it is the school or teacher's responsibility to educate students, while invisible parents are just not present for varying reasons, financial status being among them. Driessen et al. (2005) also noted the level of involvement closely corresponded with the socio-economic status of the parents. Partners primarily consisted of high socio-economic parents, while invisible parents primarily consisted of socio-economically disadvantaged parents.

School roles in parental involvement. The distinction between levels of parental involvement has led to schools working to increase these levels for all families. The majority of research available is from the perspective of the school (Driessen, Smit, & Slegers, 2005). There has been success in the availability, cooperation, and consistency of the educational world in regard to research involving parental involvement. However, there is a lack in research available from the perspective of the parents. From the perspective of the school, Epstein (1995) has become the dominant voice regarding parental involvement. Epstein (1995) developed six categories of parental involvement from the perspective of school. The list describes the six types of parental involvement and what the schools role can be to foster increased levels of parental involvement. The categories created by Epstein include: (a) parenting, (b) communicating, (c) volunteering, (d) learning at home, (e) decision making, and (f) collaborating with the community.

Many studies (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Fan & Chen, 2001; Driessen, Smit, & Slegers, 2005; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005) have used the categorization developed by Epstein (1995) when defining parental involvement and the role of the school. The following is a brief explanation of the school role for each category of parental involvement. Parenting involves the school or teachers role in helping parents establish a home environment that supports student academics. Communicating involves setting up effective structures for two-way conversations between school and home about student academic progress and school programming. Volunteering considers the schools role in successfully and positively involving parents in volunteer positions. Learning at home involves the school and teachers roles in providing information on how to help students at home. Decision-making involves the schools role toward inviting and involving parents

in school decisions and conversations. Collaborating with the community involves working toward using community resources to help strengthen school programming, student learning, and families (Epstein, 1995). Presented in Table 2 below are common specific types of parental involvement and their correlation to each category.

Table 2

Categorized Types of Parental Involvement

Epstein's categories of parental involvement	Types of parental involvement
Parenting	a, b, c, e, h, i
Communicating	a, j, k, l, n
Volunteering	j, k
Learning at Home	c, d, f, h
Decision Making	b, c, h, i, l, n
Collaborating with the Community	j, k, l

Note. Adapted from: J. Epstein, 1995.

For each of the six categories of parental involvement, many specific examples of parental involvement may fit into each category. Fourteen common examples of parental involvement have been chosen to be categories, and correlate with each of the letter represented above in Table 2. The examples used in Table 2 are: (a) parental communication or discussion with students about school, (b) rules imposed at home to affect academics, (c) structuring of the home environment to aid in learning, (d) homework help, (e) monitoring out of school activities, (f) developing general cognitive skills, (g) providing direct/indirect instruction of academic material, (h) time management, (i) parental structure, (j) volunteering at school or with school related functions, (k) attending parent nights, parent-teacher conferences and school activities, (l) being involved with a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), (m) serving on a school board,

and (n) contacting teachers directly. Categorization of specific types of parental involvement can allow research to determine the effect certain actions from schools have on levels of types of parental involvement, furthering useable research possibilities.

Although much research has been completed regarding parental involvement, the inconsistencies regarding definitions for what constitutes parental involvement, and student achievement, the primarily associated research with parental involvement has led to incomparable results (Fan & Chen, 2001). However, leading researchers in the field of parental involvement in schools such as Epstein and Hoover-Dempsey have emerged and set standards by which other have started to follow. Researchers are now beginning to use these standards as a base to compile more reliable results. These standards set by Epstein and Hoover-Dempsey are discussed in detail later.

Parental Involvement and Academic Success

Parental Involvement has been linked to students' academic success in many studies (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, & Closson, 2001; Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2005; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). Yet, multiple studies have put differing values on specific types of parental involvement and its effect on academic success, making generalizations difficult. Research has also noted, primarily due to the inconsistency of data and method, that parental involvement either has no effect or a negative effect on academic success (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jordan, Orozco, & Averett, 2002). However, as a topic of study, research has supported a positive correlation between parental involvement and student's academic success.

Variation in research methods. Discontinuity among research and results, however, is the largest hurdle in the field of study concerning parental involvement's relation to student academic success. Many studies stated a general correlation between parental involvement and students' academic success (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, & Closson, 2001; Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2005; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). Yet the specific reasoning behind the academic success may vary from study to study.

In recent research three specific actions have been noted as being the greatest influence on increased levels of parental involvement, thus more positively effecting academic success of students. Anderson & Minke (2007) concluded specific invitations from teachers had the largest effect on parental involvement, thus creating one avenue to increasing parental involvement. Invitations from teachers generally consist of teachers calling home, emailing the parents, or setting up meetings with the academics of the child in mind. Invitations by teachers are generally initiated by the teacher, and relate to the student's academic situation at the school. Deslandes & Bertrand (2005) found parents' perceptions of student invitations were the most powerful predictor of parental involvement. Student invitations generally consist of the student asking for help at home, or asking a parent to become involved in their academic life. Finally, Fan & Chen (2001) noted parental aspirations and expectations for children's education had the largest effect on levels of parental involvement. This research has not shown whether high aspirations create more successful students, but the fact of parents having academic aspirations or expectations for their children was noted as having a positive effect on academic success.

Finding that different studies show different results it is easy to become confused about parental involvement. Without consistency and continuity, research in the field of parental involvement will remain to be incomparable and unreliable, and well as impossible to use as a general predictor. Henderson & Mapp (2002) as well as Fan & Chen (2001) make the compelling case that too much variation in recent research regarding parental involvement has occurred. Both studies agreed that most likely there is a link between parental involvement and student academic success, yet found that due to variation in research methods and definitions of key terms such as parental involvement and academic achievement, much of the research is inconclusive.

These findings have led to a calling for a more standardized base for research regarding parental involvement. Epstein (1995) started organizing types of parental involvement seen above in Table 2, yet this is not enough. Uniformity must be widespread in order to have comparable and accurate results. An understanding of not only what parental involvement is, but why parental involvement may or may not occur is essential.

Uninvolved Parents

Even with research that is has not been consistent regarding definitions, reasoning behind parental involvement or motivations for parental involvement, a general statement that parental involvement can increase student achievement and academic success can be made. The research regarding a positive correlation between parental involvement and students' academic success is the overwhelming majority in the field.

For educators and researchers, one major problem has arisen regarding parental involvement. Many parents are not involved. In fact, research has shown parental

involvement decreased as students progressed at school. Research suggests parents will become more involved if they perceive they are invited to be involved (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, & Closson, 2001). Deslandes & Bertrand (2005) went on to argue that one reason behind the decline of parental involvement in secondary students is the sense of autonomy that naturally increases with adolescence. While parents are more inclined to be involved if they feel invited to participate, students wanting to be independent have created a lessening of parental involvement as students enter into secondary education. A natural yearning for autonomy and independence by students entering adolescence leads students away from actively inviting parents to participate in their academic lives. With parents waiting for an invitation that may now occur less, levels of parental involvement decrease. Conversely, Halsey (2005) pointed to one reason behind decreased levels of parental involvement as a misunderstanding or miscommunication between schools and parents as students move to the secondary setting. As students enter secondary school parents and teachers are not on the same page in terms of their wants and needs for the students, or their styles of communication. Parents want to be involved, but with a change in schooling type (elementary to secondary) find less overt opportunities to become involved. Likewise, teachers perceive parents as being more unwilling to become involved. Halsey (2005) noted that at the secondary level, teachers prefer more institutional styles of communication, while parents prefer personal types of communication. A lack of consistent personal communication between teachers and parents leave these issues unresolved, leading to parents feeling less needed, and therefore becoming less involved (Halsey, 2005).

Influences Behind Parental Involvement

Naturally the study of parental involvement for greater academic success among students leads to the question of why parents decide to become involved. The influences that lead parents to invest in the academics of their children must be sought out. It is clear from the literature there are many influences on parents toward becoming involved in the academic lives of their children are many. Parents, children, teachers, families, and communities lead different lives across the United States. To name a few, peoples lives are different regarding the work they do, the amount of money they earn, the experiences with schooling they have had, and the beliefs they hold. How can sense be made of all the possible influences on parents, so that future study can to help increase parental involvement?

Variation in research again. Recent studies have noted that many influences have an effect on why parents are involved. These influences have included: family beliefs, socio-economic status, parent's level of education, the marital status of the parent(s), the number of children in a family, and cultural beliefs (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Sy, Rowley, & Schulenberg, 2007). Once again research gives different results based on variation within each study. Similarly, Jordan, Orozco, & Averett (2002) organized many of these influences or motivators into two main categories. The first category entitled *family*, included education level, family structure, family size, parent gender, and work outside the home. The second category entitled *child characteristics*, included age, gender, grade level, and academic performance. Although this organization is well thought out, it is not specific enough to create meaningful inferences from. Other research has not used this categorization or break-up of types of parental involvement.

Once again, an inconsistency in research techniques has created difficulty in interpretation and reliability of research results.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler organize parental involvement influences. In 1995, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler started reforming how the research community thought about organizing influences and motivations toward parental involvement. Initially, the influences on parents to become involved were broken into four main categories: (a) the parent's role construction, (b) the parent's sense of efficacy for helping the child, (c) the general school invitations for involvement, and (d) the general child invitations for school involvement. Other influences, such as the parents skills and knowledge, demands on time and energy, and specific invitations from the child or school, also existed, but were given secondary status as they were believed to be constructed following one of the four primary influences (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005).

Since the time of the development of these four primary influences, many researchers have based studies using this organization of influences on parental involvement. Anderson & Minke (2007) and Deslandes & Bertrand (2005) used a modified version of these categories by combining general school invitations, general child invitations, specific child invitations, and specific teacher invitations into one category entitled invitations, while keeping parent's role construction and parent's self efficacy as separate categories.

Role construction, self-efficacy, and invitations. Considered the primary influences on parental involvement, role construction, self-efficacy, and invitations will be given a deeper attention, so to further understand what they are. Anderson & Minke (2007) defined parent's role construction as "parent's ideas about what they should do in

relation to their children's schooling" (p. 312), while Deslandes & Bertrand (2005) went on to say, "parents are more likely to become involved if they view their participation as a requirement of parenting" (p. 165). Beliefs about the role that a parent plays in their child's academic life can be founded on many sources such as cultural values, family beliefs, or religion, yet whatever the reasoning behind parent's beliefs about their role, the influence it can have on their children is definite.

Anderson & Minke (2007) defined parent's self-efficacy as "parent's beliefs that their involvement in their children's schooling will positively affect their children's learning and school success" (p. 312). Parents experience with school, their level of education, and current available skill set play a large part in parent's self efficacy. "Parents are more likely to be involved if they believe that they have the skills and knowledge to help their children (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005, p.165).

