

The Impact of Parental Involvement on the Reading Achievement of Fourth Grade African
American Males in the Tidewater Region of Virginia

Faye Covington Bradley

Dissertation submitted to the faculty of
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

In

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Travis W. Twiford, Chair

Theodore B. Creighton

Richard G. Salmon

John F. Schreck

April 2, 2010

Virginia Beach, Virginia

Key Words: Reading Achievement, African American Males, At Risk Learner, Parental
Involvement, School, Family, and Community Partnership

The Impact of Parental Involvement on the Reading Achievement of Fourth Grade African American Males in the Tidewater Region of Virginia

Faye Covington Bradley

ABSTRACT

During the last decade there has been a renewed focus on improving the instruction of children at risk for not learning to read well and ways to effectively involve their parents to enhance their children's reading achievement. This focus has particularly centered on how programs of school, family, and community partnerships can be organized to improve schools and enable all families to support children's reading and literacy skills (Epstein et al, 2002-2009). This study examined the extent to which the reading achievement of African American male learners improves with school, family, and community partnerships. The sample consisted of fourth grade African American males from the Tidewater region of Virginia who were enrolled in Title 1 schools that participate in the National Network of School Partnerships. The goal of this study was to examine the relationship between school, family, and community partnerships and the reading achievement of the African American male. Second, the study identified which type of parental involvement significantly influenced the reading achievement of African American males. Third, the study identified parental involvement activities that significantly influenced the reading achievement of the African American male learner. Teachers and administrators were surveyed using an instrument adapted from Epstein's School, Family, and Community Partnership Survey, The Virginia Standards of Learning reading and language arts assessments provided data for reading achievement of fourth grade African American males. Data analysis revealed no significant differences in promising practices and the reading achievement of fourth grade African American males. An ANOVA showed a significant difference between principals and teachers in their ratings of the importance of Type 6 activities, collaborating with the community. A correlation was found between Type 3 parental involvement activities of volunteering and the reading achievement of fourth grade African American males. An ANOVA showed a significant difference between principals and teachers in their ratings of Teacher Reports of School Program Type 4 (Learning at Home). Significant differences were found between principals and teachers in their ratings of Teacher Reports of Total School Program to Involve Families. A correlation between teacher estimates of parents' involvement and the mean SOL English score for African American male fourth grade students was found.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved mother, Emily Mae West Covington who overcame many adversities in life and made many sacrifices for her children's success. I thank God for allowing her to know that I have completed my doctorate degree. Mother, you are a strong and phenomenal woman.

This dissertation is also dedicated to my husband, Carroll and son, CJ Bradley. Carroll, words cannot express my deep love and appreciation for your unwavering love and support. When I thought this academic mountain was too hard to climb, your prayers, words of encouragement, and many acts of kindness strengthened me. I would not have accomplished this academic achievement without you.

CJ, you are the love of my life. Your name had to be included in this dissertation, because you have given so much to make this happen for me. I thank you for the many hours you spent helping me type. You handled the missed soccer games and vacation interruptions with such maturity. I thank God for your outstanding intellectual abilities and achievements. Yes CJ, you are expected to reach the same academic height in your field of study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank God for the great things that HE has done. The trials and tribulations that I endured while completing my dissertation would have been impossible to overcome without the Lord by my side.

I am grateful that I had the love and support from my family and friends. I would like to say "thank you" to my siblings: John, Joan, Betty, Willie, Clarence, and Jacqueline for your prayers, encouragement, humor, and relentless support. A special "thank you" to my sister, Joan who helped to teach me the fundamental literary and math skills necessary to become a successful life-long learner. I say "thank you" to my Bradley family, my uncle, aunts, nieces, nephews, and godchildren for your many prayers, assistance, and warm wishes. You all believed in me. Thank you to my friends and colleagues, Drs. Atkins, Caston, and Rascoe for being there through the sunshine and rain. I appreciate the encouragement from my cohort colleagues Dr. Browder, Joyce, and Sylvia. Special gratitude is given to my mentor, Dr. W. H. Joyner for enlightening me about school, family, and community partnerships. Thank you to my dear sisters of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and the Commonwealth Chapter of the Links, Inc., you were great cheerleaders! A mammoth "thank you" to my dear friend, Dr. Jovanovich who was heaven sent to push me across the finish line.

Dr. Travis Twiford, thank you for serving as my committee chair. Thank you for your guidance and support while I completed my dissertation. I appreciate your commitment to excellence. Dr. Schreck, thank you for serving on my committee. You were there from the initial interview for admissions into Virginia Tech's doctoral program to my final defense. I will always remember your unselfish act of kindness to help me. You are a real trooper. Dr. Salmon, thank you for serving on my committee. Thank you for your encouragement and support throughout the years. Dr. Creighton, thank you for serving on my committee. Thank you for your positive and uplifting disposition. I will always remember your words of encouragement after I lost a large portion of my research while working on the Blacksburg campus of Virginia Tech.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
CONTEXT OF THE STUDY	1
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	2
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	3
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	3
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	4
DEFINITIONS	4
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	5
LIMITATIONS	10
DELIMITATIONS	10
SUMMARY	11
CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	12
INTRODUCTION	12
<i>No Child Left Behind Act of 2001</i>	12
<i>Reading First</i>	13
TEACHING AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES.....	16
<i>Teacher and Student Interactions</i>	17
<i>Teacher-Student Relationship and Parent Involvement</i>	22
<i>Parental Influence and Involvement</i>	25
<i>Academic Achievement of Elementary African American Males</i>	29
<i>School, Family, and Community Partnership</i>	33
SUMMARY	40
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	41
INTRODUCTION	41
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	41
RESEARCH DESIGN	42
RESEARCH SITE	42
POPULATION.....	42
INSTRUMENTS.....	43
VALIDITY	43
RELIABILITY	45
DATA COLLECTION.....	45
DATA ANALYSIS.....	46
SUMMARY	46
CHAPTER FOUR DATA ANALYSIS	47
Research Question 1	50
Research Question 2	57
Research Question 3	63
SUMMARY	75
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS	79

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY	79
FINDINGS	80
Research Question 1	80
Research Question 2	81
Research Question 3	82
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	82
Research Question 1	82
Research Question 2	83
Research Question 3	85
IMPLICATIONS.....	86
FUTURE RESEARCH	88
REFERENCES.....	89
APPENDIX A TEACHER SURVEY LETTER.....	93
APPENDIX B EPSTEIN’S SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP SURVEY.PROMISING PRACTICES	94
APPENDIX C CORRESPONDENCE FROM DR. EPSTEIN.....	102
APPENDIX D DR. EPSTEIN’S PERMISSION TO USE SURVEYS AND PROMISING PRACTICES	103
APPENDIX E DR. EPSTEIN’S PERMISSION TO USE SIX TYPES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND THEORETICAL MODEL	104
APPENDIX F IRB APPROVAL	105
APPENDIX G PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY IN HONEYDEW HEIGHTS SCHOOL DIVISION.....	106
APPENDIX H HONEYDEW HEIGHTS NATIONAL AWARD FOR EXCELLENT PARTNERSHIP PRESS RELEASE.....	107

List of Tables

Table 1 <i>Epstein’s Framework Of Six Types Of Parental Involvement</i>	8
Table 2 <i>Demographic Profile Of Participants</i>	48
Table 3 <i>Ranking Of Promising Practices From Highest To Least In Terms Of Importance</i> ..	51
Table 4 <i>Mean And Standard Deviations For Responses For Promising Practices For All Respondents: Principals, And Teachers</i>	53
Table 5 <i>Findings For Anova Tests Of Differences Between Mean Ratings Of Principals And Teachers On The Promising Practices Scales</i>	54
Table 6 <i>Mean And Standard Deviations For Responses For The Promising Practice Scales For All Respondents, Those At Accredited And Non-Accredited Schools</i>	55
Table 7 <i>Findings For Tests Of Differences Between Ratings Of Respondents At Accredited And Non-Accredited Schools On The Promising Practices Scales</i>	56
Table 8 <i>Pearson Correlations Between Promising Practices And School Mean And African American Mean Score On English Sol</i>	57
Table 9 <i>Summary Of Estimates Of Percent Of Contacts Teachers Made With Families Of Their Students</i>	58
Table 10 <i>Summary Of Use Of Volunteers In Classroom And In School</i>	59
Table 11 <i>Number And Percent Of Responses Of Summary Of Teacher Reports Of Total School Program To Involve Families</i>	60
Table 12 <i>Number And Percent Of Responses To Importance To Teachers Of All Practices To Involve Families</i>	62
Table 13 <i>Number And Percent Of Responses To Teacher Attitudes About Family And Community Involvement</i>	64
Table 14 <i>Number And Percent Of Responses To Agreement With Teachers’ Estimates Of Parents’ Involvement</i>	67
Table 15 <i>Summary Of Responses Of Teachers Reports Of Parent Responsibilities</i>	68
Table 16 <i>Number And Percent Of Responses To Various Sources Of Support</i>	69
Table 17 <i>Mean And Standard Deviations For Responses For Scale Items For All Respondents, Principals, And Teachers On The School, Family, And Community Partnership Survey</i>	70

