

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

by

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of parents and educators on parent involvement in education. A 22-item survey developed by the researcher was given to parents of students in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades and all school staff at Mead Elementary School in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin. The study asked how teachers think and feel about parental involvement in education, how parents think and feel about parental involvement in education, and how parents' and teachers' attitudes compare. Answers were then provided for the research questions based on the results of this study, which are

in Chapter Four, along with the results of the data analysis that was completed.

The results of this study support the belief that parents and educators believe parental involvement does play an important role in a child's education. It was also confirmed that differences existed between parents and educators as to which forms of parental involvement were most and least important. For example, the majority of teachers found the items involving parents helping their children with homework to be essential whereas the majority of parents found it to be important. Another example involved the majority of parents expressing that rewarding their children for academic achievement was important, whereas the majority of teachers expressed that they were somewhat important forms of parental involvement. This research will hopefully be used as a tool to help parents and educators reach the common goal of assisting students do their best in education.

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## CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

Research indicates that a child's performance in education can be heavily influenced by his or her parent's involvement. For example, Dunnewind (2003) noted that research shows all students do better in school when parents are involved. In today's society, children and adults are faced with more responsibilities than ever before. With many families, both parents work to support the family financially. The responsibilities increase in the home when children are present. With numerous responsibilities, whether they are related to work, home, or the community, one can realize how easy it is to get caught up in accomplishing these things. As parents are faced with an increased number of responsibilities, so are their children. Many children come home to an empty house after school because their parents are still working. They may have to make something to eat for themselves because their parents are attending to some other obligation. Children are also receiving more school work and responsibilities related to school than ever before. Martinez-Pons (2002) noted in his research that as students reach junior-high school, they are given more homework and expected to show greater personal responsibility in completing it. Along with parents and their children facing an abundance of responsibilities, educators are also bombarded with additional responsibilities and requirements in their profession.

With parents, educators, and students receiving an

abundance of responsibilities in their daily lives, it is important that each of them work together to learn the skills and strategies necessary to complete those responsibilities. With children being the most vulnerable individuals, they should receive the most guidance and assistance in their lives. It is most important for educators and parents to collaborate their efforts to promote the well-being of children. Shinn (2002) noted, "The research showed that when parents got regular and effective communications from teachers, they became much more likely to be active participants in their children's education" (p. 34). Research supports the notion that there is a positive correlation between parental involvement and academic success. Bafumo (2003) supported this idea when she noted, "Parent involvement has been shown to increase student achievement" (p. 12). Parental involvement not only affects the child's education, but also his or her future. Parental involvement affects a child's academic success throughout each grade level. Research from Dunnewind (2003) suggested that the benefits of involving parents are not confined to the early years, but there are also significant gains at all ages and grade levels. Also, traits, skills, and other things learned as a child are used over and over. According to Martinez-Pons (2002), the knowledge and skill level for technology in today's society are needed more now than ever before. Not only does it affect the occupational level, but also the personal level. As children grow up learning new skills to achieve new and greater goals, they continue to develop a sense of self-worth. Surprisingly,

there is little evidence that educators and parents teach children simple study skills such as goal setting, time management, and self-monitoring (Martinez-Pons, 2002). If a child is not taught the proper skills, they may have the motivation, but lack the knowledge and skills necessary to reach their goals. As they fail to reach their goals, they lose confidence and lack feelings of self-worth.

In this study, it is the researcher's goal to portray how important parental involvement really is in the outcome of a child's education. This researcher hopes to help educate parents and educators on the importance of parental involvement, what it entails, how it affects academic success. This researcher also hopes to identify some of the barriers that may occur between parents and educators. By doing this, communication lines can be developed, allowing parents and teachers to reach the common goal of helping the child gain the most from his or her education. Parental involvement may include many things. Martinez-Pons (2002) mentioned four activities that parents can participate in to become more involved in their child's education. They include modeling, encouragement, facilitation, and rewarding. Fan (2001) also mentioned four types of parental involvement. They included basic obligations, school-to-home communications, parent involvement at school, and parent involvement in learning activities at home.

Another goal of this researcher is for individuals to read this study and understand the value placed on parental involvement by both parents and educators. Some parents may need

to make changes in their busy schedules in order to meet the needs of their children. Those who do are making a great investment and will benefit along with their child. This researcher would like to provide valuable results and information to educational professionals and parents in efforts to increase parental involvement in education and enhance the effectiveness of it.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

Parents and educators have generally agreed that parental involvement is important for children's success in education. However, parents and educators may have different perspectives on how involved parents should be involved in his or her child's education. This study examined the perspectives of parents with children enrolled in the third through sixth grade classes at Mead Elementary School and the perspectives of all the teachers currently employed at Mead Elementary School during the 2003-2004 school year in the Wisconsin Rapids School District.

Approximately 160 elementary aged students were asked to take home a 22-item survey, request their parents to complete it, and return it within one week. There were also approximately 50 educators who were asked to complete this survey. Support and permission was sought from administrators, educators, and parents.