Invitations have been further broken down into three distinct types: general school invitations, general child invitations, and specific child or teacher invitations. While some research has argued child invitations are the primary influence on parental involvement (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005), and other research has noted teacher invitations are (Anderson & Minke, 2007), many studies have found the perception that parents have of invitations does influence their involvement. Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey (2005) found "perceptions of invitations for involvement from others (or perceptions that their involvement is sought, welcomed, and valued by the child, the child's teacher, and the child's school)" (p. 94) had a significant effect on levels of parental involvement.

General school and general child invitations are a more implicit method of influence. “An overtly welcoming school climate and clear, manageable suggestions for parents’ home-based support of the child’s learning are examples of general school invitations” (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005, p. 94), while a “child’s attributes (e.g. age) and characteristic child behaviors (e.g. difficulty and success with school work, valuing of parental help)” (Walker et al., 2005, p. 94) are examples of general child invitations. It can be noted that these invitations do not consist of the school or child directly asking the parent to become involved.

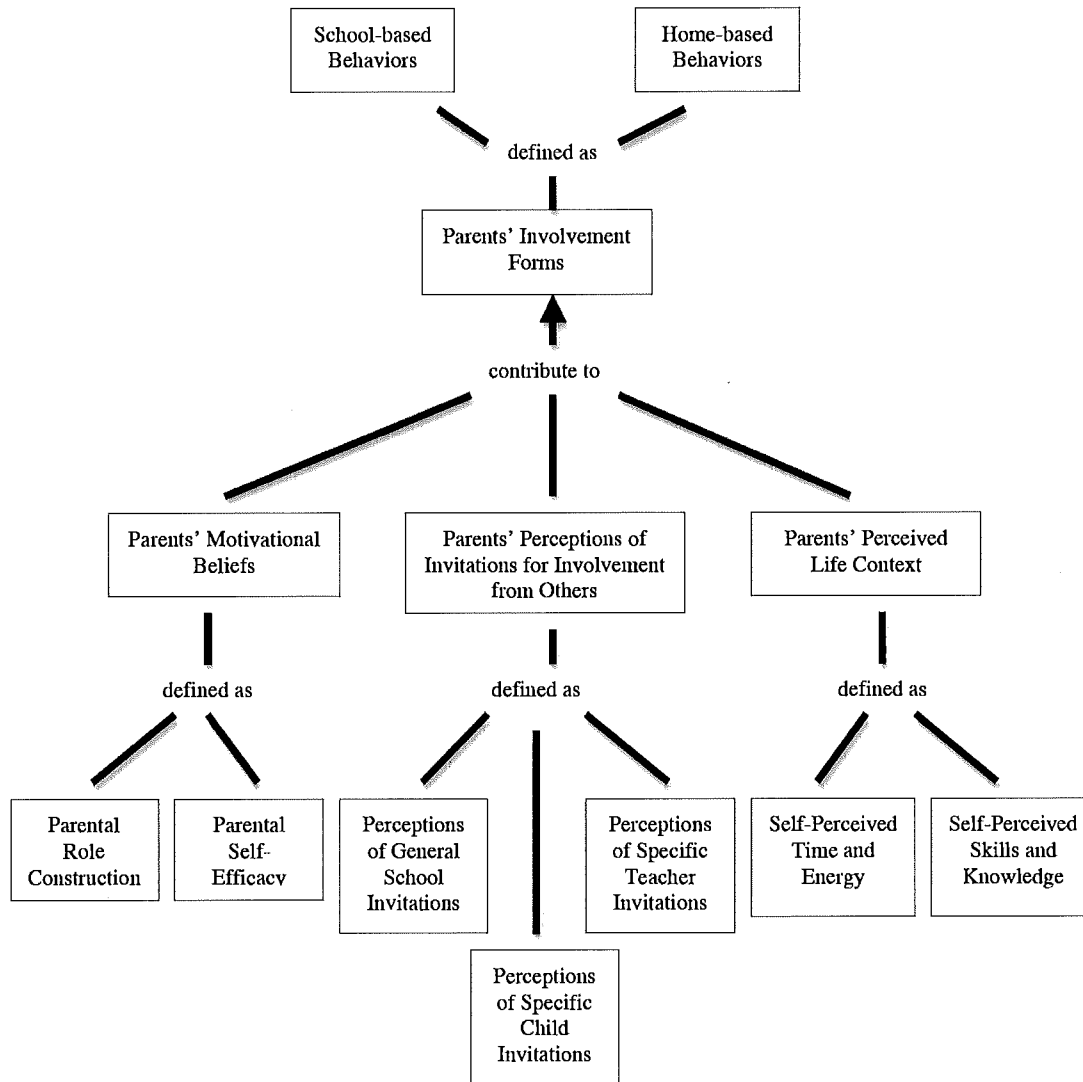
Specific invitations explicitly ask the parent to become involved. Children asking for help on homework, asking parents to come on field trips, teacher’s calling home to invite parent’s to help out at home, come into the classroom, or assigning homework that involves the parents are examples of specific child or teacher invitations (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). Notice that specific invitations uses direct contact or the child or the school to the parent.

The financial perspective held by the parent can in turn effect the perspective they may hold on life. It may be important to note that six influences used by Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey (2005) are solely from the perspective of the parent. Life without financial stability gives a different outlook than life with financial stability. Working more and being available at home or at school less, feeling less successful in life, having more negative experiences with school, and having less resources available are all possible effects of financial instability that can have a direct effect on the perceptions of each influence toward parental involvement. The socio-economic status of a family can have an effect on parental involvement levels (Anderson

& Minke, 2007; DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane, 2007; Driessen, Smit, & Slegers, 2005; Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2005; Sy, Rowley, & Schulenberg, 2007).

Hoover-Dempsey reorganizes. In an explicit and over-arching way, Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey (2005) have broken down reasoning behind parental involvement into six influences that envelop each of the topics already discussed: “Parental role construction; Parental self-efficacy; Perceptions of general school invitations; Perceptions of specific child invitations; Perceptions of specific teacher invitations; Self-perceived time and energy; and Self-perceived skills and knowledge” (p. 88) all stemming from three primary influences. These three primary influences are the parent’s motivational beliefs, the parent’s perceptions of invitations for involvement from others, and the parent’s perceived life context. A realization that much of the reasoning behind parental involvement hinges on experiences and perceptions held by the parent, makes understanding specific instances of parental involvement difficult. Parents have had many different experiences, positive and negative, within the school system, parents perceive their interactions with schools, teachers, and their children in different ways, and parents perceive their life processes in different ways as well. An understanding of the idea that reasoning and motivation behind parental involvement is not standard or set in stone, yet differs depending on the parent and their personal experiences and perceptions is key, yet makes progress in this field difficult. See Figure 1 for an organized explanation of the parent involvement process as described by Walker et al. (2005).

Figure 1. “Levels 1 and 2 of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s Theoretical Model of the Parental Involvement Process.



Adapted from: “Parental Involvement: Model Revision Through Scale Development,” by J. Walker, A. Wilkins, J. Dallaire, H. Sandler, and K. Hoover-Dempsey, 2005, *The Elementary School Journal*, 106(2), p. 88.

This new model, adapted from Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's earlier work published in 1995, compiles the latest research on the primary influences of parental involvement into a complete framework.

As a general observation, there are many factors that determine the decision of a parent to become involved in a student's academic life. One of the six influences listed by Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey (2005) is the parent's perception of specific teacher invitations. Teacher contact falls under this influence. Teachers have control over contacting parents and possibly influencing their role in a student's academic life.

What Teacher Contact Is

Within the realm of teacher invitations falls teacher contact. Specific to communication between parents and teachers, Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey (2005) gave examples of teacher contact to include: (a) asking or expecting parents to help on homework, (b) asking or expecting parents to supervise homework, (c) asking or expecting parents to talk with their child about the school day, (d) informing parents about special events at school, (e) asking parents to help at school, and (e) contacting parents regarding school (e.g. written note, phone, email, etc.).

Teacher contact is one aspect of a broader research field named teacher invitations or specific invitations by the teacher (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). Importantly, it has been seen by Anderson & Minke (2007), that "the emergence of specific invitations from teachers as the single most influential variable on parents' involvement choices is significant because schools

are able to influence teacher practices more so than any other variable” (p. 321). Analysis of teacher invitations done by Walker et al. (2005) has shown that teacher invitations may include: “encouraging parents to visit the classroom and to contact the teacher regularly; making the classroom a place where parents feel welcome and; assigning homework that specifically includes parents” (p. 95).

In research conducted by Anderson & Minke (2007), teacher contact instances were divided into two categories: ongoing issues (helping with homework, helping at home) and; time limited issues (attending an open house, going to parent teacher association meetings, attending parent teacher conferences, attending a fundraiser event). The reasoning behind this division was to more easily control variables in the study of teacher contact.

Teacher contact can be directly controlled by teachers and school staff, so it is ever important to keep in mind that, “for the parents...the ways in which their beliefs about involvement affected their involvement behaviors at home and at school varied according to their perceptions of being invited specifically to participate” (Anderson & Minke, 2007, p. 319). With this understanding, teachers and school staff can directly affect levels of parental involvement by contacting parents.

With such varied research based in studies of parental involvement and the motivations behind parental involvement, a consensus among results is hard to find. Yet, leaders in the field are starting to become consistent as more studies apply principles and frameworks developed by Epstein, Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler. Much research is still needed regarding parental involvement and the motivations behind it, however more reliability and consistency among results is now possible with a strong research base.

Using research based on a positive correlation between parental involvement and academic success, along with studies concerning influences and motivations behind parental involvement, including teacher invitations (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005), this study specifically researched the effect teacher contact had on levels of parental involvement. As other studies have been broadly based on researching possible influences for parental involvement, this study focused on teacher contact as a possible influence. Since teacher contact is controllable by teachers and school staff, fewer variables were influential in the research, resulting in more reliable results.

Chapter III: Methodology

As students move through school, academics become more complicated and rigorous. Students are increasingly asked to become more independent and responsible for themselves and their actions. Although this independence is an important learned tool of public schooling, research has shown that parental involvement does have a positive impact on students' academic performance (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). This study focused on the effect that teacher contact had on levels of parental involvement. To understand what effect teacher contact had on levels of parental involvement, a detailed description of the research methods involved in this study, including the selection and description of the sample, instrumentation used, data collection and analysis processes, and limitations follows below.