Table 18 Findings For Tests Of Differences Between Ratings Of Principals And Teachers On The Scales Of The School, Family, And Community Partnership Survey	72
Table 19 Mean And Standard Deviations For Responses For Scales On School, Family, And Community Partnership Survey For All Respondents Those At Accredited And Non-Accredited Schools	73
Table 20 Findings For Tests Of Differences Between Ratings Of Principals And Teachers On The Scales For The Family, School, And Community Partnership Survey	74
Table 21 Pearson Correlations Between Scales And School Mean And African American Mean Score On English Sol	75

List of Figures

Figure 1. Theoretical Model Overlapping Spheres Of Influence Of Family, School, And Community On Children’s Learning. (Permission To Use – See Appendix E) 7

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework. 10

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Context of the Study

According to McPike (1995) “reading has been termed the “gateway” to all other knowledge” (p. 3). Students’ learning paths are blocked when they do not learn to read early in their school years. The dispute over the best instructional reading programs, strategies, methods and techniques has been raging for decades (Adams, 1990; Juel, 1988; Tatum, 2005). During the mid-1950s, American education was dominated by the “look-say” method of teaching. Students were encouraged to look at and recognize the whole word instead of using the phonetic method that had been taught for generations. Flesch warned in the best-selling book *Why Johnny Can’t Read* that American schools would produce a generation of illiterates if they continued to rely on faddish techniques for teaching reading (Flesch, 1955).

In the early 1970s reading programs emphasized the mechanics of reading and the phonetic method. This resurgence of phonics did not last long. By the 1980s, educators were employing the “whole language” approach and phonics once again was not emphasized in the early instruction of reading. The National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP] conducted six national assessments of reading levels from the early 1970s to the late 1980s. The NAEP found that during the 1970s, nine- year olds showed a steady improvement in reading comprehension. The reading scores of fourth graders rose during the decade when they had been exposed as first and second graders to basic phonics programs. However, reading improvements dropped when phonics programs were dropped (U.S. Department of Education, (1988). Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP]). The NAEP’s study was supported by the 1985 study titled *Becoming a Nation of Readers*. The National Institute of Education [NIE] found that: “Classroom research shows that on average, children who are taught phonics get off to a better start in learning to read than children who are not taught phonics” (Hiebert et al., 1985, p. 5). The advantage is most apparent on tests of word identification. Children in programs in which phonics is heavily stressed also do better on lists of sentence and story comprehension, particularly in the early grades (Hiebert et al., 1985).

Statement of the Problem

For the last decade there has been a renewed focus on improving the instruction of children at risk for not learning to read well. Students who do not *learn to read* early in the first and second grades find themselves trapped in a maze when they cannot *read to learn*. Most poor readers never catch up with their peers in reading and writing abilities, and the gap between low and high readers widens as children progress through the grades (Stanovich, 1986). Students who have difficulty learning to read are disproportionately poor and members of minority groups (Kennedy, Jung, & Orland, 1986). As the number of students fitting this profile grows, the focus has been on early intervention. Early intervention is necessary before children experience a sense of failure and while the gap between those who are succeeding and those who are having difficulty remains relatively narrow. The 1994 National Assessment of Educational Reading Progress (NAEP) found that 42 percent of fourth graders were reading at a “below basic” level, meaning that they were unable to understand uncomplicated narratives and high interest informative texts. The 2003, National Assessment of Educational Reading Progress [NAEP] reports an increase of fourth graders performing at or above the proficient level. It is critical to note that the percentage of fourth graders at or above a basic reading level in 2003 was not significantly different from the percentage in 1992 (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). The 2005 NAEP results indicate that fourth graders had higher average scores and higher percentages of students performing at or above the basic level than in 1992. However, Caucasian students continued to score higher in reading than African American students.

During the third grade, many African American male students experience a decline in their academic progress (Baker, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 2002; Wilson, 2003). Despite the African American male’s potential for success in reading, this population is not achieving as well as their Caucasian male peers (NAEP, 2005). There is limited research that directly addresses the African American male’s academic decline after the third grade. Providing insight to this educational phenomenon is vital.

Epstein’s decades of research on school, family, and community partnerships has provided some insight into improving students’ academic success. When educators view students as children, educators are “likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school in children’s education and development” (Epstein et al., 2002-2009, p.7). Partners care about children and share the responsibilities to work together to create better programs and

opportunities for students (Epstein et al., 2002-2009). A caring community is formed when parents, teachers, students, administrators, and people in the community perceive each other as partners in education. Caring partners help students succeed in school.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which reading achievement of fourth grade African American male learners improves with school, family, and community partnerships. The present study focused on a sample of fourth grade African American males from the Tidewater region of Virginia who were enrolled in 13 Title 1 schools. This study examined the relationship between school, family, and community partnerships and the reading achievement of the African American male. Second, the study identified which type of parental involvement significantly influences the reading achievement of African American males. Third, the study identified parental involvement activities that significantly influenced the reading achievement of the African American male learner.

Significance of the Study

The current researcher's study is different from the related literature because it focused on a single academic subject, gender, and (race) ethnicity. The study examined the influence of parental involvement on the reading achievement of a sample of fourth grade African American males enrolled in an urban school district within the Tidewater region of Virginia. This study was designed to provide school administrators, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders with data that indicate which type of parental involvement and which parental involvement activities influenced the academic improvement in the reading achievement of the fourth grade African American male within one urban school district in the Tidewater region of Virginia. The findings from this study may be useful to school administrators, teachers, and parents as they work collaboratively to improve the reading achievement of the African American male learner. In addition, the findings may help school leaders to be better prepared to meet the needs of this specific group of students as they plan, write, and implement their respective School's Improvement Plan. The data will also assist in adding to the body of knowledge of all stakeholders who educate the African American male, thus helping to close the achievement gap among Caucasian and African American males.

This study may enhance the ability of school personnel to improve their communication and outreach programs to parents, encouraging them to become more involved with their child's education. This research focused on an area that has not been heavily investigated in this context before.

Research is needed to provide better empirical evidence of the effects of particular interviews and specific practices of family involvement on children's reading and other literacy skills. We need to know which practices with which families at which grade levels will produce which results in reading, writing, and other literacy skills for which students. These unknowns establish a broad and exciting research agenda. The results of such studies will be of immediate interest in practice (Sheldon et al., 2005b, p. 124).

The findings from this study are helpful to most school leaders by providing them with professional development topics that their teachers can utilize to improve the literacy instruction of African American male students. The data from this study help school leaders effectively enrich the African American males' reading achievement. This research enables school leaders to help the African American male navigate a learning environment that has been viewed in the past as hostile and unpredictable for many of these students (Tatum, 2005).

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. Is there a significant relationship and difference between particular parental involvement activities and the reading achievement of African American males?
2. Is there a significant relationship and difference between a specific type of parental involvement and the reading achievement of African American males?
3. Is there a significant relationship and difference between school, family, and community partnerships and the reading achievement of African American males?

Definitions

Parent Involvement. Desimone's "conceptualized parent involvement as a set of group defining actions, beliefs, and attitudes that serve as an operational factor in defining categorical differences among children from different racial ethnic and economic backgrounds" (Desimone, 1999, p.11).