#### *Research Questions*

There are three research questions that this study attempted to provide answers for. They include:

1. How do educators think and feel about parental

involvement in education?

2. How do parents think and feel about parental involvement in education?

3. How do parent's and teacher's attitudes about parental involvement in education compare?

#### *Definition of Terms*

It is important that an audience and a researcher communicate well with each other and understand the meaning of information being provided. To enhance the communication and correct interpretation of the information being presented, the following terms are defined:

*Academic success:* describes how a child is performing in school. This is measured by school grades, test scores, social skills, observations by educational professionals, and meeting grade level requirements (Fan, 2001).

*Home-school collaboration:* describes the involvement by educational professionals, parents, and sometimes students for the purpose of gathering parental support and involvement in efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the student's education.

*Parental involvement:* describes parents who participate in their child's education in some ways such as attending school obligations (parent-teacher conferences), attending extra-curricular activities the child is involved in, collaborating with educators and becoming part of the decision-making process, helping the child with school-work and participating in educational activities at home, volunteering at school events, providing a positive learning environment at home, and providing

unconditional love, support, and encouragement to the child (Dunnewind, 2003).

#### *Assumptions of the Study*

It was assumed that an adequate number of subjects would complete surveys out of the 210 surveys that were sent out. With careful precautions being taken to maintain confidentiality, it was assumed that all subjects who participated completed the survey honestly. This researcher assumed that the participants understood the basic terminology and the concepts of parental involvement employed in the survey.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

One limitation of this study is that the sample only included 160 parents of students attending Mead Elementary School, where over 400 students attend. Also, the sample only included parents of fourth through sixth grade students from one elementary school in the Wisconsin Rapids School District. It was believed that data collected from parents of students enrolled in the fourth through sixth grade would be most reliable, because these grades might provide more opportunities for parents to become involved in their child's education. A second limitation of this study is the possibility that the sample might be more involved in their children's education since they were involved enough to return the survey completed. A third limitation of this study is that the survey used to collect data was developed by this researcher and therefore has no reports of reliability or validity. A fourth limitation of this study might be the misinterpretation of ideas, terminology,

or data that were collected and presented. Although defined in the research, the meaning and understanding of parental involvement, academic success, or other terms used could be misinterpreted. This is partly because only a broad definition can best describe these terms. Other limitations in this study included financial barriers and time deadlines.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Students tend to perform at higher levels of success in their studies when their parents are involved (Dunnewind, 2003). According to Fan (2001), "Policy makers, school administrators, teachers, parents, and students themselves generally agree that parental involvement is critical for students' academic success" (p. 28). Parental involvement may consist of many things, and sometimes parents and educators have different views about parental involvement. As a parent or educator, one should have an interest in the different views of parental involvement, how to overcome differences and work together, and the benefits of parental involvement when effective home-school collaboration is in progress.

With many questions and even problems arising between parents and educators, this researcher is interested and involved in searching for answers to these questions, such as:

1. How can I become more involved in my child's education?
2. How can I communicate better with my child's teacher?
3. How can I communicate better with my student's parent?
4. How can parent-teacher conflicts be resolved or prevented?

The reader will be presented with educators' views on parental involvement, parents' views on parental involvement, some necessary objectives that can be put into affect to gain parental involvement, and the effects and benefits encountered as a result of parental involvement.

### *Educators' Views of Parent Involvement*

Educators are faced with many responsibilities and requirements in their profession. One of these includes home-school collaboration. This could be a full-time job in itself. Educators develop a relationship with each student and learn to work with them in order to meet their needs. One reason this occurs is because of the amount of time that educators spend with their students.

In order for home-school collaboration to be effective, parents and educators need to also develop open communication lines (Shinn, 2002). One problem, however, is that they may not have the time to spend together that the educator and student do. One of the mistakes often made by educators is making judgments or assumptions about a parent based on previous interactions or a lack thereof (Crozier, 1999). This behavior can minimize the effectiveness of home-school collaboration and shows a lack of attention being focused on the best interest of the child.

Some qualities that an effective educator would have may consist of, a positive attitude, willingness to involve parents, and dedication to professional growth and training (Andrade, Garcia, Skelton, & Torrence, 1999). When a group of educators from one secondary school were asked about parental involvement, they agreed that parents could be divided into three groups: "a minority of supportive parents" interested in every aspect of their child's education; "a larger minority" interested in certain aspects of their child's education; and the "majority,

who don't want to know" because they are unable to control their child at home and in some cases blame the school for their problems (Crozier, 1999, p. 324-325). In this case, it seems that there is no hope to gain parental involvement. However, there are things that educators can do to establish and increase parental involvement.