Subject Selection and Description

The study took place at Metcalf Junior High School in Burnsville, Minnesota. The subjects were chosen using convenience sampling. The researcher was also a mathematics teacher at Metcalf Junior High School. Since the students enrolled in the researcher's mathematics classes were readily available and easy to access, they were used as the starting sample for this study. Surveys were sent home with students to parents of students enrolled in the researcher's mathematics courses. The courses chosen consisted of three general 8th grade mathematics courses and one general 7th grade mathematics course, including 105 students. The sample consisted of 42 parents who choose to participate in and return a pre and post survey.

The sample included parents from a general sampling of the school population. Based on the relevance of previous research concerning parental involvement and the

effect of race and socio-economic status (Anderson & Minke, 2007; DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane, 2007; Driessen et al., 2005), the following school data is included. In 2007, Metcalf Junior High School had a *free and reduced lunch* (FRL) population of 23% and a *limited english proficient* (LEP) population of 10%. The racial makeup of Metcalf Junior High consisted of 69% White, 16% Black, 12% Asian, 6% Hispanic, and 1% Native American. Metcalf Junior High School is located in Burnsville, Minnesota, considered a third ring suburb of Minneapolis/St. Paul and part of the Greater Metro area surrounding the Twin Cities.

Instrumentation

Pre and post surveys sent home to parents consisted of 20 questions. 18 questions used Thurstone scale answers, that varied based on the type of question and possible appropriate answers. A copy of the instrument used can be found in Appendix A. Thurstone scale questions “require(d) individuals to express agreement or disagreement with a series of statements about” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003, p. 214) levels of parental involvement. Each of the possible answers was tailored to the question, based on acceptable outcomes. Answers were assigned a numerical value to be used in data analysis. Two questions were *open-form* questions, allowing parents to “make any response they wish” (Gall et al., 2003, p. 227). These questions allowed parents to voice any additional information they felt was beneficial to the survey. Identical surveys were given as a pre and post survey, before and after the study had been conducted. Using this pre and post survey format allowed for a change in levels of parental involvement to be measured.

Survey topics describing types of possible parental involvement and measureable levels of parental involvement were influenced through research conducted by Epstein (1995) and Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey (2005). Using this research, parental involvement was divided into two main categories, which include *at-home* involvement, and *at-school* involvement. Of the 18 Thurstone scale questions used on the pre and post survey, the first 11 considered *at-home* parental involvement, while the remaining seven considered *at-school* parental involvement. Table 3 shows the order of questions used in the survey, the topic of each question, and whether each topic pertains to *at-home* or *at-school* parental involvement.

Table 3

Survey Question Topics

Survey Question	Question Topic	At Home/At School	Category
1	Rules imposed at home that directly effect student academics	AH	a, e
2	Academically structured home environment	AH	a, d
3	Time management	AH	a, e
4	Talk with child about school day	AH	a, b, d
5	Supervise homework	AH	d
6	Help study for tests	AH	d
7	Practice spelling, math, or other skills	AH	d
8	Read with child	AH	a, d
9	Contact teachers (phone, email, written note, meeting)	AH	b, e
10	Access school websites/teacher homepages	AH	b, e
11	Access online grading system	AH	b, e
12	Help out at school	AS	c
13	Attend special events	AS	e
14	Volunteer to go on fieldtrips	AS	c
15	Attend PTA meetings	AS	c, e
16	Go to Open House	AS	b, e
17	Attend parent teacher conferences	AS	b, e
18	Serve on/attend school board meetings	AS	c, e, f

Note: Adapted from J. Epstein, 1995 and J. Walker, A. Wilkins, J. Dallaire, H. Sandler, and K. Hoover-Dempsey, 2005.

Table 3 also relates each survey question to one of the six subcategories, introduced earlier by Epstein (1995), that have been used to further differentiate between types of parental involvement. These subcategories include: (a) parenting, (b) communicating, (c) volunteering, (d) learning at home, (e) decision-making, and (f) collaborating with the community.

To help ensure reliability and validity of this study, research based topics discussed above have been used to construct the survey. However, this survey was constructed by the researcher, and has not yet been tested for reliability and validity.

Data Collection

Anonymity of subjects was also given high importance, so to elicit honest responses, as information given could have been considered personal and sensitive. Surveys were sent home with students in sealed envelopes, with instructions to be given to their parents. A description of the purpose of the survey, a consent form, and an assurance of anonymity were included along with the survey. Names of participants were only included on the outside of the envelope and the consent form, names were not included on the actual survey. After surveys were returned, consent forms and surveys were labeled with corresponding numbers and separated. Consent forms and surveys were stored in separate locked spaces, so as not to compromise personal information. Collected surveys from the 42 parental participants, was used for data analysis. The numbering process described above was also used for data analysis to aide in the assurance of anonymity

Meticulous record keeping in the form of a teacher contact journal was kept by the researcher through the duration of the study. A copy of this journal can be found in

Appendix B. The teacher contact journal took place from March 9th through May 7th, during the second academic semester of the 2008-2009 calendar year at Metcalf Junior High School. Each instance of teacher contact that occurred involving the 42 participants was recorded. The date of each instance, as well as the nature of the conversation were either paraphrased (phone conversation or face to face meeting) or copied and pasted (email). This journal, along with survey results, was used to analyze changes in levels of reported parental involvement.

Data Analysis

Data was assessed and analyzed from pre and post survey results. In conjunction with the teacher contact journal, a correlation between amount of teacher contact and changes in levels of parental involvement was noted. Using information from the teacher contact journal, 11 students with high incidences of teacher contact through the duration of the study were chosen for deeper analysis. A high incidence of teacher contact constituted two or more occurrences of teacher contact with the allowed time frame. Survey results from each of the 11 students were analyzed. Each of the 18 Thurstone scale questions was individually compared between pre and post survey results. Since survey questions are also divided into the six subcategories of parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community, the effect of teacher contact on these subcategories was also be analyzed separately.

The research hypothesis is that with a higher incidence of teacher contact, amounts of parental involvement would increase. As teacher contact is considered one active influence on parent's attitudes toward their children's education, the hope is that increased teacher contact will induce increased parental involvement.

Limitations

Limitations for the study include the limited time of the study (approximately two months), a small sample size of 42 participants, and the specificity of the sample. This may affect the ability to generalize the data to other studies, samples, and populations. Teacher or researcher bias also needs to be taken into account, since the researcher is the teacher of the participant's children. The researcher was also in control of the teacher contact and could possibly have been subconsciously influenced, playing both teacher and researcher role. The researcher/teacher was also constrained with using appropriate and timely teacher contact. As a professional educator, each incidence of teacher contact must be warranted. A final limitation is the bias of survey respondents. Parents who choose to participate in a pre and post survey on parental involvement may already be more involved in their students' academic lives than parents who do not choose to participate in the study. Likewise, students who are more inclined to deliver a survey to their parents, may have parents who are already more involved in their academic lives.

Chapter IV: Results

Parental involvement has been shown to have a positive effect on students' academic lives (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Yet it is true that many parents are not involved in their children's schools, or in their children's academic lives. With an understanding of this information, this study looked at one method of addressing the issue of uninvolved parents by researching the effect that teacher contact had on levels of parental involvement. Teacher contact is one possible influence toward parental involvement that can directly be controlled by schools and teachers in the educational community.

For this study, a research based pre and post survey was created. This survey was disseminated by the teacher to his students, to be taken home to one of their parents. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A. Parents who voluntarily decided to participate in the survey, returned the surveys via their children. During the approximately two months of research time between pre and post surveys, the researcher kept a detailed journal recording each incidence of teacher contact that occurred between the teacher and any of the research participants. A copy of the teacher contact journal can be found in Appendix B. Identical post surveys were then disseminated in the same manner as the pre survey, and were then returned to the teacher/researcher. Of the 42 research participants, 11 were identified as having high incidences of teacher contact based on the teacher contact journal. These 11 participants survey results were then analyzed to determine if any changes in levels of parental involvement occurred. Finally, using the results of this analysis, the research questions were answered. The result of the item analysis is discussed below.

Item Analysis

Survey dissemination and research for this study occurred during the second academic semester of the 2009-2010 school year at Metcalf Junior High School in Burnsville, Minnesota. One hundred five pre surveys were sent home with students on February 19th, 2009. A return time period of approximately two weeks was given to maximize the number of survey participants. Forty-five parents voluntarily participated in the pre survey. A teacher contact journal containing each incidence of teacher contact between the teacher and the participants was recorded from March 9th, 2009 until May 7th, 2009. Forty-five post surveys were sent home with students on May 11th, 2009. Forty-two parents voluntarily participated in the pre and post survey process. Of the 42 participants, 11 were chosen to have had high incidences of teacher contact during the time of study. A high incidence of teacher contact consisted of two or more instances during the approximately two-month research period.

Each of the 11 targeted participants pre and post surveys were then individually analyzed. For the 18 Thurstone scale questions, each possible response was given a numerical value. Question 9, for example, asks the participants how often they contact teachers. The possible responses are: daily, weekly, monthly, or never. Each of these four responses was given a value from one to four, with four representing the most frequent occurrence, and one representing the least. This process of assigning numerical values for each possible response was used for each of the 18 Thurstone scale questions, following the pattern of three or four (depending on the number of possible responses) representing the highest level of involvement, and one representing the lowest level of involvement for

each survey question. Detailed results for each of the 11 participants pre and post survey data, broken down by question can be found in Appendix C.

For each of the 18 survey questions, the average numerical values of the 11 targeted participants was found for the pre and post survey separately. This can be seen in table 4 below:

Table 4

Average Survey Results by Question for the 11 Targeted Survey Participants

Survey Question	Pre Survey Average/Possible Points	Post Survey Average/Possible Points	Pre/Post Survey Difference	Percent of Change (%)
1	3.5/4	3.4/4	-0.1	-2.9
2	3.5/4	3.2/4	-0.3	-8.6
3	3.5/4	3.4/4	-0.1	-2.9
4	3.8/4	3.9/4	+0.1	+2.6
5	3.3/4	3.2/4	-0.1	-3.0
6	2.5/4	2.7/4	+0.2	+8.0
7	2.8/4	2.8/4	+/-0.0	+/-0.0
8	1.8/4	1.9/4	+0.1	+5.6
9	1.9/4	2.3/4	+0.4	+21.1
10	3.0/4	2.7/4	-0.3	-10.0
11	3.0/4	2.5/4	-0.5	-16.7
12	1.45/4	1.54/4	+0.09	+6.2
13	2.6/3	2.5/3	-0.1	-3.8
14	1.6/3	1.5/3	-0.1	-6.3
15	1.7/3	1.3/3	-0.4	-23.5
16	2.7/3	2.9/3	+0.2	7.4
17	2.7/3	2.9/3	+0.2	7.4
18	1.2/3	1.2/3	+/-0.0	+/-0.0

For each survey question, Table 4 shows the numerical average for the pre survey out of the highest possible value, the numerical average for the post survey out of the highest possible value, the numerical difference between pre and post survey, and the percent of change between pre and post surveys. For most of the survey questions, it is of interest to note that there was only a small amount of positive or negative change during the time of

research. Additionally, it can be noted that since the values are small, a minute change can result in a larger percent of change. Due to this effect, only four questions were looked at as having significant change.