Types of Parent Involvement. The conceptual framework consists of six parental involvement categories: Type 1: parenting practices at home that support children as students; Type 2: communicating effectively students' progress and school programs; Type 3: volunteering or being supportive of school activities; Type 4: learning at home curriculum related activities; Type 5: decisions making roles where parents are developed as leaders; and Type 6: community collaboration that identifies resources and services that foster the integration of school programs, family practices, and student achievement. This conceptual framework can be beneficial to educators in enhancing their understanding of parental involvement as a catalyst to improve school experiences and achievement for at-risk students (Epstein, 1995).

School- community partnership. Is defined as the connections between schools and community individuals, organizations, and businesses that are forged to promote students' social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development (Sanders, 2001).

Family. Family includes siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and "fictive kin" who may be friends or neighbors; they often contribute in significant ways to children's education and development (Mapp et al., 2002).

Reading achievement. The academic achievement as indicated by the reading and language scores of the Standards of Learning tests. The Standards of Learning tests are administered in the Spring of the school year in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Conceptual Framework

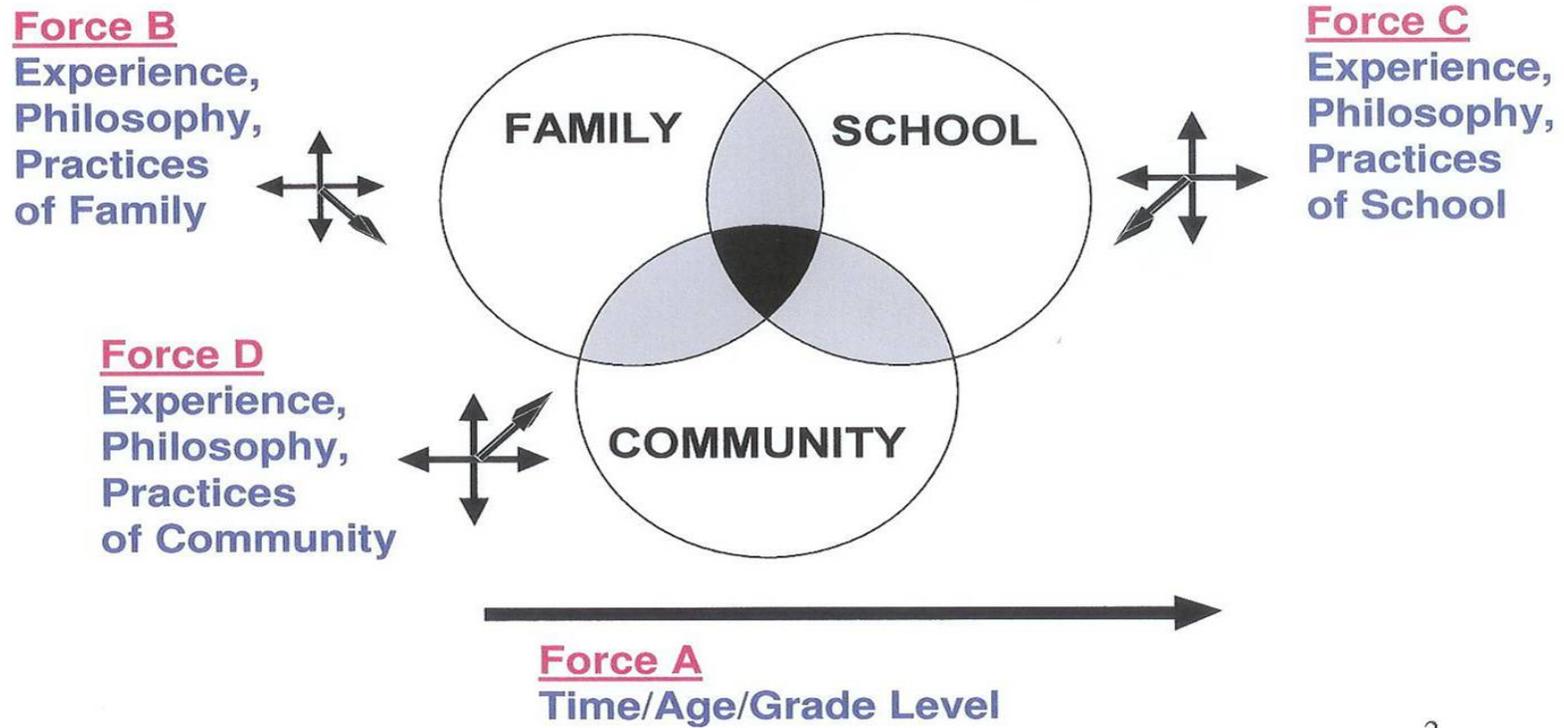
In today's society, schools are required to educate a more diverse student population. School leaders must give their undivided attention to improving student achievement and social outcomes of disadvantaged minority students. Therefore, it is imperative that educators increase their understanding of how to utilize parental involvement in ways that are best for all children, especially for those at risk of educational failure (Epstein, 1995). Epstein's research has provided researchers with a widely cited conceptual framework of parental involvement. The current researcher used Epstein's conceptual framework to examine the impact of parental involvement on the reading achievement of the fourth grade African American male.

Recognizing how social organizations of school, family, and community connect, Epstein refers to them as spheres of overlapping influences. These spheres of influence directly affect

student learning and development. The more these spheres interact, the more students are likely to receive common messages that emphasize the importance of “school, working hard, of thinking creatively, or helping one another, and of staying in school” (Epstein et al., 2002-2009, p. 8).

Epstein’s external model of overlapping spheres of influence recognizes the three major contexts of school, family, and community in which students learn and grow. These spheres of influence may be “drawn together or pushed apart” (Epstein et al., 2002-2009). “In this model, there are some practices that schools, families, and communities do separately and some that they conduct jointly to influence children’s learning and development” (Epstein et al., 2002-2009, p. 8). Epstein’s theoretical model is illustrated in Figure 1.

Theoretical Model
OVERLAPPING SPHERES OF INFLUENCE OF FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND
COMMUNITY ON CHILDREN'S LEARNING
External Structure



Reprinted with permission: Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Simon, B. S., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N. R., & Van Voorhis, F. L. (2002). *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action (Second Edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. See *Handbook*, page 164, for the internal structure of this model.

Figure 1. Theoretical model overlapping spheres of influence of family, school, and community on children's learning. (Permission to use – see Appendix E)

Epstein’s conceptual framework shown in Table 1 consists of six parental involvement categories:

Table 1

Epstein’s Framework of Six Types of Parental Involvement

Type of Involvement	Sample Practices
<u><i>Parenting</i></u> : Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent education and other courses or training for parents (e.g., GED, college credit, family literacy). • Family support programs to assist families with health, nutrition, and other services. • Home visits at transition points to pre-school, elementary, middle, and high school.
<u><i>Communicating</i></u> : Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children’s progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conferences with every parent at least once a year. • Language translators to assist families as needed. • Regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters, and other communications.
<u><i>Volunteering</i></u> : Recruit and organize parent help and support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School and classroom volunteer program to help teachers, administrators, students, and other parents. • Parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings, and resources for families. • Annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times, and locations of volunteers.
<u><i>Learning at Home</i></u> : Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information for families on skills required for students in all subjects at each grade. • Information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home. • Family participation in setting student goals each year and in planning for college or work.

(table continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Type of Involvement	Sample Practices
<i>Decision Making</i> : Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, advisory councils, or committees for parent leadership and participation. • Independent advocacy groups to lobby and work for school reform and improvements. • Networks to link all families with parent representatives.
<i>Collaborating With Community</i> : Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information for students and families on community, health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs/services. • Information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programs for students.

Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D., of the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships

This framework as shown in Figure 2 is beneficial in helping educators enhance their understanding of parental involvement as a catalyst to improve school experiences and achievement for at-risk students. School, Family, and Community Partnerships are essential to students’ success in school and later in life. A school’s programs and its climate are enhanced with partnerships. In addition, partnerships “provide family services and support, increase parents’ skills and leadership, connect families with others in the school and in the community, and help teachers with their work” (Epstein et al., 2002-2009, p.7).

The six types of parental involvement as stated in Table 1 helps educators develop programs of school and family partnerships. The six types of parental involvement include many different practices to involve and meet the needs of all families and students. The six types of parental involvement redefines the old notion of parental involvement as measured by the number of parents in the school for an activity.