Knoff and Raffaele (1999) noted four steps that educators can take to increase parental involvement. First, "welcome all families into the educational process from the beginning of their children's school experiences" (p. 452). The second step is, respect cultural backgrounds of students and families. The third step is to show appreciation for any involvement that a parent does have (Knoff & Raffaele, 1999). This can break barriers such as feelings of inadequacy on the parents' behalf. The fourth and final step involves open communication between the parent and the educator which should be "based upon mutual respect and trust" (Knoff & Raffaele 1999, p. 452). Other ways to increase parental involvement may include documenting academic improvements made by the child daily and reporting this information to the parent. This is one form of communication and can provide encouragement (Reynolds, 1999). Educators could also provide more opportunities for parents to volunteer at school and be involved in classroom activities (Aidman, Clark, Katz, & Reese, 1994).

#### *Parents' Views of Parent Involvement*

Parents are often blamed for any problems that their child encounters whether at school, home, or in the community.

Although it is possible that the problem could stem from the environment at home, it is not always the cause. Along with educators, parents struggle with many responsibilities and expectations on a regular basis. One of these includes caring for their children.

When it comes to parental involvement in education, there are some different views shared by parents. Some parents are not involved in their children's education for whatever reasons. Then, there are some who are somewhat involved, but not whole heartedly committed. Finally, there are parents who are always looking for ways to be more involved with their child's education (Crozier, 1999). Some parents are not involved because they truly believe it is not their job, but rather the teachers' and schools' job to educate their child. They put their trust in the education system and focus on their own priorities (Crozier, 1999). These parents simply have no interest or desire to become involved in their child's education because of their attitudes, beliefs, or the way they were raised. Other parents are not involved because of previous negative experiences with the school system. It may be a result of a bad experience with a teacher, failure in school performance, grade retention, or some other reason. Regardless, these people are hesitant to trust the education system. There are other parents who are not involved in their child's education simply because they don't believe they have anything more to offer than what the educator already does. They also don't know how to become more involved. They feel as though they lack proper training and skills in order to

help their child on their schoolwork (Knoff & Raffaele, 1999).

In a study done by Crozier (1999), research suggested that the working class parents were among the least involved in their child's education. This could be a result of some of the reasons previously mentioned with the exception of a lack of time.

Liontos (1994) provided some ideas for parents when helping their children with schoolwork. These ideas include providing encouragement and rewards for progress made, staying informed by the teacher about school assignments, helping the child develop a schedule, keeping communication lines open with the child, providing a positive environment for learning, and never making schoolwork a form of punishment.

The second group of parents include those who become partially involved (Crozier, 1999). These parents may go to parent-teacher conferences once or twice a year to talk with teachers regarding certain subjects they find most important. They view the report cards of the child and encourage them to try harder next time. This type of parent may get more involved during one school year, but the level of involvement decreases. This parent is not involved in any education activities at home and does not attend any school events.

The third group of parents includes those who are totally dedicated to being involved in their child's education (Crozier, 1999). These parents communicate openly with the school and educational professionals, read with their children, play educational games with their children, help their children on his or her homework, become involved with decision making in

their children's educational program, volunteer and participate in school activities and events, and attend extra-curricular events that their children participate in.

Obviously not all parents have the ability to be involved in their children's education as much as desired. One thing to remember is that it is important for a parent to become involved as much as possible early in their child's education and continue that level of involvement through junior and senior high school. Cotton and Wikelund (1989, para. 23) noted, "research shows that parent involvement remains very beneficial in promoting positive achievement and affective outcomes with these older students." If there are any questions about how to become involved, what impact it can really have, and what the teacher will think, then hopefully after reading the information from this research, one has discovered some answers to these questions.

#### *Effects and Benefits*

There are many benefits of parental involvement in the education process of their child. Research suggests the parents, the school system, and most importantly the student all benefit from parental involvement.

Parents benefit by learning new things and improving their communication skills (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989). Parents learn how to collaborate with professionals, manage their time better, organize, and they gain a better understanding of their child and themselves. With this, there is an increased feeling of self-worth and gratification (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989).

The school system also benefits from parental involvement. Educators enhance their communication skills and gains priceless experience in home-school collaboration. They can apply skills learned from these experiences in their personal lives. Educators are better able to develop rapport with their students and the parents. They also feel a sense of accomplishment in their profession, not to mention the respect that is earned through this challenging, but rewarding task (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989).

Children whose parents are involved also benefit in many ways. For example, a student's attitude and behavior are considered to be more acceptable according to today's standards of society, and he or she is more likely to abide by the classroom rules (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989). These children have a better chance of becoming more successful in their future. There is no doubt that the child learns problem solving skills, communication skills, and many other skills and characteristics, some of which were learned from the modeling of his or her parents. As a result, they will also be more likely to become involved in meeting their own child's educational needs.

In review, the research demonstrates the importance of parent involvement in education. Parents, educators, and children all benefit in different ways, and the common goal of helping each child reach his or her greatest academic potential is accomplished.

## CHAPTER THREE

## METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the reader will discover a description of the sample that participated in this study, how the instrument was designed and administered, and the procedures in which data was collected and analyzed. Finally, the methodological limitations of the study will be discussed.