Significant Findings

Four survey questions had a 10% or higher percent of change from the pre survey to the post survey. This means that the levels at which parents were involved in their child's academic lives, for these four types of parental involvement, changed on average between the 11 targeted participants by 10% or more. The four survey questions were numbered 9, 10, 11, and 15 on the survey. The information posed by each question was, respectively: I contact teachers (e.g. phone, email, written notice, face to face meeting, etc.), I access school websites and teacher homepages, I access the online grading system (Schoolview), and I attend Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings.

The first survey question noted (I contact teachers), which is question 9 on the survey, increased in numerical average for the 11 targeted participants from 1.9 to 2.3. The possible responses to this question were: daily, weekly, monthly, and never, with numerical values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. This increase in parental involvement regarding contacting teachers represented a 21.1% change over the approximately two-month time period of research.

The second survey question noted (I access school websites and teacher webpages), which is question 10 on the survey, decreased in numerical average for the 11 targeted participants from 3.0 to 2.7. The possible responses to this question were: daily, weekly, monthly, and never, with numerical values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. This

decrease in parental involvement regarding accessing online resources represented a 10.0% change over the approximately two-month time period of research.

The third survey question noted (I access the online grading system), which is question 11 on the survey, decreased in numerical average for the 11 targeted participants from 3.0 to 2.5. The possible responses to this question were: daily, weekly, monthly, and never, with numerical values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. This decrease in parental involvement regarding accessing the online grading system represented a 16.7% change over the approximately two-month time period of research.

The fourth survey question noted (I attend PTA meetings), which is question 15 on the survey, decreased in numerical average for the 11 targeted participants from 1.7 to 1.3. The possible responses to this question were: every meeting, occasionally, and never, with numerical values of 3, 2, and 1 respectively. This decrease in parental involvement regarding attending PTA meetings represented a 23.5% change over the approximately two-month time period of research.

It may also be noted that a moderate amount of change can, and should, be considered insignificant. This can be seen in two questions that should have shown no change in levels of parental involvement over the period of research. Question 14, regarding volunteering on fieldtrips, showed a decrease of 6.3%, yet there were no school fieldtrips available during the time of research. Similarly, question 16, regarding attendance at the open house, showed an increase of 7.4%, yet the only open house held during the school year occurred before the time of research.

Two open ended questions were also included at the end of the survey, to give parents a chance to voice any additional information they may have felt was missing from

the survey, regarding their parental involvement. The first question gave parents the opportunity to expand on *at-home* parental involvement, while the second question gave parents the opportunity to expand on *at-school* parental involvement. Results were highly variable, however the two common threads among the majority of the surveys, was that parents reiterated types of parental involvement addressed earlier in the survey, and parents included more information in the open ended question responses in the pre survey than in the post survey. There did not seem to be a significant change in the types of parental involvement expressed from pre to post survey, most significant was the amount of information given decreased from pre to post survey. For example, many parents who did include responses the open ended questions in the pre survey did not include responses in the post survey.

In summary of the significant findings, it can be noted that contact of teachers by parents increased for the 11 targeted participants. It can also be noted that regular monitoring of online systems available, as well as attendance at PTA meetings decreased. Overall, however, most types of parental involvement surveyed did not show any significant change over the approximately two-month research period.

Research Questions

At the outset of this study, three research questions were posed. These research questions were: (a) does teacher contact effect specific types of parental involvement, (b) does teacher contact effect levels of *at-home* parental involvement, and (c) does teacher contact effect levels of *at-school* parental involvement. Below are the results of this study in relation to each of these research questions.

Research question one considered the effect that teacher contact, or increased levels of teacher contact had on specific types of parental involvement. Through development of the survey instrument, various types of *at-home* and *at-school* parental involvement were chosen, and represented individually by survey questions. The majority of the various types of parental involvement represented in Table 1 (see Chapter 2) were used in developing questions for the survey. As noted above, four survey questions, and three parental involvement topics were significantly effected by increased incidences of teacher contact. The specific types of parental involvement that showed change were: contacting teachers, regularly monitoring online systems, and attendance at PTA meetings. It may be noted that the types of parental involvement effected are not types where the child is in direct contact with the parent. It may also be noted that most types of parental involvement researched did not show a significant change based on increased levels of parental involvement.

Research question two, considered the effect that teacher contact, or increased levels of teacher contact had on *at-home* parental involvement. It should be noted that each of the 18 Thurstone scale questions were identified as representing *at-home* or *at-school* types of parental involvement. Survey questions 1 through 11 represented types of *at-home* parental involvement. Three of the four survey questions that showed significant change from pre to post survey represented *at-home* types of parental involvement. The three survey questions covered the topics of contacting teachers and monitoring online systems and showed that the levels at which parents contact teachers increased, while the levels at which parents use and monitor online systems set in place by the district, school, or teachers decreased.

Research question three, considered the effect that teacher contact, or increased levels of teacher contact had on *at-school* parental involvement. Survey questions 12 through 18 were identified as representing types of *at-school* parental involvement. Of the seven *at-school* questions, one showed a significant change in level of occurrence among research participants. This question measured the level at which parents regularly attended PTA meetings. The results showed that the level of attendance at PTA meetings decreased between the times of the pre and post survey dissemination. It should also be noted that a majority of the questions regarding *at-school* parental involvement did not show a significant change over the period of research.

Through an item analysis of the data presented from this research, three results are significant. For participants in this research where high levels of teacher contact were noted, an increase in the level of contacting teachers was noted, while a decrease in the levels of monitoring online systems and attending PTA meetings was noted. Other items measured did not show a significant change during the period of research.

Chapter V: Discussion

In an age where standards based on performance and grade achievement are mandated federally and statewide at an increasing rate, a premium has been put on student performance. Recent research has shown parental involvement in students' academic lives, has a positive effect on the student's academic performance, as well as social and cultural influences (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Research has also noted that one leading influence toward increased levels of parental involvement is invitations (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). Invitations have been broken into more specific types, such as student invitations, school invitations, or teacher invitations. This study focused on one particular aspect of invitations, teacher contact. Research on the effect teacher contact may have on levels of parental involvement was conducted through a pre and post survey process where all accounts of teacher contact on any participants was recorded in a teacher contact journal by the researcher. Results from the research noted that for participants who had increased levels of teacher contact, levels of contacting teachers increased, while levels of monitoring online systems and attendance at PTA meetings decreased. What follows is a discussion on the limitations affecting this research, as well as some conclusions, notable observations, and recommendations for further research.

Limitations

Prior to the conclusion of research, three limiting factors were identified as outstanding for this specific research situation. The first being accurate reporting by participants or honesty of responses by participants. It was assumed that each response given by each participant was true to the best of their knowledge, and that no participants

were intentionally increasing or decreasing their perceived levels of parental involvement for any reason. An assurance of anonymity should have helped alleviate possible instances of this occurrence. Although it can be assumed that each participant responded to the best of their knowledge at the time of each survey, a small difference in average percentage did occur in response to questions where little or no change should have occurred. One instance was in response to a survey question regarding attendance at the open house, which occurs each fall. Since this one-time affair did not occur during the time of research, the understanding would be that participant's responses would remain consistent from the pre survey to the post survey. However, a small percentage change from pre survey to post survey did occur.

The second limitation is that, due to the voluntary nature of the survey, participants choosing to be included in the research may already have an above average level of parental involvement. Furthermore, as the survey was distributed to students to bring home to parents, students who have parents who are more involved already, may feel more comfortable presenting them with a survey from their teacher at school. When asked by the researcher if her parent was going to return the survey, one student noted that her mother would have returned the survey, but knew it would make her look bad, so she decided not to. This may lead to the conclusion that a high percentage of more involved parents would naturally be participants in this research. As these already involved parents may feel that their level of involvement is adequate, teacher contact may not have a large effect on their levels of parental involvement.

The third limitation is the specificity of the study. This research included a small sample, or only 7th and 8th grade students and parents, in a specific location. Although

these results may be interesting, without further research it may be hard to generalize them among other populations.

Conclusions

Significant findings resulting from this research were that for participants experiencing increased levels of teacher contact: (a) contact with teachers increased, (b) monitoring of school sponsored online systems decreased, and (c) attendance at PTA meetings decreased. Specific research on the effect of teacher contact on levels of parental involvement is limited. Research has, however, noted that teacher contact positively effects the perception that parents hold in regard to the school and their beliefs about teachers and academics (Anderson & Minke, 2007). This perception of being invited, whether acted upon or not, held by parents has been shown to positively effect levels of parental involvement. The research conducting in this study measure the change in levels of specific types of parental involvement over a short period of time, but did not look into the perception that parents held by experiencing increased levels of teacher contact. Further research is suggested to whether the perception of being invited by the teacher, through teacher contact, has an effect on the positive or negative feeling held by parents about schools, and being accepted by the academic community.

Notable Observations

Through the research process, many observations were noted that the researcher found interesting to the specific research situation, or may be used for further research. These observations included: (a) the possibility of inflated parental involvement by voluntary participants, (b) the strive for independence by the middle years student and its effect on decreased levels of parental involvement, (c) the timing of research within the

school year, (d) the change in grades among all students and research participants' students, and (e) the occurrence that only types of parental involvement that did not include parent to student contact were effected by the research. General observations on these topics are discussed below.

Discussed above as a limitation, the observation that voluntary participants in a survey regarding parental involvement having already high levels of parental involvement may be a reality. Although this observation cannot be validated, as only participants in the survey have recordable data, the researched noted that parents, who, in general, have more regular contact with the teacher, seemed to have a higher incidence of participation in the research. This observation would need further research, but potentially has an effect on the results of this study, as parents with an already high level of parental involvement may be less influenced to increase their levels of parental involvement by teacher contact.

Widely understood in the educational field as an effect of adolescence, a striving for independence and autonomy by middle grades students seems natural to many teachers, yet frustrating for many parents. Deslandes & Bertrand (2005) note that this yearning for independence results in decreased levels of parental involvement, especially within the schools. As this research involved parents of students in 7th and 8th grade, the beginning of this search for independence is just beginning for some students, and in full swing for other students. Teacher contact may only play a small role in the parent-students dynamics in a time of searching for independence from parental influence.

A third observation of interest to the researcher is that timing within the school year. The research conducted occurred during the second semester of the school year.