Parental involvement activities are practices that are created for each type of involvement. The activities are family-friendly and the needs of the students and families are

taken into consideration. The activities are well-designed and well-implemented to influence students' skills and achievement.

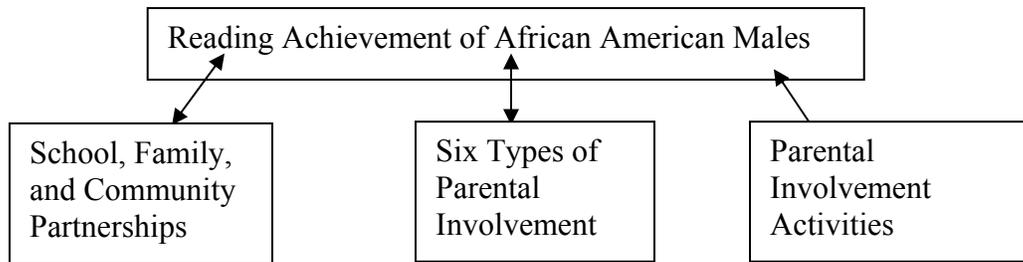


Figure 2. Conceptual framework.

Limitations

Limitations to this study include, the data can only be generalized to urban at risk African American male children. Second, it cannot be generalized to other African American students who do not have the adverse effects associated with being at risk. Third, it also cannot be generalized with African American students who may have behavioral or cognitive learning difficulties. Students who were given the Virginia Standards of Learning Alternate Assessment were not included in this study. Fourth, the size of the population sample is limited. Fifth, it is likely that the sample population was not a representative sample. Lastly, the survey was lengthy and some respondents did not complete certain sections of the survey.

Delimitations

This study examines one single academic subject, gender, and (race) ethnicity. The participants in this study are African American males who attend Title 1 schools in an urban school district within the Tidewater region of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Therefore, this study does not examine parental involvement influences of the reading achievement of African American males who attend schools located in rural and suburban districts throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. The sample population was from the fourth grade, because the literature indicates that the African American males' reading achievement begins to decline at this grade level. In addition, the scope of the curriculum increases from third to fourth grade, and the achievement levels between students become more evident.

Summary

This study consists of five chapters. In the first chapter, the researcher provides a brief historical overview of reading instruction and reading achievement as it relates to the African American male. The purpose, significance of the study, and research questions are identified. Definitions for the indicators of the study have been provided. In addition, a conceptual and theoretical framework that will guide this study are included in chapter one. Limitations and delimitations are also included in chapter one.

Chapter two consists of the literature reviewed for this study. The literature review originated from a very board search of factors that influenced the reading achievement of the African American male learner. Factors such as (a) teaching the African American male, (b) parent, student, and teacher interactions, (c) parental involvement, and (d) school, family, and community partnerships, were selected as topics for this study.

Chapter three identifies and explains the methodology used for this study. This study used quantitative research methods to collect data. Instruments used to collect data were Epstein's School, Family, and Community Partnerships Survey and the Virginia Standards of Learning reading assessment. A Pearson's Correlation and an Analysis of Variance was used analyze the data in this study.

Chapter four consists of the data analysis for this study. Three research questions guided this study. The results of the investigation of each research question are reported in chapter four.

In chapter five, a discussion of findings to each research question are reported. Implications of the findings are discussed. Future research is also discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The need to expeditiously and expediently intervene in early reading instruction is generated by the understanding that a child's success in learning to read in the first grade appears to be the best predictor of ultimate success in schooling (Adams, 1990; Juel, 1988). According to Adams, "proficient reading depends on an automatic capacity to recognize frequent patterns and to translate them phonetically" (Adams, 1990, p 33). The failure to learn the mechanics of phonics "may be the single most common source of reading difficulties" (Adams, 1990, p.33). The inability to read with fluency by third grade is associated with a significantly higher risk of dropping out, delinquency, and illiteracy (Bayer, 1994; Clay, 1985).

Students who experience difficulty learning to read present instructional challenges in the classroom as well as programmatic and policy challenges. The limited progress of such students creates an enormous pressure to achieve full academic accreditation on state mandated assessments. It contributes to the abundance of referrals for special education and related services. Schools are exploring effective program models and approaches to prevent early reading failure. In the classroom, the teacher must employ instructional strategies to meet a broad range of student needs (Atkinson et al., 1997).

Although there appears to be a consensus on the importance of preventing early reading failure, debate continues about the relative effectiveness of various approaches. Adams contends that the problem of teaching low-achieving students to read is not the use of phonics, but the poor use of instructional materials. Adams found those schools with high proportions of students from low-income families and who have been labeled at-risk schedule less classroom time on reading instruction (Adams, 1990). Therefore, the issue should not be which program is "best," but which programs are best suited to which students within particular settings.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

The No Child Left Behind [NCLB] Act of 2001 is the most sweeping reform of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) that has been enacted since 1965. This act redefines the federal government's role in K-12 education (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). This landmark educational reform is designed to improve student achievement and cause a paradigm

shift in the culture of America's schools. The law requires adequate yearly progress for disadvantaged and minority students, thus attempting to close the achievement gap between them and their peers. The No Child Left Behind Act is based on four basic principles: (1.) stronger accountability for results, (2.) increased flexibility and local control, (3.) expanded options for parents, and (4.) an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

The No Child Left Behind Act has affected the teaching and leadership practices of current educators. It requires states to develop and implement plans to achieve the goal of having all core academic teachers to be highly qualified by the end of the 2005- 2006 school year. The law mandates that principals, assistant principals, teachers, and support staff in schools be highly qualified in order to increase student achievement. This law specifically addresses the need to close the achievement gap between the African American at-risk learner and other ethnic groups. Across the nation and specifically in Virginia, African American males are still achieving at a lower rate than their Caucasian peers (Wilson, 2003; NAEP, 2005).

This law seeks to provide every child, not only access to an appropriate education, but success in achieving an acceptable level of performance. According to President Bush, "Too many of our neediest children are being left behind" (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). The No Child Left Behind Act emphasizes early childhood education so children will start their academic learning with sound methods and instructional strategies. One initiative of the No Child Left Behind Act that focuses on improving student readiness and skills to read by the third grade is Reading First.

Reading First

Reading First is the academic cornerstone of the No Child Left Behind legislation. It is the most focused early reading initiative that this country has ever undertaken. The purpose of Reading First is to ensure that all children in America learn to read with fluency by the end of the third grade. Teaching all children to read well by the end of third grade, enhances all of the students chances to advance to higher grade levels and prepares them to achieve their academic potential (Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement [CIERA], 2002). Reading First. U.S. Department of Education Washington, DC.

Reading First funds are a component of Title 1. The funds are designated to provide increased assistance to states and school districts to establish research based reading programs

for students in kindergarten through third grade. Another focus of Reading First funds is to provide professional development for regular and special education teachers so that they will have the skills needed to teach these programs effectively. In addition the program provides assistance to states and school divisions in preparing classroom teachers to effectively screen, identify and overcome any reading difficulties that their students' encounter CIERA, 2002. In order to adequately and accurately measure the instructional levels of students and monitor their progress, Reading First provides technical support. The technical support educates teachers in selecting and administering screening, diagnostic and classroom-based instructional reading assessments that are research based (CIERA, 2002). This is extremely important because the classroom provides the most important venue for reaching early readers. It is in the classroom where the Reading First program will build and support the research based reading foundation. The essential components of reading instruction are embedded into all elements of the primary kindergarten through third teaching curricula. Research based research has identified these essential components of reading instruction as phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension strategies (CIERA, 2002). Reading First programs that are funded must meet the essential component criteria and demonstrate its comprehensiveness and effectiveness in improving student achievement. Reading First emphasizes achievement for all students. However, it gives special attention to those children who are in America's most disadvantage schools and communities.