*Subject Selection and Description*

During the 2003-2004 school year, over 400 students are attending Mead Elementary School. In this study, approximately 160 parents of students attending fourth through sixth grade at Mead Elementary School in the Wisconsin Rapids School District were administered a survey. Also, all staff/educators employed at Mead Elementary School were administered a survey. Permission was requested and granted from school administrators prior to administering this survey. Specific directions were provided on the survey. Students were asked to return the survey completed by his or her parent(s) within one week. Consent was implied in the completion of the returned survey.

*Instrumentation*

The survey used in this study was designed by the researcher. Other research on parental involvement was taken into consideration in the development of this survey. Sheldon (2002), for example, provided a great deal of helpful information on how to develop an effective survey. The survey was also critiqued by professionals to enhance its effectiveness. The survey consisted of 22 items. The survey

asked each participant if he or she was a parent/guardian or a teacher/school staff. This survey used a five point Likert scale for each question asked as did Sheldon (2002) in his research on parental involvement. Answers made available included: A) essential, B) important, C) somewhat important, D) not important, E) no opinion.

#### *Data Collection*

This study took place during the 2003-2004 school year. This researcher requested permission from school administrators before administering the survey to each student to take home and have their parents complete it. Once this researcher obtained permission, the survey was distributed in each fourth through sixth grade classroom by the teachers. The students were asked to return the survey within one week from that time. Teachers were encouraged to provide incentives to increase the number of completed surveys returned. Teachers collected them from their students and placed them in a designated box at Mead Elementary School. Surveys were also distributed to educators by placing the survey in each of their mailboxes. Educators were instructed to return their completed survey to a designated mailbox.

#### *Analysis of the Data*

This researcher sent the completed surveys to the University of Wisconsin-Stout where results were compiled and a *t*-test was conducted comparing the results from parents and educators. The researcher then presented the descriptive data by breaking it down and using percentages to show the results of each of the answered items from the two groups.

*Limitations*

One limitation of this study is that the survey used to collect data was developed by this researcher and therefore has no reports of reliability or validity. Also, this study only involved parents and educators at Mead Elementary School and cannot represent the parents and educators from all elementary schools.

In summary, the survey pertaining to the importance of parent involvement was administered to students for their parents to complete and educators at Mead Elementary School in Wisconsin Rapids, WI. The findings were then compiled and analyzed to answer the researcher's questions.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

This chapter will discuss the results of the study conducted at Mead Elementary School. The demographic information of the sample will be presented along with an item analysis of each item on the 22-item survey. Finally, the research questions in Chapter One will be discussed.

#### *Demographic Information*

There were 210 surveys distributed to parents of students in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades and to school staff at Mead Elementary School in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin during October of 2003. There were 79 completed surveys returned, and one was returned without the back page completed. Therefore, there were 80 usable surveys, which constitutes a 38% return rate.

Of the 80 participants, 34 included teachers/school staff and 46 included parents. Keep in mind that there are a total of about 50 teachers/school staff who received surveys and about 160 parents who received surveys. The only demographic information requested on the survey was whether the participant was a parent or a teacher/school staff.

#### *Item Analysis*

The survey referred to parents performing each of the 22 items, which were forms of parent involvement. A *t*-test was conducted on the data, and when a significant difference was found between parents and teachers, it was reported. Percentages will be used to show the results of each item answered,

including parents', teachers', and combined results. The number of participants will also be provided.

Item number one on the survey stated "help their children with homework." Parents and teachers had similar responses to this item. All of the participants responded to this item as either essential, important, or somewhat important (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Percentage Responses to Item #1: Help their children with homework*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important
Parents (n=46)	41.3%	54.3%	4.3%
Teachers (n=34)	55.9%	32.4%	11.8%
Total (n=80)	47.5%	45.0%	7.5%

Item number two on the survey stated "be home when their children get home from school." There were no significant differences between the responses from parents and teachers. Over 48% of the respondents found this form of parent involvement to be important. Combined, only 1.3% of participants responded to this item as not important (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Percentage Responses to Item #2: Be home when their children get home from school*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Parents (n=46)	37.0%	43.5%	17.4%	2.2%
Teachers (n=34)	17.6%	55.9%	26.5%	
Total (n=80)	28.8%	48.8%	21.3%	1.3%

Item number three on the survey stated "have a set time for children to complete homework." Overall, the respondents found this item to be at least somewhat important, with over 21% finding it to be somewhat important and over 38% finding it to be essential (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Percentage Responses to Item #3: Have a set time for children to complete homework*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important
Parents (n=45)	35.6%	40.0%	24.4%
Teachers (n=33)	42.4%	39.4%	18.2%
Total (n=78)	38.5%	39.7%	21.8%

Item number four on the survey stated "attend parenting workshops if provided." There were some differences between parents and teachers on this item, but they did not reach significance. As a whole, 45.5% of respondents found this item to be somewhat important, 31.2% important, 9.1% essential, and

14.3% not important (see Table 4).