Through general observation of many years of teaching, the researcher has noted that many parents are more involved at the beginning of the school year, and less involved near the end. It may be that if students are succeeding, parents like to leave the situation how it is, and tend not to increase their involvement at this time of the year. It may also be that for students who are not succeeding, parents may have given up at this point in the year, and may not increase their levels of involvement. With research only conducted during the second semester of the school year, it would be interesting to compare results with similar research conducted at differing times of the school year. Further research would be suggested to conclude if results vary among studies conducted at alternate times of the school year.

Another observation made during the time of research was the occurrence of decrease in grade averages. The averages in grade changes from the time of the pre survey to the post survey for the 105 students enrolled in the researchers classes, the 42 survey participants, and the 11 targeted participants is shown below in Table 5:

Table 5

Average Student Grades from Pre to Post Survey

Sample Population	Pre Survey Grade Average (%)	Post Survey Grade Average (%)	Percent of Change (%)
All Classes (105 students)	81.8	78.4	-3.4
Survey Participants (42 students)	86.8	84.0	-2.8
Targeted Participants (11 students)	79.3	73.4	-5.9

Observations of interest made through these grade comparisons are that the grades of the 42 survey participants' students were, on average, higher than the class averages, yet the grades of the 11 targeted participants were lower than either previous group. Incidences

of teacher contact consisted primarily of academic concern, thus giving reason to the lower overall grade average of the students of the 11 targeted participants. It should also be noted that in general, grade averages of students decreased over the time of study. As an observation made by the researcher, this is consistent with the timing of the school year, and should also be taken into account. Further research on this phenomenon may be suggested.

A final notable observation is that the only types of parental involvement addressed in this study as having significant changes were types of parental involvement where no interaction between parent and child is required. Contacting teachers, monitoring online systems, and attending PTA meetings does not require that parents actually interact or speak to their children, yet implications of these actions may lead to parent/child interaction. Evidence was not shown toward why only these types of parental involvement were affected. The reason may have been due to the brief nature of the study, or the convenience of first changing practices that only involve a singular person.

Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the limitations, conclusions, and notable observations outlined above three items have been suggested for further research. These three items include further research regarding random sampling using voluntary practices, parental involvement during specific times of the school year, and parental perceptions of teacher invitations. Noted should also be that much research has been completed regarding parental involvement and academic success, as well as influences and motivation regarding parental involvement. However, the research regarding specific topic such as teacher contact is limited.

One of the limitations for this study was the realization that in using a voluntary research survey, the participants may initially have higher levels of parental involvement than the general population. If it is true that parental involvement is related to increased academic success, this may be one rationale for the higher grade averages of the 42 research participants listed in Table 5. The ability to randomly sample the entire population to obtain results regarding parental involvement levels as they relate to teacher contact is suggested for further research.

Also noted in the discussion above, is the fact that student's grades decreased, on average during the second academic semester, as well as the researcher's observation that as the school year progressed, parents became less involved. Further research is suggested to determine the effect that different times within the school year have on levels of parental involvement. As well as any effect teacher contact may have through different times of the school year.

A final topic of further research is the perception that parents hold of teacher contact. As this study only researched the effect increased teacher contact had on levels of specific types of parental involvement, it would be of great interest to understand the parent's perception of this teacher contact. Research concerning whether parents hold positive or negative views of teacher contact, and how their experiences with school effects these views would aid in the understanding of the role teacher contact plays in parental involvement.

This study looked to show how only a small aspect of what the educational community can do each day might have an effect on what role parents have in their children's education. Teacher contact is one aspect of the teacher/student/parent

relationship that can be completely controlled by the teacher. This advantage gives teachers an avenue to communicate with parents, and positively influence the actions they take to encouraging their children toward a more successful education. There are many things that influence parents, students, and teachers, and it is not possible to account for all of them, yet to understand one more aspect of the process is to take one more step toward success.

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Appendix A: Instrumentation: Parental Involvement Survey

This research has been approved by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46.

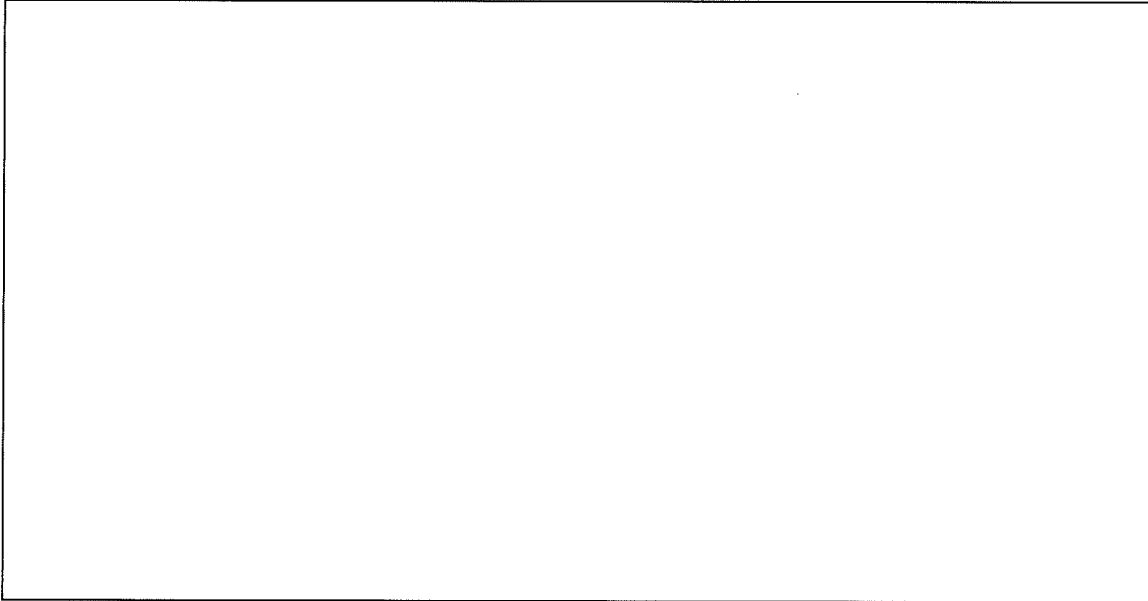
Parental Involvement Survey

Please answer each question. Base the answers on your recollection of levels of parental involvement in the last 5 months (2008 -2009 school year to date).

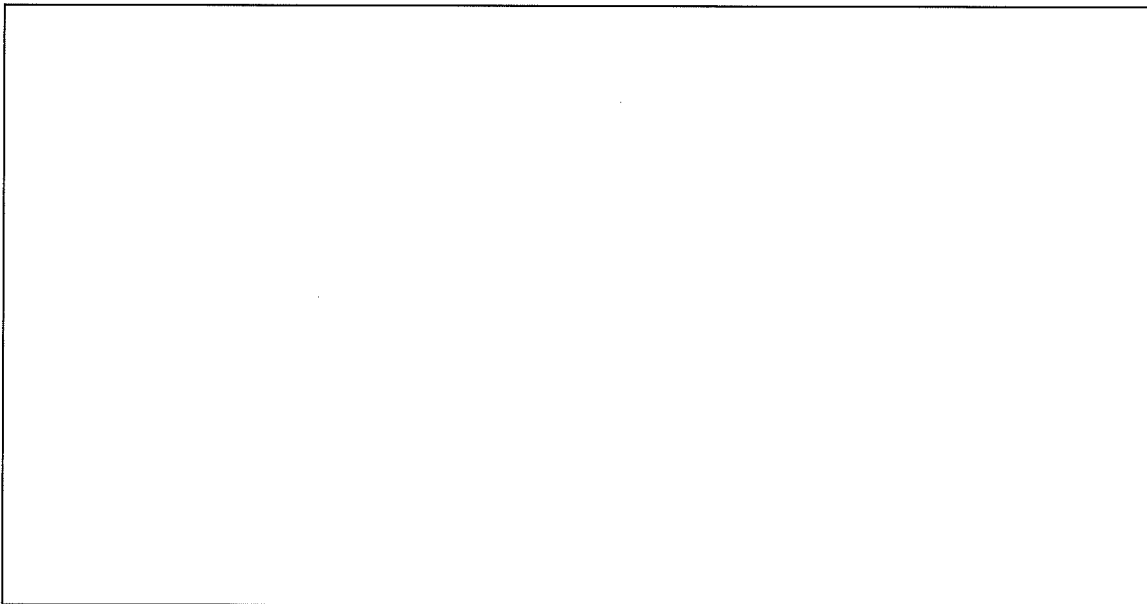
Please circle the appropriate answer.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. I impose rules at home that have a direct effect on my child's academics. | Always Regularly Seldom Never |
| 2. I structure the home environment with my child's academics in mind. | Always Regularly Seldom Never |
| 3. I manage family time with school in mind. | Always Regularly Seldom Never |
| 4. I talk with my child about his/her school day. | Daily Weekly Monthly Never |
| 5. I supervise homework. | Daily Weekly Monthly Never |
| 6. I help my child study for tests. | Daily Weekly Monthly Never |
| 7. I practice spelling, math, or other skills with my child. | Daily Weekly Monthly Never |
| 8. I read with my child. | Daily Weekly Monthly Never |
| 9. I contact teachers (e.g. phone, email, written notice, face to face meeting, etc.). | Daily Weekly Monthly Never |
| 10. I access school websites and teacher homepages. | Daily Weekly Monthly Never |
| 11. I access the online grading system (Schoolview). | Daily Weekly Monthly Never |
| 12. I help out at school. | Daily Weekly Monthly Never |
| 13. I attend special events at school. | When the occur Sometimes Never |
| 14. I volunteer to go on fieldtrips at school. | When the occur Sometimes Never |
| 15. I attend Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. | Every meeting Occasionally Never
Each year Sometimes Never |
| 16. I attend the Open House. | Every conference Sometimes Never |
| 17. I attend parent-teacher conferences. | Every conference Sometimes Never |
| 18. I serve on the school board/attend school board meetings. | Every meeting Occasionally Never |

1. Describe any ways, not listed above, that you are involved in your child's academics at home.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the respondent to describe their involvement in their child's academics at home.

2. Describe any ways, not listed above, that you are involved in your child's education at school.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the respondent to describe their involvement in their child's education at school.

Appendix B: Teacher Contact Journal

3/11

1. Marilyn Knutson (Dicky Knutson) emailed me regarding Dicky retaking his Module 4 Test. I emailed back stating that any day this week would work.

3/12

1. Rick and Marilyn Knutson (Dicky Knutson) emailed back noting that Friday would work best. I emailed back wondering if I should remind Dicky about the retake today in class.