There is a growing awareness of the benefits of early reading success and of the detrimental effects of early reading failure. There are a substantial number of African American males who experience a dramatic decline in their reading achievement as early as the third grade of their elementary school years. Although the African American male learner has the ability to be successful in school, they are not experiencing reading achievement at the same level as their male peers. (Adams, 1990 ; Baker, 1999; Bayer, 1994; Clay, 1985; Desimone, 1999; Juel, 1988; NAEP, 2005; O'Sullivan, 1992; Polite, & Davis, 1999; Stanovich, 1991; U. S. Department of Education, 2002; Wilson, 2003).

Henderson and Mapp (2002), recommend that educators of male students from diverse backgrounds who are experiencing reading achievement difficulties explore the influence of parental involvement. Henderson and Mapp suggest that families have a major influence on their

children's achievement in school and life. Children from all cultural and economic backgrounds achievement increased directly with the extent of parental involvement (Henderson et al., 2002).

When parents talk to their children about school, expect them to do well, help them plan for college, and make sure that out-of-school activities are constructive; their children do better in school. When schools engage families in ways that are linked to improving learning, students make greater gains. When schools build partnerships with families that respond to their concerns and honor their contributions, they are successful in sustaining connections that are aimed at improving student achievement. And when families and communities organize to hold poorly performing schools accountable, studies suggest that school districts make positive changes in policy, practice, and resources. (Henderson et al., 2002, p.8)

The literature reviewed for this study originated from a very board search of factors that influence the reading achievement of the African American male learner. Factors such as: (a) teaching the African American male; (b) parent, student, and teacher interactions; (c) parental involvement; and (d) school, family, and community partnerships: These were selected as topics based on the report, *Becoming a Nation at Risk*, the researcher's interest and experience, number of professional articles, and empirical research presented in educational journals. The researcher spent several hundred hours researching the literature for this study. The researcher spent numerous days in person and on the telephone with a Virginia Tech University media specialist searching electronic data bases for research that related to the specified topics. The researcher conducted hand searches of the book shelves at the Virginia Tech University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Virginia State University libraries. The researcher reviewed dissertations that related to the identified topics that influence the reading achievement of African American males. The researcher traveled to Fayetteville, North Carolina to have a four hour consultation with Dr. Linda Jones-Wilson. Dr. Wilson conducted research on the academic achievement of the elementary African American males in Mississippi. She is a published author and considered an expert in the field. In addition, the researcher had the privilege to consult with Dr. Joyce Epstein on two occasions. Dr. Epstein is a leading researcher with over twenty years of expertise in the field of school, family, and community partnerships. On January 24, 2007, the researcher participated in the National Network of School Partnerships web conference.

Students' learning, reading achievement, and other literacy skills are influenced by their experiences inside and outside the classroom (Sheldon et al., 2005b; Wilson, 2003). The detailed reviews of studies conducted by Baker, O'Sullivan, Desimone, Wilson, Sanders, and Sheldon are included in the literature review: Baker (1999), conducted a study on teacher-student relationships and their influence on student achievement at the elementary level. A study conducted by O'Sullivan (1992), addresses both concerns of teacher-student relationship and parent involvement. A study conducted by Desimone (1999), utilizes Epstein's conceptual framework to investigate the effects of parental involvement on student achievement. A study conducted by Wilson (2003) that included parental involvement as well as identified factors that promoted and inhibited student achievement was reviewed. The review includes research conducted by Sanders (2001) on school, family, community partnerships. In addition, Sheldon's (2003) research on the relationship between the quality of school, family, and community partnership programs and student achievement was reviewed. In 2005, Epstein conducted a case study of Partnership Schools-Comprehensive School Reform.

Teaching African American Males

Irvine (1990) argues that teachers' lack of understanding and appreciation of the cultural backgrounds, language, living environments, values, or learning styles of African American students is directly related to students' academic failure. Teachers who are effective in teaching African American males take responsibility for their teaching and actively engage all of their students in the learning environment. They help their students maneuver the school bureaucracy, solve problems on a daily basis, and provide coping skills to help them with misfortunes and hardships (Irvine, 1990). The teacher's genuine care builds a productive relationship with the students. This behavior of effective teachers leads to mutual respect between the teacher and students. It is through the development of a positive rapport and personal relationships with their students that teachers assist their students in becoming attached to the learning environment. Polite et al. (1999) states that effective teachers of the African American male expect their students to meet high behavioral and academic standards.

According to Tatum (2005) many low socio economic African American males are "too preoccupied with thoughts of their own mortality and the day-to-day energy required to survive to think about literacy as a bridge to the future"(p.14). Therefore, literacy instruction must be presented as having value in the daily lives of African American males. "Effective teachers of

African American males understand that they must go beyond reading instruction” (p.24). Teachers must understand the life experiences of African American males and how they respond to them. Tatum declares, “teachers must become personally invested in the African American male students in a way that moves beyond the existing curriculum”(p.35). Effective teachers of African American males provide planned literacy instruction that encompasses academic, cultural, emotional, and social literacy.

Collins (1990) contends that disengaged students are not going to do well in school, because they are unable to handle the multiple environments in which they must exist. Deficiencies in their reading abilities only exacerbate their inability to perform successfully in school and in their communities. From the moment their deficiencies have been identified, most students have been exposed to a wide range of reading programs. Many of these remedial reading programs have served as “band-aids” if nothing more for the minority at risk learner (Hopkins, 2001). Students’ continued failure with reading programs has given them a sense of hopelessness and they view reading as an obstacle that they cannot overcome. Therefore, the at-risk learner often views reading as a task to be avoided (Collins, 1990). The at-risk learner needs experiences with reading that have personal relevance and enhance their comprehension. Building low achieving students’ self-esteem, assisting, and motivating them are essential to improving performance (Collins, 1990).

The attitudes of effective teachers reflect their beliefs in their African American male students’ desire to learn and master the school curriculum. Polite et al., 1999 argues that effective teachers believe that student’ academic achievement results from their concerted and consistent efforts, not the students’ abilities. Effective teachers of African American males are constantly seeking ways to engage students in learning activities that interest the students as well as connect to their real life situations. Linking the academic content to students’ experiences emphasizes the relevant practice of effective teachers of African American male students. Students can vividly see the relationship between what they are learning in school and their personal lives (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Consequently, effective teachers believe that using real-life experiences foster learning.

Teacher and Student Interactions

According to Baker (1999), the teacher- student relationship is one vital facet of the classroom learning environment. Students develop skills, attitudes and beliefs regarding

schooling and school attachment based on their relationship with significant others, including teachers. The teacher-student relationship is pertinent for minority or poor children, many of whom are at risk of poor school outcomes (Baker, 1999). A positive relationship with teachers may act as a bridge between home and school cultures (Wang et al., 1994). Personal and academic support of teachers is necessary, because students at risk for school failure may not be exposed to mainstream cultural assumptions regarding schooling. Therefore, at risk students may not make the meaningful connection to the culture without the teacher (Ogbu, 1992). Students may gain access to the school culture and develop the competence to support school success, if they develop a significant relationship with teachers (Baker, 1999).

It is important to study the student teacher relationship at the elementary level, because school related attitudes form and manifest themselves during the latter elementary grades. Therefore, Baker (1999) conducted a study to investigate teacher- student relationship quality and interactions between students and teachers, and their relations to satisfaction with school among low- income, urban, African American students. The researcher obtained information about the teacher- student interactions by conducting classroom observations, interviews with teachers and students, and self- report questionnaires.

Participants in Baker's study were from a public elementary school in a large metropolitan school district located in the southeastern section of the United States. The sample was derived from a potential pool of 126 subjects who completed self report questionnaires. There were 30 third graders, 64 fourth graders, and 30 fifth graders. The selection of students who participated in this study was based upon their scores on a school satisfaction measure. Sixty- one third through fifth grade students were selected from among the potential pool. Students selected to participate in this study included 27 whose scores were in the top quartile and 34 with scores in the bottom quartile on the school subscale of the Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS). The sample participants were observed in their classroom and interviewed following the questionnaire administration. Due to the participants' low socio-economic status and the higher- than average dropout rate, all participants were deemed at risk (Baker, 1999). All teachers and students in this school were African American. Ninety- eight percent of the school's student population participated in the free and reduced-price lunch program. All participants had active parental consent and were afforded the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time.