Table 4

*Percentage Responses to Item #4: Attend parenting workshops if provided*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Parents (n=43)	11.6%	23.3%	44.2%	20.9%
Teachers (n=33)	5.9%	41.2%	47.1%	5.9%
Total (n=78)	9.1%	31.2%	45.5%	14.3%

Item number five on the survey stated "attend parent/teacher conferences." A *t*-test conducted on group means indicated a statistically significant difference ( $p < .001$ ) between parents and teachers, with 91.2% of the teachers and only 50% of the parents finding this item as essential (see Table 5).

Table 5

*Percentage Responses to Item #5: Attend parent/teacher conferences*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important
Parents (n=46)	50.0%	43.5%	6.5%
Teachers (n=34)	91.2%	8.8%	
Total (n=80)	67.5%	28.8%	3.8%

Item number six on the survey stated "reward their children for academic achievement." A *t*-test indicated a statistically significant difference ( $p < .001$ ) between both groups of

participants. The parent group seemed to find this item more important with over 40% of responses as essential and over 43% as important. As for teachers, only 3% responded to this item as essential and only 15.2% as important (see Table 6).

Table 6

*Percentage Responses to Item #6: Reward their children for academic achievement*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Parents (n=44)	40.9%	43.2%	11.4%	4.5%
Teachers (n=33)	3.0%	15.2%	42.2%	39.4%
Total (n=77)	24.7%	31.2%	24.7%	19.5%

Item number seven on the survey stated "encourage their children to get good grades." There were similar responses between groups. As a whole, there were no respondents that thought this item was not important. Actually, 61.5% of the respondents found this item to be essential (see Table 7).

Table 7

*Percentage Responses to Item #7: Encourage their children to get good grades*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important
Parents (n=44)	65.9%	29.5%	4.5%
Teachers (n=34)	55.9%	32.4%	11.8%
Total (n=78)	61.5%	30.8%	7.7%

Item number eight on the survey stated "set bedtime for

children so they get enough sleep." With a majority of each group responding to this item as essential, there were no significant differences found. Seventy-six point five percent of the teachers, and 64.4% of parents responded to this item as essential (see Table 8). The remaining respondents found it to be important or at least somewhat important.

Table 8

*Percentage Responses to Item #8: Set bedtime for children so they get enough sleep*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important
Parents (n=45)	64.4%	33.3%	2.2%
Teachers (n=34)	76.5%	23.5%	
Total (n=79)	69.6%	29.1%	1.3%

Item number nine on the survey stated "make sure children get three meals each day." Although a majority of each group found this item to be essential, the t-test showed statistically significant difference ( $p = .044$ ) among the 79 respondents. Eighty-two point four percent of teachers and 64.4% of parents expressed that this item is essential (see Table 9).

Table 9

*Percentage Responses to Item #9: Make sure children get three meals each day*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important
Parents (n=45)	64.4%	31.1%	4.4%
Teachers (n=34)	82.4%	17.6%	
Total (n=79)	72.2%	25.3%	2.5%

Item number ten on the survey stated "provide a quiet place for doing homework." Again, the majority of each group found this item to be essential or important. However, the *t*-test did indicate a statistically significant difference ( $p = .036$ ). The majority of the teacher group marked this item as essential (61.8%). A large group of parent participants marked this item as important (48.9%) (see Table 10).

Table 10

*Percentage of Responses to Item #10: Provide a quiet place for doing homework*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important
Parents (n=45)	40.0%	48.9%	11.1%
Teachers (n=34)	61.8%	35.5%	2.9%
Total (n=79)	49.4%	43.0%	7.6%

Item number 11 on the survey stated "know who their children's friends are at school." The responses from each group were similar. A combined total of over 98% of the respondents found this item to be essential, important, or somewhat important. Only 1.3% of the respondents marked this item as not important. The majority (54.4%) of the parent and teacher groups combined found this item to be essential (see Table 11).

Table 11

*Percentages of Responses to Item #11: Know who their children's friends are at school*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Parents (n=45)	48.9%	44.4%	4.4%	2.2%
Teachers (n=34)	61.8%	38.2%		
Total (n=79)	54.4%	41.8%	2.5%	1.3%

Item number 12 on the survey stated "call their children's school when problems occur." Again, the responses were similar with the majority of each group finding this item to be essential. There were a higher percentage of parents (60.0%), than teachers (55.9%), who found this item to be essential. In combining both groups, 58.2% found this item to be essential, 35.4% important, 5.1% somewhat important, and only 1.3% not important (see Table 12).

Table 12

*Percentages of Responses to Item #12: Call their children's school when problems occur*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Parents (n=45)	60.0%	37.8%		2.2%
Teachers (n=34)	55.59%	32.4%	11.8%	
Total (n=79)	58.2%	35.4%	5.1%	1.3%

Item number 13 on the survey stated "read with their children." Even though the majority of parents (53.3%) and teachers (88.2%) responded to this item as essential, the *t*-test showed a statistically significant result ( $p < .001$ ) between the two groups of participants. Forty-two point two percent of parents responded to this item as important, and only 11.8% of teachers responded as important. One hundred percent of the respondents found this item to be at least somewhat important, important, or essential (see Table 13).