2. I emailed Krissawan Thongviroge (Nicole McGroarty) about Nicole's homework progress.

"My name is Tim Lotze, and I am Nicole's mathematics teacher at Metcalf Junior High school. I am contacting you regarding Nicole's performance in math class. Nicole has been doing well, and I noticed that this is one of her better classes. However, I am concerned about Nicole's homework completion. Fortunately Nicole is performing well on tests and quizzes this quarter, but is choosing not to do a majority of her homework (Nicole has a 36% in homework). With this said, I feel that Nicole is able and capable to finish her homework each night.

I have been asking Nicole to get her homework done and am hoping you can also encourage her to get more of it done at home. If Nicole is having a hard time writing down the assignments or remembering them, the daily homework is posted on my school website each day. You can find this at: www.rschooldtoday.com/metcalf/lotze Please let me know if you have any questions regarding Nicole's mathematics performance. Feel free to email me back at this address or give me a call at (952)707-2525."

3/16

1. I responded to an email from Tina Wittchow (Emma Wittchow) regarding her upcoming absences on Thurs./Fri. I also followed up with Tina since she missed student-teacher conferences and wanted information regarding Emma's performance.

"Thank you for the note...Emma did mention this to me during class today. We will be having a test on Friday, I told Emma that I would get her the review materials tomorrow, and she can take it on Wednesday (or Thursday if that is an option).

Also, I wanted to follow up with you about conferences, since you left a note that you had stopped by while I was out. Emma is doing well in math this quarter. She is currently receiving an A-, and has been consistent with homework, classwork, and tests and quizzes. We will be having another notebook quiz before the end of the quarter (one week after spring break) and will be having the test on Friday. These assignments will have an effect on Emma's grade. Please let me know if you have any other questions or concerns regarding Emma's mathematics performance."

3/17

1. I emailed Sue Fredericks (Charlie Fredericks) regarding Charlie's inappropriate talking during class:

"This message is for Sue Fredericks. Hello Sue, my name is Tim Lotze, I am Charlie's math teacher at Metcalf Junior High. I am contacting you regarding Charlie's in class behavior. For most of this school year Charlie has been a great student. He almost always has all of his homework done on time, he knows what is going on in class, and participates as well. With the latest seating chart (one and a half weeks ago) Charlie has had a hard time staying on task and not talking during class. I have had to talk to him several times during class about this. I would like Charlie to be able to show that he can act appropriately and control his actions in class, so I have not moved him to another seat. My concern is twofold. The first is that Charlie is acting up during class, and may not understand that he may be talking at inappropriate times. The second is that his actions are also distracting the students around him. Different students need different levels of concentration during class, and all students should be able to concentrate and listen as much as they need to in order to be successful. Since reminding Charlie in class has not seemed to work yet, I thought I would let you know what is going on at school. If you have any other concerns or questions, please feel free to contact me by responding to this email, or by calling me at: (952)707-2525."

2. I emailed Carolyn Woelfel(Brennan Sievert-Moist) regarding Brennan's improvement on turning in homework, and about the upcoming test on Friday:
"This is Tim Lotze, Brennan's math teacher at Metcalf Junior High School. I am contacting you for a couple of reasons. First, to let you know that Brennan has been working hard to get caught up in math. It has not been an easy task, since he got so far behind, but I believe most of Brennan's missing work has been turned in. Secondly, I would like to let you know, if you were not aware, that we will be having a test on Friday. Hopefully Brennan can use the review/study guide to help him prepare for the upcoming test.
Please let me know if you have any more questions or concerns."

3. I emailed Pam and David Somar (Sean Somar) regarding Sean getting caught up in class, and about the upcoming test on Friday:
"This is Tim Lotze, Sean's math teacher at Metcalf Junior High emailing regarding a few items. First, I believe Sean has taken the initiative to get completely caught up from his absences. He finished the Notebook Quiz the other day, but I have yet to get it into the gradebook. Secondly, the class will be taking the Module 5 Test on Friday. This is just a heads up notice so that hopefully Sean can take advantage of the upcoming days to use the review/study guide to help prepare for the test.
Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns regarding this."

4. I emailed Sean Jefferson (Jasmyne Jefferson) regarding his help getting Jasmyne caught up and about the upcoming test:
"Thank you for working with Jasmyne to get caught up in math class. I believe she is mostly caught up. I would also like to let you know that we will be having a test, coming up on Friday. I hope that Jasmyne can use the review/study guide we will be getting tomorrow to help prepare for the test.
Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns regarding this."

3/18

1. I emailed back Sean Jefferson (Jasmyne Jefferson) regarding his question about how to explain percent word problems to Jasmyne to help study for the test of Friday: "Thanks for getting back to me. The biggest advice I can give you in working with percentage problems is to first identify what you are missing or looking for. In class we have set up proportions to solve these types of problems. The percent, part, or whole would be missing from the proportion, the rest would be there to solve by using cross products or cross multiplication.

For example:

If 35% of people surveyed at the mall said they went to Legoland, and 45 people said they went to Legoland, how many people were surveyed?

I would set this up as follows: $35/100 = 45/x$

In this problem you would be missing the whole. You can cross multiply by doing $(45)(100) \div 35$. This equal approximately 128.6. So about 129 people were surveyed. Each word problem is similar but slightly different. It is up to the student to figure out what to find and then how to properly set up the proportion.

I hope this helps."

3/25

1. I responded to Tanya Kulyas (Tyrone Margrum) regarding her request for missing work for Tyrone to work on over spring break:

"Thank you for contacting me regarding Tyrone. Tyrone does not have current homework over spring break, however, Tyrone did not come to get any work he has missing before the break started. I will be able to check my records tomorrow and see if there is work he can do from home."

3/30

1. I sent Tanya Kulyas (Tyrone Margrum) work for Tyrone to work on to get caught up before the end of the quarter (Friday):

"Thank you for contacting me regarding Tyrone. Tyrone does not have current homework over spring break, however, Tyrone did not come to get any work he has missing before the break started. I will be able to check my records tomorrow and see if there is work he can do from home."

4/7

1. In response to Sean Jefferson's (Jasmyne Jefferson) request for an update on Jasmyne's work in class and a request for MCA-II test prep materials, I sent the following email:

"Thank you for the email. Jasmyne is doing better with her homework. She has been good about remembering to have me sign her planner at the end of class. From my records Jasmyne missed one book assignment from the last homework sheet (2/26-3/13) and also did not have the assignment finished yesterday (Exs. 16 - 18 p. 391). Other than these assignments, Jasmyne has shown great improvement in turning work in on time! In regards to the MCA practice materials, I sent home a packet with Jasmyne today. What I sent home is a complete practice test. Included are sample answer sheets, gridded response answer sheets, and short and extended response answer sheets. Also included

are the answers, possible answers for the gridded response questions, and sample solution for the short and extended response questions at varying levels of competency. Please let me know if these materials make sense once Jasmyne brings them home. Once again, thanks for working with Jasmyne."

4/16

1. I emailed John Lahet (Gina Lahet) regarding Gina's change in recent attitude in math class:

"Hello, my name is Tim Lotze, I am Gina's math teacher at Metcalf Junior High School. I am writing you in regard to Gina's performance in math class. So far this year, Gina's performance in math class in regards to her grade has stayed fairly consistent. Gina has been in the B- to C range most of the year. Recently, however, I have noticed a shift in Gina's attitude toward school and especially math. Lately Gina has been less concerned about paying attention, learning math, and getting assignments finished, than talking with classmates during class time. I am concerned that this will start affecting Gina's grade. Since we are at the beginning of a new quarter, I am hoping to catch this right away, so that this issue does not affect Gina's grade.

I am emailing you so that we can hopefully work together on this. When you get a chance, please let me know that you received this message and feel free to email or call me at (952)707-2525."

2. I emailed Krissawan Thongviroge (Nicole McGroarty) regarding Nicole's homework completion and her frequent absences in class, and working on getting caught up:

"This is Tim Lotze, Nicole's math teacher, emailing regarding Nicole's math performance. Last quarter I emailed regarding Nicole's homework. I am still hoping that we can work on getting Nicole's homework grade up, but am also concerned about Nicole staying caught up in class. Since Nicole missed 5 days of class just recently, and we just started a new quarter almost 2 weeks ago now, I am hoping that Nicole will not get behind here at the beginning of the quarter.

Nicole is still struggling with getting her homework in, but has missed a lot of class lately (5 days plus 2 extra days for MCA testing). I am afraid that since Nicole has been gone so much, she is not aware of what she needs to know for the last two sections that we have covered in class. I will check in here at school, but am wondering if you can do the same. If it is any incentive for Nicole, we do have a test coming up in about a week. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about this. Feel free to email back or give me a call at (952)707-2525."

4/17

1. In response to Krissawan Thongviroge (Nicole McGroarty), I emailed this response:

"Thank you for your response! Since the new quarter just started and Nicole has missed many days so far, I am hoping that Nicole can keep on track. I hope that this effort can keep Nicole on track this quarter."

4/22

1. Today I emailed 5 parents informing them about two upcoming quizzes. They were:

Troy Fee (Ian Fee), Justin Gerber (Austin Gerber), Sean Jefferson (Jasmyne Jefferson), Carolyn Woelfel (Brennan Sievert), and Pam Somar (Sean Somar):

"Troy,

I am sending this email as a reminder that there will be a notebook quiz tomorrow, and a section 1 & 2 Quiz on Friday in math class. We will be spending in class time preparing for the Section 1 & 2 Quiz tomorrow and will get a review sheet to study from for tomorrow evening. Please let me know if you have any questions regarding this or about Ian's performance in math class."

"Justin,

I am sending this email as a reminder that there will be a notebook quiz tomorrow, and a section 1 & 2 Quiz on Friday in math class. Austin has had some troubles being organized in the past, so hopefully this reminder will help. We will be spending in class time preparing for the Section 1 & 2 Quiz tomorrow and will get a review sheet to study from for tomorrow evening. Please let me know if you have any questions regarding this or about Austin's performance in math class."

"Sean,

I am sending this email as a reminder that there will be a notebook quiz tomorrow, and a section 1 & 2 Quiz on Friday in math class. We will be spending in class time preparing for the Section 1 & 2 Quiz tomorrow and will get a review sheet to study from for tomorrow evening. Jasmyne has been doing well getting the planner signed, but is still having trouble getting her homework finished and in on time! Please let me know if you have any questions regarding this or about Jasmyne's performance in math class."

"Carolyn & Brian,

I am sending this email as a reminder that there will be a notebook quiz tomorrow, and a section 1 & 2 Quiz on Friday in math class. We will be spending in class time preparing for the Section 1 & 2 Quiz tomorrow and will get a review sheet to study from for tomorrow evening. Brennan has started out the quarter having trouble getting assignments in on time, but has taken the responsibility to turn them in late. Hopefully we can get them in on time! Please let me know if you have any questions regarding this or about Brennan's performance in math class."