Baker, a research assistant, and a classroom teacher assisted individual children, as needed, and administered the questionnaire to students in small groups. The questionnaires were read aloud to control for reading differences among the participants. The participants were grouped based on their scores on the school subscale of the Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS). The MSLSS assesses positive subjective well-being in children. Using a four point Likert-type scale (“never”, “sometimes”, “often”, “almost always”), the MSLSS measures five discrete domains of life satisfaction in students in grades 3 through 8. The eight- item school subscale measures the participants’ appraisals of school satisfaction. The MSLSS had an internal consistency reliability of .79 in this study.

Baker and four trained research assistants, who were blind to the participants’ ratings, observed and interviewed the sample in this study. The researcher and her assistants used a modification of the Good and Brophy dyadic teacher-student contact observational system to observe student- teacher interaction. Negative and positive student-teacher interactions were documented using this systematic observation measure. Participants in this study were observed during academic instruction in their classrooms. During the 10-minute observation period, the researcher and assistants used an event-recording procedure to document interactions between students and teachers engaged in academic work, classroom procedures, and behavior issues. Each interaction between the student and teacher was documented and coded into one of the seven categories. Data within the categories were summed across the 10-minute period.

A 15-minute structured interview to assess the participants’ satisfaction with school was conducted with each participant. The interviews were conducted outside the classroom during the school day by trained research assistants. The research assistants were blind to the participants’ scores on the MSLSS. The participants were apprised of the confidentiality and the voluntary nature of the interviews was described to each participant before the interviews. The participant’s responses to the structured interview questions were coded into predetermined categories by one rater who was blind to the students group.

In addition to the classroom observations, structured interviews, and the MSLSS, two self-report measures of the quality of students-teacher relationship were used in this study. The Things That Happen in School Scale was used to measure the participants’ social support at school (Baker, 1999). This scale measured the participants’ perceptions of the degree of assistance available and the supportiveness of interpersonal interactions at school. The Things

That Happen in School, “includes options for students to rate the frequency of the item’s occurrence and its importance to them on a separate three-point Likert-type scale” (Baker, 1999, p.5). Due to the participants’ age at the time of the study, they were not asked to complete the appraisal ratings from this scale. They were only asked to rate the frequency of the item’s occurrence. The subscale yielded an internal consistency reliability of .79 in this study.

The Psychological Safety Index (PSI) was used to measure the participant’s appraisals of the classroom social climate. The PSI is a 31-item scale that measures the degree to which participants perceive the learning environment to be caring, respectful, encouraging, and accepting. This scale accesses participant’s perception of teacher attributes. In this study, the scale yielded an internal consistency reliability of .89.

The researcher used various analyses to determine the teacher-student interaction and relationships among groups of poor, urban, African American students expressing high and low satisfaction with school. First the researcher analyzed the data at the individual participant level. A 3 (grade) X 2 (gender) Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed on each of the variables. Since there were no significant grade or gender effects evidenced, the data were then collapsed for further analysis.

The researcher used t-tests for the frequencies of teacher- student contacts that were summed within the coding categories. There were no statistical differences between the groups. It is important to note that the participants were frequently engaged in independent seatwork according to the observers in this study. The observers only observed the participants for 10 minutes. Therefore, these data should be viewed cautiously.

The data from the observations yielded important findings. The group of participants expressing dissatisfaction with school, 27 percent of their approaches to teachers concerning academic instruction received a negative response. This figure was 75 percent for those participants who were highly satisfied with school. The findings suggest that teachers hold higher expectations for students whom they perceive to be more competent during the course of independent seatwork. Teachers may expect satisfied participants to wait. While on the other hand, teachers recognize the need to seize a teachable moment for the less competent student during instruction.

According to the observational data, there was a distinct difference between the groups when teachers commented to the participants concerning their behavior. The highly satisfied

participants received negative to positive comments about their behavior at a ratio of 3:1. The findings indicate that for every one contact praising a participant's behavior there were three reprimanding the participant's behavior. The dissatisfied participants experienced a ratio of 5.5:1. This means that the teachers commented five and one half times more to these students about inappropriate than appropriate behavior. Despite the fact that the dissatisfied students received more encouragement about their schoolwork, they were subject to more behavioral reprimands than were their more satisfied peers.

The researcher used chi-square analysis to compare the different interview responses between the highly satisfied and dissatisfied groups. It was evident that the groups differed concerning their most and least favorite part of school, and they cited the academics as their least favorite part of school. However, the satisfied group liked every aspect about school ([chi-square] (5) = 15.67, $p=.008$).

Using the data from the participants' self-reports, the quality of student-teacher relationship, social support, and classroom social climate were obtained. The Things That Happened in School measured the differences in social support. The researcher used a two-sample t-test to assess the differences between students reporting high and low school satisfaction. The participants who were satisfied with school reported more social support than their peers who disliked school. The researcher used a Wilcoxin two-sample test to evaluate the differences on the classroom social climate measure (PSI). The Wilcoxin test was used because of unequal variances between the groups. The results indicated that satisfied students significantly perceived a more positive and caring classroom social environment than did their dissatisfied peers (Baker, 1999).

The results of this study indicate as early as the third grade, student perceptions of school as a likeable and satisfying environment is influenced by the social context of the classroom. Students who experience a caring and supportive relationship with their teachers express more satisfaction with school than their peers who express displeasure with school. Despite the behavior interactions with teachers that students experience, it is important for students to perceive that they are cared about and supported in school. The results of this study indicate that a supportive teacher-student relationship is an important variable affecting both learning and psychosocial outcomes seem vital to the academic success of African-American students (Baker, 1999). The supportiveness of teachers creates a positive learning environment in the classroom

and helps students affiliate with school, (Baker, 1999). This supportiveness may be extremely important to at risk African American students who may feel alienated and need assistance adapting to the school's expectations and rigorous demands.

During the period of third to fourth grade (Baker, 1999), acknowledges the scope of the curriculum increase and the achievement abilities between students become evident. Students at risk may have limited academic or behavioral competencies to endure this increased academic focus. Most elementary students spend extended instructional time with one teacher, "thus enhancing the potential for interactions and relationships with that teacher to influence school attitudes and appraisals" (Baker, 1999, p.6). Baker suggests that improving student-teacher relationships may be a means of early intervention for students at risk of poor school outcomes.

There are several limitations cited in this study. The first limitation is the brief periods of observation, and the lack of teacher-student interaction during instruction. The limited teacher-student interactions during the classroom observations created problems in the analyses. Based upon Baker's observational data students were given an abundance of independent seatwork. She states that an abundance of seat work "may exacerbate problems among students who are poorly affiliated to or low- achieving students who may not have the behavioral or academic competence to succeed"(Baker, 1999, p. 8). Secondly, the data can only be generalized to low-income, urban, African American children. It cannot be generalized to other African American students who do not have the adverse effects associated with low socioeconomics. It also cannot be generalized with African American students who may have behavioral or cognitive learning difficulties. Thirdly, it is likely that the sample population differed on academic ability and behavior.

Although, additional research on teacher-student relationships at the elementary school level is needed, this study provided clear evidence that students had formed positive or negative perceptions about school as early as the third grade. This finding is important because the students' perceptions of school may be affected by their interactions with their teachers. Therefore, teachers need professional development in this area to help prevent students from feeling alienated in the learning environment.

Teacher-Student Relationship and Parent Involvement

Many students only read material when it has been assigned to them or when they receive some extrinsic reward for so doing. Another group of students, for example, refuse to read and

become defensive when they are pressed to read. The literature also has identified a final group of students who read enthusiastically and who enjoy doing it (Lamb & Lambert, 1980). A good reader must possess the cognitive skills to comprehend the text and the will to use these skills to achieve high standards and goals. In young students their cognitive skills are a vital determinant of reading achievement (Lamb et al., 1980). However, as they grow older students' beliefs become increasingly important (O'Sullivan, 1992). O'Sullivan found that there is a strong relationship between reading perceptions and reading comprehension (O'Sullivan, 1992). In her study of low-income students, O'Sullivan identified that low-income students' belief systems greatly influenced their reading abilities. This study also indicated that students' perceptions were greatly influenced by the beliefs of their teachers and parents.