Table 13

*Percentages of Responses to Item #13: Read with their children*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important
Parents (n=45)	53.3%	42.2%	4.4%
Teachers (n=34)	88.2%	11.8%	
Total (n=79)	68.4%	29.1%	2.5%

Item number 14 on the survey stated "be a chaperone on a field trip." The *t*-test results indicated a statistically significant difference ( $p < .001$ ) with over 40% of parents and only 14.7% of teachers considering this item to be important. Also, 23.5% of teachers, and only 9.1% of parents did not find this item to be important. Overall, 47.4% of parents and teachers thought this item was somewhat important (see Table 14).

Table 14

*Percentages of Responses to Item #14: Be a chaperone on a field trip*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Parents (n=44)	13.6%	40.9%	36.4%	9.1%
Teachers (n=34)		14.7%	62.8%	23.5%
Total (n=78)	7.7%	29.5%	47.4%	15.4%

Item number 15 stated on the survey "act as a role model for their children." The majority (82.1%) of both parents and teachers considered this essential. However, *t*-test results showed a statistically significant result ( $p < .001$ ) between parents and teachers. Over 97% of teachers responded to this item as essential, whereas 70.5% of parents considered this item essential (see Table 15).

Table 15

*Percentages of Responses to Item #15: Act as a role model for their children*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important
Parents (n=44)	70.5%	27.3%	2.3%
Teachers (n=34)	97.1%	2.9%	
Total (n=78)	82.1%	16.7%	1.3%

Item number 16 on the survey stated "set limitations on video games, the television, and the computer." The *t*-test results indicated a statistically significant difference ( $p =$

.029) between parent and teacher participants. The majority of teachers (61.8%) found this item to be essential, and the largest group of parents (46.7%) found this item to be important (see Table 16). As a whole, the respondents found this item to be somewhat important, important, or essential.

Table 16

*Percentages of Responses to Item #16: Set limitations on video games, the television, and the computer*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important
Parents (n=45)	40.0%	46.7%	13.3%
Teachers (n=34)	61.8%	35.3%	2.9%
Total (n=79)	49.4%	41.8%	8.9%

Item number 17 on the survey stated "make sure children are not absent unless ill." The responses were similar among both parents and teachers. All respondents found this item to be somewhat important, important, or essential. When combined, the majority of parents and teachers found this item to be essential (52.6%). Exactly 41% of the combined groups found this item to be important, and 6.4% somewhat important (see Table 17).

Table 17

*Percentages of Responses to Item #17: Make sure children are not absent unless ill*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important
Parents (n=44)	50.0%	47.7%	2.3%
Teachers (n=34)	55.9%	32.4%	11.8%
Total (n=78)	52.6%	41.0%	6.4%

Item number 18 on the survey stated "talk to their children about peer pressure." Although they were not significant, differences did exist between parent and teacher groups. Overall, 62.0% of parent and teacher participants responded to this item as essential. However, a higher number of parents (64.4%) responded to this item as essential than teachers (58.8%). There were over 41% of teachers that responded to this item as important, along with 31.1% of parents. Four point four percent of parents thought this item was somewhat important (see Table 18).

Table 18

*Percentages of Responses to Item #18: Talk to their children about peer pressure*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important
Parents (n=45)	64.4%	31.1%	4.4%
Teachers (n=34)	58.8%	41.2%	
Total (n=79)	62.0%	35.4%	2.5%

Item number 19 on the survey stated "teach children organizational skills and responsibility." The responses of parents and teachers were similar, with 57.0% of parents and teachers finding this item to be essential, 41.8% finding it important, and 1.3% finding it somewhat important. Almost 62% of teachers and 53.3% of parents responded to this item as essential. Over 44% of parents and 38.2% of teachers found this item to be important. Only 2.2% parents found it to be somewhat important (see Table 19).

Table 19

*Percentages of Responses to Item #19: Teach their children organizational skills and responsibility*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important
Parents (n=45)	53.3%	44.4%	2.2%
Teachers (n=34)	61.8%	38.2%	
Total (n=79)	57.0%	41.8%	1.3%

Item number 20 on the survey stated "take time to listen to their children." Although 86.1% of parents and teachers responded to this item as essential, the t-test results indicated a statistically significant difference ( $p = .008$ ) between parent and teacher participants. Over 90% of teachers and 77.8% of parents responded to this item as essential. Twenty percent of parents and only 2.9% of teachers found this item to be important. Only 1.3% of all respondents found this item as somewhat important (see Table 20).

Table 20

*Percentages of Responses for Item #20: Take time to listen to their children*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important
Parents (n=45)	77.8%	20.0%	2.2%
Teachers (n=34)	97.1 %	2.9%	
Total (n=79)	86.1%	12.7%	1.3%

Item number 21 on the survey stated "provide learning opportunities during the summer." As a whole, the responses were similar on this item, with the majority of respondents (55.7%)

considering this item to be important. Over 60% of parents and 47.1% of teachers said it was important. Thirty-eight point two percent of teachers and 26.7% of parents considered this item to be essential. Combined, 11.4% of parents and teachers considered this item to be somewhat important. Only 2.3% of teachers felt it was not important. There were no parents that felt this item was not important (see Table 21).