"Pam,

I am sending this email as a reminder that there will be a notebook quiz tomorrow, and a section 1 & 2 Quiz on Friday in math class. We will be spending in class time preparing for the Section 1 & 2 Quiz tomorrow and will get a review sheet to study from for tomorrow evening. Please let me know if you have any questions regarding this or about Sean's performance in math class."

2. In response to John Lahet's (Gina Lahet) phone response to an email I sent on Thursday April 16, I wrote the following response:

"John,

Thank you for the quick response to my last email regarding Gina's performance in math class. I apologize for the late response on my part. At this point I would like to work together to try to get Gina back on track. Due to MCA-II state testing last week and this week, Gina has missed two days of class work over the past week. Gina did not finish testing within the allotted time, and consequently missed math class Tuesday & Wednesday of last week and this week. Due to this, I am concerned that Gina may not be ready for the upcoming test next Monday April 27th.

Right now my initial concern is that Gina is prepared for the test on Monday. We will be getting a review packet tomorrow in class, and students will have all weekend to prepare for the test. With focus on helping Gina at home and at school, hopefully we can work to turn Gina's attitude around by the end of the year, and end on a positive note.

Please let me know about any questions or concerns from your end."

4/23

1. In response to Troy Fee (Ian Fee), who emailed back about yesterday's email I sent this:

Troy,

Yes, I feel that Ian is on top of things. However, I know that Ian got behind last quarter and I am hoping that we can avert that problem this quarter. I would just double check that he knows what is going on for the quiz. It is only over 2 sections, but there is a lot of information to know.

2. I sent out a message regarding the upcoming test to Jessica Bohar (Ava Bohar):
"Jessica,

This is Mr. Lotze, Ava's math teacher at Metcalf Junior High. I just wanted to inform you that on Monday, April 27th we will be having the Module 5 Test. This will be the first big test of the quarter, and I wanted to make sure Ava can start the new quarter out on the right foot. Ava has had some troubles with testing this year and I wanted to let you know that we received a review packet today in class, and students will have that packet to work on and study from over the weekend to prepare for the test. If you have any questions regarding this, please call or email, I would be more than happy to answer them.

Ava also mentioned that you had some questions about the differences between her regular math class (Math Thematics 3) and the elective math class (Math Skills). I would be more than happy to talk to you about this and would also direct you to my school home page (www.rschooltoday.com/metcalf/lotze) which has information regarding both of these classes."

3. I sent out a message regarding the upcoming test to Kari Johnson (Bailee Johnson):

"Kari,

This is Mr. Lotze, Bailee's math teacher at Metcalf Junior High. I just wanted to inform you that on Monday, April 27th we will be having the Module 5 Test. This will be the first big test of the quarter. Bailee has been doing well and working very hard in math this year and needs to keep this up. We received a review packet today in class, and students will have that packet to work on and study from over the weekend to prepare for the test.

If you have any questions regarding this, please call or email, I would be more than happy to answer them."

4. I sent out a message regarding the upcoming test to Richard & Marilyn Knutson (Dicky Knutson):

"Richard & Marilyn,

This is Mr. Lotze, Dicky's math teacher at Metcalf Junior High. I just wanted to inform you that on Monday, April 27th we will be having the Module 5 Test. This will be the first big test of the quarter, and I wanted to make sure Dicky can start the new quarter out on the right foot. Dicky has had some troubles with testing this year and I wanted to let you know that we received a review packet today in class, and students will have that packet to work on and study from over the weekend to prepare for the test. Dicky is still struggling with turning in homework. I will keep asking him each day, but remember that you can always check my website (www.rschoolday.com/metcalf/lotze) to find the daily assignment. If you have any questions regarding this, please call or email, I would be more than happy to answer them."

5. I sent out a message regarding the upcoming test to Terri & Craig Robb (Caleb Robb):

"Terri & Craig,

This is Mr. Lotze, Caleb's math teacher at Metcalf Junior High. I just wanted to inform you that on Monday, April 27th we will be having the Module 5 Test. This will be the first big test of the quarter, and I wanted to make sure Caleb can start the new quarter out on the right foot. Caleb had trouble with the last test we had and I wanted to let you know that we received a review packet today in class, and students will have that packet to work on and study from over the weekend to prepare for the test. If you have any questions regarding this, please call or email, I would be more than happy to answer them."

6. I sent out a message regarding the upcoming test to Tanya Kulyas (Tyrone Margrum):

"Tanya,

This is Mr. Lotze, Tyrone's math teacher at Metcalf Junior High. I just wanted to inform you that on Monday, April 27th we will be having the Module 5 Test. This will be the first big test of the quarter, and I wanted to make sure Tyrone can start the new quarter out on the right foot. Tyrone has had some troubles with testing this year, mostly due to his lack of completion of daily work, and I wanted to let you know that we received a review packet today in class, and students will have that packet to work on and study from over the weekend to prepare for the test. If you have any questions regarding this, please call or email, I would be more than happy to answer them."

4/24

1. I had a face-to-face conversation with Janet Kuziej (John Kuziej) about the upcoming test, on Monday. Just a reminder that John has a review packet and can be working to study over the weekend.

4/27

1. Responded to Pam Somar (Sean Somar) regarding the message I sent about the upcoming quizzes:

"Pam,

Last weeks work should be up on schoolview, and Sean should have his quizzes from last week in hand. Thank you for being on top of this!"

4/28

1. Responded the Rick & Marilyn Knutson (Dicky Knutson) regarding the absence of Dicky and him missing the chapter test yesterday:

"Rick & Marilyn,

I hope Dicky is feeling better. The MCA testing was last week and the week before (Tuesday/Wednesday each week). Yesterday Dicky missed the Module 5 Test for math class. He should have his study guide to help. We will work on completing this when he returns."

5/1

1. I emailed Jessica Bohar (Ava Bohar) encouraging her to help Ava decide to retake the most recent math test:

"Jessica,

This is Tim Lotze, Ava's math teacher here at Metcalf. I am emailing you in response to Ava's performance on the most recent math test. We will be getting these tests back in class today, and going over them. As per all tests in this class, if a student scores below 80% they are able to retake the test. I am sending this message to encourage Ava to take advantage of this opportunity. I would suggest that Ava spend some time over the weekend studying from her first test and the review materials. Then, if needed, I would suggest that Ava come in to get any questions answered before she retakes the test. Retakes of the Module 5 Test will happen all next week, before or after school. The new test score will be averaged with the first test score (if it is higher) to receive the final test score. I am hoping that this can happen.

When you get a chance, please let me know that you received this message."

2. I emailed Rick & Marilyn Knutson (Dicky Knutson) regarding a retake of the most recent math test

"Rick & Maryilyn,

Dicky had a chance to make up his math test, due to his absence on Monday, in class the other day, but did not score very well on it (14 out of 47). With this in mind, I would encourage Dicky to retake the test. We will be getting back, and going over, the tests in class today. Retakes of the Module 5 Test will happen all next week, before or after school. The new test score will be averaged with the first test score (if it is higher) to receive the final test score. I am hoping that this can happen. I would suggest that Dicky spend some time reviewing his test (which he can take home with him today) as well as

the study guide. Also if needed, Dicky is more than welcome to come in early to get help prior to retaking the test.

Please let me know if there are any questions you may have about this."

3. I left a message on Dawn Stevens (Cody Cowan) phone mentioning the opportunity for Cody to retake the math test next week. I mentioned that Cody did not score well on the test, but has been working hard in the Math Skills class (elective math) and was hoping that this would transfer to the regular math class.

4. I emailed Krissawan Thongviroge (Nicole McGroarty) regarding the opportunity for Nicole to retake the math test next week

"Krissawan,

I am writing just to let you know how Nicole is progressing in class. I have not heard much from Nicole in her asking for her missing homework assignments, but she is doing better on turning them in on time! Also, I want to let you know about the Module 5 Test retake opportunity we have coming up next week. We took the Module 5 Test last Monday, and got them back in class today. I would encourage Nicole to take the time to retake this test next week. Nicole score 30 out of 47 on this test and I believe she can do better than this based on her performance on previous tests and quizzes. Nicole should have her test as well as her study guide to help prepare for the retake.

Retakes will take place before or after school all 5 days next week. The new test score will be averaged with the first test score to get the final test score. Please let me know if you have any questions about this process. I thank you for taking the time to work with Nicole."

5. I emailed Terri Robb (Caleb Robb) thanking her for working with Caleb and congratulating Caleb on a job well done on the last test:

"Terri,

I just thought I'd let you know, if you haven't checked yet, that Caleb scored very well on the math test he took on Monday. I'm glad to see that the last test seems to be an anomaly. Thank you for working with Caleb. He did a great job!"

6. I emailed Tanya Kulyas (Tyrone Margrum) regarding Tyrone's performance on the most recent test:

Tanya,

I just thought I'd let you know that we handed back the latest math test (that we took on Monday) in class today. Tyrone scored well on this test considering where he has been most of this chapter. Tyrone did not score well on the Section 1 & 2 quiz on this same module, and I am happy to see that he improved on this. Tyrone scored 38 out of 47 points on the test, and this should keep him on track for this quarter if he can keep up with his homework.

Thank you for working with Tyrone.

7. I had a face-to-face conversation with Janet Kuziej (John Kuziej) regarding his performance on the last test and the opportunity to retake next week. We discussed strategies for improving his score, study skills, and taking responsibility for his learning.

5/7

1. I emailed Sue Fredericks (Charlie Fredericks) regarding the upcoming math test:
"Sue,

This is Tim Lotze, Charlie's math teacher. I am emailing to give you a heads up about the upcoming Module 6 Test...it is tomorrow. Charlie has consistently been on top of his school work this year, but I have noticed recently that he is becoming more lax in his completion of classwork and homework. This worries me and I hope this will not affect his consistency in Test and Quiz scores. Charlie should have a review packet to study from with him."

2. I emailed Justin Gerber (Austin Gerber) regarding the upcoming math test:
"Justin,

This is Tim Lotze, Austin's math teacher. I am emailed to give you a heads up that we will be having the Mod 6 Test tomorrow in class. Austin should have a review packet with him (he actually needed to get a new one today) to study from and complete to get ready for the test.

Thank you for taking the time to work with Austin and please let me know if you have any questions or concerns regarding class or the upcoming test."