The purposes of O'Sullivan's study were to examine the effects of gender and grade in school on (a) students' reading proficiency; (b) students' beliefs about their reading; (c) parents beliefs about the students' reading and (d) teachers' beliefs about the students' reading. The study also examined the casual relationships between students, parents, and teacher beliefs and students' reading proficiency. O'Sullivan chose students from low income families as participants in this study, because they are the students most at risk for not having high achievement in reading.

Third, sixth and ninth grade students from low-income families, their parents, and their teachers participated in this study. The participants were selected in three stages. First, a sample of twenty rural schools from different communities in Eastern Newfoundland that served a high population of low income families was selected. Then superintendents from urban areas were asked to nominate schools within their jurisdictions that served a high population of low income families. This request produced six additional schools. The total sample of 26 schools came from eight school boards within the province (Eastern Newfoundland).

Second, class lists for grades three, six, and nine were provided by each school. The class lists generated 1,527 potential participants. Six trained interviewers then contacted the students' homes via telephone. Ninety-two percent of the parents contacted agreed to participate and completed a telephone interview. Subsequently, only 77% of the parents (1079) gave written permission for their children to participate. The researchers tested the participants at their respective schools and distributed the questionnaires.

Third, based upon employment information supplied by the parents, the sample of 1079 students was reduced to 552 students from very-low income families. Families selected to participate in this study met the following criteria (a) both parents were employed full-time in manual labor, (b) employed part-time in any other capacity, or (c) they were unemployed.

The six teamed interviewers conducted the telephone interviews with parents. Once written permission from the parents was obtained, the researchers tested the student participants at their respective schools. The participants were tested in groups. They were administered a questionnaire about their reading beliefs and the reading comprehension subtest on the Gates-MacGinire Reading Tests. The questionnaire was read orally by the interviewer and administered before the reading test. This procedure was followed to eliminate the effects of the test on students' beliefs (O'Sullivan, 1992).

The teacher with the primary responsibility for the students reading or English instruction completed the teacher questionnaire. There were 77 teachers with this responsibility. Three teachers declined to participate. Data were collected from 74 teachers and 552 students and their parents over an eight-month period.

O'Sullivan's findings indicated that the parents and their children had very positive beliefs about the children's reading. The teachers were less optimistic. The parents and teachers believed that the females were better readers than the males. The teachers in this study had higher expectations for the females. However, it is important to note that the teachers believed that male students were more capable of improvement. The findings indicated that teachers believed that they were more capable of helping male students improve. Teachers also believed that the insufficient effort to improve reading problems was demonstrated more in males than females.

The participants at each grade level had low mean scores from the 35th to 18th quartile on the standardized Gates MacGinire reading comprehension test despite the high class grades assigned by the teachers. Students' beliefs about reading directly and significantly influenced their reading achievement. The beliefs of the parents and teachers greatly influenced students' beliefs. Students who had positive perceptions about themselves were the most proficient readers. These students' parents and teachers also held extremely positive beliefs and expressed them to their children/students (O'Sullivan, 1992). According to the data, it was not until the

students were in the ninth grade that the teacher's assigned grades influenced the students' own beliefs directly.

This study provided evidence of the need to educate low income parents about reading development and instruction. This will help them to have a better understanding of their children's progress and to actively participate in the school system. Educating the low-income parents would also allow parents a shared responsibility in educating their children rather than delegating this authority solely to the school. Parental knowledge about reading is crucial because, between grades three and six, students' confidence in their reading ability decreased. This may be due to the fact that younger students have unrealistic beliefs about their reading skills, but become more objective with age.

Limitations to this study may be cited as the reading proficiency variations among the participants. The participants reading comprehension scores ranged from the first to the ninety-ninth percentile. The rural schools in this study more than doubled those schools from the urban district. The selection of the low-income families based on their employment as manual laborers may be biased. Manual labor is not always associated with low-income in today's society.

This early research by O'Sullivan has practical implications for students, parents, and teachers today. First and foremost, parents should participate in their children's reading development during their elementary school years. Secondly, it is imperative that both teachers and grades reflect an objective assessment of each student's performance. Thirdly, personal control and a sense of empowerment over reading is more motivating to students than anticipated rewards or benefits (O'Sullivan, 1992). Fourthly, gender differences are established by third grade. Males tend to consistently underachieve in reading, because they have not been socialized to behave in ways that are valued in school (O'Sullivan, 1992). During the primary grades, male students experience difficulty conforming to a school environment where the majority of teachers are female. Male students' underachievement in reading is related to their female teachers' (O'Sullivan, 1992).

Parental Influence and Involvement

The literature shows that motivation is a key component in developing students' reading habits, achievement, and learning preferences (Wilson, 1999). Students who like reading generally have parents who like to read (Morrow, 1983). Morrow's study of kindergarten students' high or low interest in literacy suggests that the home exerts a tremendous influence

upon the students. The findings of her investigation indicated home practices that could be successful in school settings and information concerning the crucial role a family plays in the development of their children's literacy. When at-risk students do not have reading role models, and when they continue to experience reading failure, many avoid reading and reading related activities. Therefore, it is imperative that schools and parents unite to bring about improved achievement.

Parent involvement has become a critical component of school reform. As educators seek to better understand, provide a rationale, and remediate the inequalities of student achievement outcomes in the United States, parental involvement has been the focus of educational policy (Desimone, 1999). Educational policy at the district, state, and national levels has provided strategies for improving parental involvement. There are provisions to strengthen relationships between parents and schools in several major pieces of federal legislation, including the Goals 2000, Title 1 of the Improving America's School Act of 1994, The School-To-Work-Opportunities Act and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (Desimone, 1999).

According to Desimone, educators must have a better understanding of how parental involvement effects differ by family background characteristics. This is essential if parental involvement is used as a mechanism to improve school opportunities and outcomes for all students (Desimone, 1999). Utilizing Epstein's conceptual framework, Desimone (1999), compared the effects of multiple types of parental involvement across several racial-ethnic (Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, and Asian) and income groups to examine "how different forms of parental involvement may be "differentially effective for students from diverse backgrounds" (Desimone, 1999).

A non-experimental study was conducted to examine the relationship between types of parent involvement and eighth grade mathematics and reading scores. In this study, Desimone "conceptualized parent involvement as a set of group defining actions, beliefs, and attitudes that serve as an operational factor in defining categorical differences among children from different racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds" (Desimone, 1999, p.11). The researcher addresses the issue that the relationships between particular types of parental involvement and student achievement differ according to students' ethnicity and family income level.

Desimone used the data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS: 88; Ingels, Abraham, Karr, Spencer, & Frankel, 1990). The NELS data consisted of survey

results and standardized test scores for a nationally representative sample of 24,599 adolescents who were eighth graders in 1988 (Desimone, 1999). The NELS data provided a two-stage stratified probability sample of students within 1,035 schools. Students attending the schools were the second-stage. Approximately 21,000 parent surveys were available. Parent and student surveys were used to collect data.

In an attempt to categorize the 88 parent-involvement variables that were reported by the students and thirteen reported by parents, the researcher conducted an exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis using LISREL (Desimone, 1999). Based upon the results, twelve measures were constructed because this study focus was on parent, and not school-initiated actions, the measures were derived from survey questions that inquired about parent behavior and practices.

Desimone used Epstein's parent-involvement typology to systematize the conceptualization and measurement of parent-involvement constructs. Parental-involvement practices were divided into six general categories: Type 1: Parenting practices at home; Type 2: School-home communication; Type 3: Volunteering or being an audience at school; Type 4: Involvement in home learning activities; Type 5: Decision making, governance, and advocacy roles; and Type 6: Community collaboration. A regression statistical analysis was conducted to analyze the data. The students' grade point average and achievement test scores were converted to z scores. The results indicated that racial effects were the strongest effects in the models. Compared to Caucasians, African American, and Hispanics reading and mathematical scores were at a substantial disadvantage. Asian students were at a disadvantage in reading. However, African Americans' grades were not significantly below their Hispanic and Asian peers.

The middle and high-income models were not significantly different from each other. However, each of the ethnic group models was significantly different from each other. According to the results of this study, there were statistically significant and substantively meaningful differences in the relationship between student achievement and parent involvement, according to the student's ethnicity and socio economic background (Desimone, 1999). Depending on the type of parent involvement, student achievement varied. For example, the findings indicated that parent involvement at the school fosters a relationship among the teachers and parents. This relationship positively affects teacher perceptions of students' homework completion and attendance. Volunteering at the school level for Caucasian middle-income

students affected student achievement more than Asian, African American, Hispanic and low-income students.