Table 21

*Percentages of Responses for Item #21: Provide learning opportunities during the summer*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Parents (n=45)	26.7%	62.2%	11.1%	
Teachers (n=34)	38.2%	47.1%	11.8%	2.9%
Total (n=79)	31.6%	55.7%	11.4%	1.3%

Item number 22 on the survey stated "teach their children social skills." The results of the *t*-test indicated a statistically significant difference ( $p = .002$ ) between parent and teacher groups. Combined, the majority of parents and teachers (68.4%) expressed that this item was essential. However, 83.5% of teachers and only 55.6% of parents found it essential. Forty percent of parents and only 14.7% of teachers found this item to be important. Only 4.4% of parents said this item was somewhat important (see Table 22).

Table 22

*Percentages of Responses to Item #22: Teach their children  
social skills*

Participants	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important
Parents (n=45)	55.6%	40.0%	4.4%
Teachers (n=34)	85.3%	14.7%	
Total (n=79)	68.4%	29.1%	2.5%

*Research Questions*

Taken together, the results of responses to all 22 items reveal information related to the study's research questions introduced in Chapter One. These research questions are as follows.

*Research question #1.* How do educators think and feel about parental involvement in education?

Each of the 22-items was related to this question. Seventeen of the items were found by a majority of teachers to be essential forms of involvement that a parent should have in their child's education. Three of the items were found by a majority of teachers to be important forms of involvement that a parent should have in their child's education. Two of the items were found by a majority of teachers to be important forms of involvement that a parent should have in their child's education.

According to the responses on the 22 items, teachers felt the strongest about parents attending parent-teacher conferences, parents acting as role models for their children, and parents taking time to listen to their children. Four of the

items were found by at least one or more teachers as unimportant forms of parental involvement in education.

*Research question #2.* How do parents think and feel about parental involvement in education?

All of the items included on this survey also related to this question. Thirteen of the 22 items were found by a majority of parents to be essential forms of involvement that a parent should have in their child's education. Eight of the items were found by a majority of parents to be important forms of involvement that a parent should have in their child's education. One of the items was found by a majority of parents to be somewhat of an important form of involvement that a parent should have in their child's education. According to the responses on the 22 items, parents felt the strongest about parents taking time to listen to their children, parents acting as role models for their children, and parents encouraging their children to get good grades. Seven of the items were found by at least one or more parents as unimportant forms of parental involvement in education. For example, one parent considered the item involving parents being home when their children get home from school to be unimportant. Another example involved parents attending parenting workshops if provided. Nine parents found this item to be unimportant.

*Research question #3.* How do parents' and teachers' attitudes about parental involvement in education compare?

All of the items on this survey related to this question as well. Each participant's attitude was expressed by how they

responded to each item on this survey. They marked each item as essential, important, somewhat important, not important, or no opinion. Thirteen of the 22 items were found by a majority of both parents and teachers to be essential forms of involvement that a parent should have in their child's education. The items found to be most essential by both groups involved parents acting as a role model for their children and parents taking the time to listen to their children. There were two items found by a majority of both parent and teacher groups to be important. Those items included, parents being home when their children get home from school and providing learning opportunities during the summer. One item was found by a majority of both parent and teacher participants to be somewhat of an important form of involvement, which involved parents attending parenting workshops if provided. Three items on this survey, including parents attending parenting workshops when provided, parents rewarding their children for academic achievement, and parents being a chaperone on a field trip, were found by at least one or more parents and teachers combined to be unimportant forms of parental involvement in education.

Although both groups shared similar views on several of the items, significant differences did exist. For example, even though the majority of the combined groups felt that parents attending parent-teacher conferences was essential, a much higher percentage of the teacher group found this item to be essential than the parent group. Another significant difference involved parents reading with their children. Again, the

majority of the combined groups considered this item essential, however the percentage of teacher participants who considered this item to be essential was much higher than the parent participants. Other items of significant difference included parents rewarding their children for academic achievement, making sure their children get three meals each day, providing a quiet place for doing homework, reading with their children, being a chaperone on a field trip, acting as a role model for their children, setting limitations on video games, the television, and the computer, and teaching their children social skills.

This research indicates that parents and teachers share many views regarding parent involvement in education. It is also evident that there are some noteworthy differences between parents and teachers regarding parent involvement in education.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, and CONCLUSIONS

This chapter will discuss the results of the survey. Recommendations will be given for Mead Elementary School, including staff and parents. Recommendations will also be made for future research on parental involvement. Finally, conclusions of this study will be provided.