3. I emailed Sean Jefferson (Jasmyne Jefferson) regarding the upcoming test and Jasmyne's homework completion:

"Sean,

This is Tim Lotze, Jasmyne's math teacher. I am emailed you for two reasons today. First of all to let you know that we will be having the Module 6 Test tomorrow during class. Jasmyne should have her review packet that she has been working on with her to study from tonight. Secondly, Jasmyne has been great about remembering to get her planner signed, yet her homework is still not coming in on a consistent basis. This concerns me because there must be some disconnect for Jasmyne between writing down the work and actually finishing it. I have talked to Jasmyne about this, but am hoping we can find a way to be more consistent in this area.

Once again, thank you for all the time you spend working with Jasmyne."

4. I emailed Carolyn Woelfel (Brennan Sievert) regarding the upcoming test and Brennan's recent homework completion:

Carolyn,

"This is Tim Lotze, Brennan's math teacher. I am emailing you for two reasons. One is that we will be taking the Module 6 Test tomorrow in class. Brennan should have a review packet (I think he actually stated that he left it at home today) to finish and study from to prepare. Also, Brennan is once again struggling with getting his homework in on time. If you could remind Brennan to talk with me about finding out what assignments he is missing so he could get caught up, it would be greatly appreciated.

Once again, thank you for all the time you spend working with Brennan. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns regarding any of this."

5. I emailed Pam Somar (Sean Somar) regarding the upcoming math test:

Pam,

This is Tim Lotze, Sean's math teacher. I am emailing you as a reminder that we will be having the Module 6 Test during class tomorrow. Sean has a review packet with him to study from tonight.

Thank you for all the time you spend working with Sean.

If you have any questions regarding this or any other math class related questions please feel free to let me know.

Appendix C: Detailed Survey Results by Questions for the 11 Targeted Survey

Participants

1. I impose rules at home that have a direct effect on my child's academics.

Always = 4 Regularly = 3 Seldom = 2 Never = 1

Student	3	7	10	13	18	20	23	25	29	32	34	Avg.
S1	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	3.5
S2	3	4	3	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	3.4

2. I structure the home environment with my child's academics in mind.

Always = 4 Regularly = 3 Seldom = 2 Never = 1

Student	3	7	10	13	18	20	23	25	29	32	34	Avg.
S1	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	2	4	3.5
S2	2	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3.2

3. I manage family time with school in mind.

Always = 4 Regularly = 3 Seldom = 2 Never = 1

Student	3	7	10	13	18	20	23	25	29	32	34	Avg.
S1	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	4	2	4	3.5
S2	4	3	3	4	3	4	3	2	3	4	4	3.4

4. I talk with my child about his/her school day.

Daily = 4 Weekly = 3 Monthly = 2 Never = 1

Student	3	7	10	13	18	20	23	25	29	32	34	Avg.
S1	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	3.8
S2	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3.9

5. I supervise homework.

Daily = 4 Weekly = 3 Monthly = 2 Never = 1

Student	3	7	10	13	18	20	23	25	29	32	34	Avg.
S1	4	4	3	4	3	4	1	2	4	3	4	3.3
S2	3	4	3	4	3	4	1	1	4	4	4	3.2

6. I help my child study for tests.

Daily = 4 Weekly = 3 Monthly = 2 Never = 1

Student	3	7	10	13	18	20	23	25	29	32	34	Avg.
S1	2	4	2	4	1	4	1	1	4	2	3	2.5
S2	3	4	2	3	3	4	1	1	4	2	4	2.7

7. I practice spelling, math or other skills with my child.

Daily = 4 Weekly = 3 Monthly = 2 Never = 1

Student	3	7	10	13	18	20	23	25	29	32	34	Avg.
S1	3	4	2	4	2	4	1	2	4	1	4	2.8
S2	3	4	1	3	3	4	2	1	4	2	4	2.8

8. I read with my child.

Daily = 4 Weekly = 3 Monthly = 2 Never = 1

Student	3	7	10	13	18	20	23	25	29	32	34	Avg.
S1	2	--	2	2	1	3	1	1	4	1	1	1.8
S2	1	--	1	2	2	3	1	1	3	1	4	1.9

9. I contact teachers (e.g. phone, email, written notice, face to face meeting, etc.).

Daily = 4 Weekly = 3 Monthly = 2 Never = 1

Student	3	7	10	13	18	20	23	25	29	32	34	Avg.
S1	2	--	2	2	2	3	1	1	2	2	--	1.9
S2	1	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	2.3

10. I access school websites and teacher homepages.

Daily = 4 Weekly = 3 Monthly = 2 Never = 1

Student	3	7	10	13	18	20	23	25	29	32	34	Avg.
S1	3	4	3	4	3	4	1	1	4	3	3	3.0
S2	2	3	3	2	3	4	1	1	4	4	3	2.7

11. I access the online grading system (Schoolview).

Daily = 4 Weekly = 3 Monthly = 2 Never = 1

Student	3	7	10	13	18	20	23	25	29	32	34	Avg.
S1	4	4	3	3	3	4	1	1	4	3	3	3.0
S2	3	3	3	1	2	4	1	1	4	3	3	2.5

12. I help out at school.

Daily = 4 Weekly = 3 Monthly = 2 Never = 1

Student	3	7	10	13	18	20	23	25	29	32	34	Avg.
S1	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	1.45
S2	1	3	1	1	2	2	1	1	3	1	1	1.54

13. I attend special events at school.

When they occur = 3 Sometimes = 2 Never = 1

Student	3	7	10	13	18	20	23	25	29	32	34	Avg.
S1	3	3	3	--	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	2.6
S2	2	3	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	2.5

14. I volunteer to go on fieldtrips at school. *

When they occur = 3 Sometimes = 2 Never = 1

Student	3	7	10	13	18	20	23	25	29	32	34	Avg.
S1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	1.6
S2	1	2	1	2	1	3	1	1	2	1	1	1.5

* No fieldtrips occurred during the time of the second survey.

15. I attend Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings.

Every meeting = 3 Occasionally = 2 Never = 1

Student	3	7	10	13	18	20	23	25	29	32	34	Avg.
S1	2	2	3	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	3	1.7
S2	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1.3

16. I attend the Open House.*

Each year = 3 Sometimes = 2 Never = 1

Student	3	7	10	13	18	20	23	25	29	32	34	Avg.
S1	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	2.7
S2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2.9

*There was no open house within the time of the second survey.

17. I attend parent-teacher conferences.

Every conference = 3 Sometimes = 2 Never = 1

Student	3	7	10	13	18	20	23	25	29	32	34	Avg.
S1	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	2.7
S2	--	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	2.9

18. I serve on the school board/attend school board meetings.

Every meeting = 3 Occasionally = 2 Never = 1

Student	3	7	10	13	18	20	23	25	29	32	34	Avg.
S1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1.2
S2	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1.2

Survey Results (students contacted) – Open ended response answers

Student #3S1

1. --
2. –

S2

1.
 - talking about grades
 - award when doing good @ school
 - ask about homework
 - look @ corrected assignments
 - look @ planner
 - look @ overall improvement
2.
 - checking up w/education
 - look @ MCA Test scores
 - look @ discipline records
 - look @ assignments/classwork
 - check in w/attendance

Student #7S1

1.
 - Keeping him on track and organized.
 - When he was young we read together every night. Now we read and talk about the books.
 - Study place.
2. encouraging him to be involved. That this is his job and he needs to do it well.

S2

1. Keep the student organized
2. –

Student #10S1

1. Just trying on a daily basis to stay on top of assignments & projects. Using the Schoolview website to monitor grades. Making sure the TV is off & the homework time is quiet.
2. We do go to the public library quite often. If there is a subject or project that needs extra research, we will check out books that will help explain thing.

S2

1. --
2. –

Student #13S1

1. I try to motivate (student #13) to work hard & sacrifice her time to study & see the rewards that can follow. She needs to know what hard work gets you in the long run.
2. –

S2

1. --
2. -

Student #18S1

1. As a parents we try to encourage our children (I'm talking both kids) how important to have a good education for their future. We played educational games to make it fun. We always encourage them to read and study every night until it become a hobby. We help their homework when asked.

Sometime when they reach at the age of young teens and try to be independent, believing that they can do w/out parents help. This is the hard part of parents side, but we never give up if their well being is invalue. He just don't know the consequences. We continue to support his academics needs when he ask.

2. In his condition with ADD & ODD it is hard for him to remember some of his task, when it comes to his school work. Despite of his talent as a good artist & in technology he need to be reminded all the time and lots of encouragement. Sometime he's so forgetful, although he's willing to do a task that challenge him & wants to finish it if he can. We appreciate when the school inform us when they have new program to help my child. Therefore, we want the teachers' input to let us know what out child's improvement and weakness that needed to be address right away. Sending e-mails and phone calls is highly appreciated.

If we can, we tried to volunteer sometime in school activities, and we like the school monthly news letters that they send us home. It help us to know whats going on at school especially our child don't tell us. If necessary, I will contact the school guidance counselor, case manager, and teacher to talk about how we can improve, & help my child's academic rating in school.

S2

1. I always &/or regularly offer him my help if he needed me. I believe that any effort to study, he should be on board. Although he refuse any help from us, saying he doesn't need help still we continue reminding him and encourage him. He can make difference to improve his grades by studying & working hard.
2. -

Student #20S1

1. I have set up his room with school work in mind. He has copies of dictionaries & thesaurouses and post it notes, note cards, many pens, pencils, erasers, pencil sharpeners. We also added a computer with internet, at Christmas and a flash drive for transporting papers to and from school.

2. I have an unusual situation because I teach at the school. I actually find this more difficult. I think there are things that I would address further with teachers or administration if I didn't work there. I most of the time feel that I am in an uncomfortable position.

S2

1. We try to create an environment where he feels comfortable.

2. –

Student #23

S1

1. --

2. –

S2

1. --

2. –

Student #25

S1

1. As much as I like to be more involve with my child's school. I just couldn't find enough time to. Because of trying to survive this economic and being a single parent. Also non native English spoken. My child is working on her own with some help from friends or classmate.

I encourage her to understand how important it is to do well in school now. I talked to her about how hard I have to work. So she want to have a better career in her future. I also find special program or project to get her involve that she can benefit from and adapted to use in her academics, such as language camp, leadership, etc.

2. Never able to find time to be more involve in school activities. I can attend on some event.

S2

1. Help getting tutor if she need to. Talked to her about how important to do well in school.

2. Make sure she has no issue at school and encourage her to talk to teachers.

Student #29

S1

1. --

2. --

S2

1. --

2. –

Student #32

S1

1. --

2. Monthly I need to come into the school & go through his locker to find missing work that he can't seem to find.

S2

1. Intensely trying to motivate my student to care about school & getting work done. Involved in continually letting him know what he is missing & reminding when things are due.

2. –

Student #34S1

1. We review and discuss school and classwork. Always asking and listening.
2. Ask if help needed but so far now as been needed.

S2

1. --
2. -