*Discussion*

The results of this study indicated that the parents and teachers at Mead Elementary School feel that parental involvement is an important part of a child's education. As a whole, participants felt the strongest about parents taking time to listen to their children and acting as role models for their children. They also deemed forms of parental involvement such as making sure children get three meals each day and setting a bedtime for children so they get enough sleep as essential. Other forms of parental involvement that were found to be essential by the entire group of 80 participants involved parents reading to their children, attending parent-teacher conferences, encouraging children to get good grades, calling their children's school when problems occur, and talking to their children about peer pressure.

The items expressed as important by the majority of both parents and teachers involved parents being home when their children got home from school and providing learning opportunities during the summer.

One item was found by the majority of the whole group to be

somewhat important, and that involved parents attending parenting workshops if provided. The results of the survey indicated there were very few parents and teachers that found the forms of parental involvement included on the survey as unimportant.

On the other hand, parents and teachers shared differences. For example, the majority of parent participants expressed that rewarding their children for academic achievement was important. The majority of teacher participants considered this item to be somewhat important. Another example included the majority of the teacher group finding the item involving parents helping their children with homework as essential, whereas the majority of the parent group found this item to be important.

#### *Recommendations for Parents*

There are a few suggestions that might be beneficial for parents. One is developing and maintaining forms of communication with anyone whom children interact with at school. As the study showed, parents and teachers find it very important for parents to communicate with a school when there is a problem. Communication can occur through calling, writing, or stopping by before or after school to discuss the issue. It is usually helpful to visit by appointment. Whether it involves an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or just a concern, it is best if a parent communicates with his or her child's teacher or other school staff about it.

Another suggestion involves taking advantage of opportunities which allow parents to participate in school

events or activities. This allows parents to see what takes place at school and builds better working relationships with teachers, school staff, and other parents. Also, children will reap the benefits by knowing that their parent(s) care about them and are willing to invest time in their future.

A third suggestion would be to see teachers and school staff as your teammates. The study conveyed that parents and teachers value the importance of parental involvement in education. If problems occur at school or at home, you can ask for help or be there to help them. A child will benefit from parents and teachers working together towards the common goals of his or her education. However, if a child feels that his or her parents are working against the teachers and school staff, the child will feel caught in the middle. Remember, the child is the one who has to see his or her parent(s) and teachers almost every day.

A final suggestion based on the findings of this study would be to teach children effective ways to complete their homework. Parents can do so by setting an appropriate time for homework to be done and providing an adequate environment to complete homework free from any distractions. It is important to remember that as children get older, their homework loads will increase. Teaching children effective ways to complete their homework now is a great investment in their future.

#### *Recommendations for Teachers*

Several suggestions related to this study might be helpful to teachers. One is to invite parents to participate in

different activities. For example, because chaperoning on a field trip was found to be valued by parents, teachers could make that opportunity available to parents. Some opportunities may include parents reading to a class, parents eating lunch with their children, or parents volunteering for certain activities. Also, teachers can create new ways that parents can and will become involved. When parents are not involved, it's not always because they don't care. Sometimes the best way to discover new ways parents can and will become involved is by asking them.

A second suggestion involves collaborating with parents and students. If any students have problems at school, parents need to be informed. As the study showed, parents especially value communication when there are problems. Also, if parents contact teachers about a problem or concern they have with their children, teachers should collaborate with parents to find some possible solutions. Open communication is a wonderful tool.

A third suggestion based on the findings of this study involves encouraging parents to attend parent-teacher conferences. Survey results indicated that teachers felt more strongly about parent-teacher conferences than parents did. Teachers might want to brainstorm and implement some ideas and incentives for parents to attend. For example, teachers could provide refreshments throughout the school during scheduled conference times. Also, information should be easily accessible for parents so there are no mistakes on dates, times, and locations of the conferences.

### *Recommendations for Future Research*

This study was completed to gain a better understanding of how important parental involvement in education was to parents and teachers at Mead Elementary School and to find how their attitudes towards each form of parental involvement compared. If further research was done, it could consider the views of students. Also, more demographic information could be attained from parents to determine if the completed surveys were done so by parents who are already involved in their child's education. A final suggestion would be to distribute the surveys at an open-house school event to achieve a higher return rate.

### *Conclusions*

After reviewing the results of the study, it is evident that as a whole, parents and teachers involved at Mead Elementary School place great value on parental involvement in children's education. There were some differences detected however, on how much value parents and teachers place on each of the 22 forms of parental involvement listed on the survey. For example, the majority of teachers found the items involving parents helping their children with homework, providing a quiet place for doing homework, having a set time for children to complete their homework, and setting limitations on video games, the television, and the computer to be essential whereas the majority of parents found it to be important.

There were also forms of parental involvement that the majority of parents valued more than the majority of teachers. For example, the majority of parents expressed that rewarding

their children for academic achievement and being a chaperone on a field trip were important, whereas the majority of teachers expressed that they were somewhat important forms of parental involvement.

The two groups that participated in this study share common ground, but also provide unique perspectives on behalf of students. With the information provided in this research, parents and teachers should be able to gain a better understanding of how they can work together to reach the common goal of assisting students perform their best in education.

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