Parents participating in the school's Parent Teacher Organization allow them to participate on an advocacy and decision-making level at the building level. This is important because Desmoine's findings indicate that participating in the PTO was a significant predictor for increased mathematical and reading scores for both African American and Caucasian students. Involvement in the PTO was a stronger predictor of grades for African American students than for any other racial-ethnic minorities or low-income students (Desimone, 1999, p. 20). For African American parents participating in the PTO may empower them to eliminate some cultural barriers traditionally held by the school, teachers, and parents.

Although the stakeholders in education are constantly trying to close the achievement gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged, disparities in education and income are increasing. The findings of this study are used to help policy makers and educators effectively respond to a diverse population of students. The findings should be used to promote academic excellence and life skills to encourage success for all students.

There are several limitations cited in this study. First, using NELS data, it is impossible to determine whether or not parent-involvement behaviors or practices might have occurred in response to a school-initiated action or independent of school efforts. Second, the NELS data is not a true random sample. Third, casual relationships cannot be estimated with any certainty because non-experimental data was used in this study. Fourth, there were too many variables and measures.

This was a very complex and complicated study. Although the study is in-conclusive, it is based on solid theoretical research. However, the results are very beneficial to educators who are serious about closing the achievement gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged and establishing true parent partnerships. The findings from this study may enhance parent-teacher interactions on a personal basis. It may provide insight to the school level policy makers when they are developing a parent involvement program that meets the needs of all families involved in their school.

“Our nation's general failure to diagnose and treat early reading difficulties is disproportionately harmful to poor and minority students” (Hettleman, 2003, p.3). The delay or failure to diagnose early reading difficulties in at-risk students “rapidly metastasize into

academic deficits and disruptive and self-destructive behavior that special education is powerless to cure (Hettleman, 2003). Often the reading difficulties are contributed to the student and family, rather than the school's failure to deliver the best reading instruction (Hettleman, 2003).

Academic Achievement of Elementary African American Males

In a quest to identify the major factors that contributed to the drastic academic decline in African American males after entering the third grade, Wilson (2003) researched this phenomenon in Mississippi. Utilizing a rural elementary school, Wilson sought to determine the major factors that promote and inhibit the academic success of sixteen African American males. Qualitative research methodology was used so that the researcher could focus on the students' life, behavior, emotions, and feelings. Personal interviews were used to collect the data to examine the meanings of the African American males' experiences.

The participants in this study were enrolled in grades three through six in one small rural school located in Mississippi. During this research, the total student enrollment was 370 students with an ethnic composition of 75 percent Caucasians and 25 percent African American. This Title 1 school was located in a rural community with a high unemployment rate. According to Wilson, fifty percent of the students who attended this school through the sixth grade do not graduate from high school.

There were 31 African American males in grades three through six. Six of these students were not included in the study because they were found eligible for special education services. These students were identified as having learning disabilities primarily in reading and math. The remaining twenty-five African American males were invited to participate in this study. However, only sixteen agreed to participate in this study. The participants' ages in this study ranged from eight to thirteen years-old. There were four third graders, seven fourth graders, three fifth graders, and two sixth graders. Seven of the participants were retained in one or more grades. The participants did not repeat kindergarten. Nine students were in their appropriate grades according to their chronological age.

The researcher used two methods to collect data. First, Wilson utilized individual face-to-face interviews with each of the African American male participants. The six thirty minute interviews were conducted over a three month period. During each session, the participants were asked to express their feelings about school, teachers, parents, and themselves, and their responses were taped recorded. Second, the participants' cumulative records were examined to

review their academic progress. The researcher examined the students' Mississippi Curriculum Test Scores (MCT) and the 2002-2003 first semester grades. The two methods of data collection allowed the researcher to capture a true picture of each participant. It was noted that the participants' inner strength was overwhelming because they encountered many obstacles at home and school on a daily basis, yet they persevered. The participants' coping mechanisms often shielded their needs from their respective teachers.

The data from this study revealed eight emergent themes regarding factors that promote and inhibit academic achievement as exposed through the voices of sixteen African American elementary males. The emergent themes were (a) pre-literacy activities, (b) academic assistance, (c) parental involvement, (d) school safety, (e) problems at school, (f) study skills, (g) academic achievement, and (h) classroom distractions. The pre-literacy activities for the participants varied some, however; a majority of the participants had experienced literature and reading during Sunday church services and with a family member. Many of these participants participated in Sunday school and learned poems and verses for church programs and activities. Many of the participants had a family member to read to them before and after they became emergent readers. These students had higher reading scores than those students who did not have someone to engage them in pre-literacy activities.

The academic assistance from an adult in their educational lives was indicated as extremely vital. The participants revealed that they performed better when an adult took interest in their education. They made better grades, did their homework regularly, and listened more attentively in class. Participants who reported receiving little or no assistance did not fare as well in school as the students who did (Wilson, 2003).

The participants were proud to have their parents come to school and work with their teachers. The participants whose parents came to school for lunch or visited regularly had fewer behavioral referrals, better test scores and better grades than those who did not have parental support. The nine participants who had not repeated a grade, parents were more active in their education than those who had repeated a grade.

Most of the participants had inward fears about school and community safety. Many felt safer at school than at home. When participants felt threatened, they did not perform well academically. School safety was related to academic success and failure.

Problems that the participants encountered daily were sometimes excruciating and eliminated the enjoyment of going to school. Those participants who had an adult support system avoided additional problems at school. The participants that did not have an adult support system often took matters into their own hands, and thus created more problems for themselves. The participants indicated that problems at home and school inhibited their academic progress, while safety and security promoted academic success.

Some participants revealed that they did not know how to effectively use the study packets that their teachers handed out. Two of the participants indicated that they had success on their spelling tests when a small group studied together. The findings indicated a need to teach the participants effective study skills and habits. Therefore, their inability to study and navigate the instructional packet inhibited academic progress. Despite the lack of mastery study skills, some participants were able to devise methods that produced positive academic results. The African American males who possessed well-developed study skills and consistent study habits had academic success. They also indicated that when their respective mothers studied with them, they made better grades and performed well on tests.

According to Wilson, the participants in this study had a good understanding of academic achievement and the efforts required to promote success in the classroom. However, for various reasons many of the participants elected not to adhere to the required regiment to be successful. The African American male participants in this study indicated that they learned best when they were taught according to their individual learning styles. They directly linked academic success with learning styles. They also indicated that academic achievement was promoted when they listened attentively to the classroom instruction, and studied at home as well as at school. The participants emphasized the importance of receiving an understanding of the concepts and objectives from their teachers. A majority of the participants understood that reading literacy time at school and at home was a necessity for their survival at school as well as in their respective community. Reading provided a majority of the participants a fascinating and adventurous way to travel to unknown places. The participants who immersed themselves in reading had higher test scores than those students who said that reading was boring. The participants who routinely read at home had higher reading comprehension test scores than those who did not read at home. According to Wilson, the participants who utilized reading as a tool to

learning, “articulated and responded to questions in a more affluent manner” (Wilson, 2003, p.22).

Although, several of the participants had reading comprehension deficiencies, they indicated that they had better success with reading materials that interested them. The participants indicated that their level of reading comprehension was a factor that promoted and inhibited academic success. Data from the participants’ reading test scores and grades indicated that the males who read with comprehension were more academically successful than the male participants who did not read with comprehension. School and home literacy activities influenced the academic success and failure of the sixteen African American males in Wilson’s study.

All of the participants in the study indicated that classroom distractions inhibited academic success. When classroom disruptions occurred due to inappropriate behavior by other students, the participants expressed feelings of anger, disappointment, and dismay. All of the participants agreed that their academic performance was affected by classroom distractions, because they often lost their concentration of what the teacher was saying.

This study provided evidence that many African American males are bombarded daily with societal issues that prevent them from achieving to their fullest potential. However, most try desperately not to succumb to the factors that place them at risk of academic failure. The findings in Wilson’s study reiterate the importance of early reading achievement, positive teacher interactions with the students and parents, and some level of parental involvement with the student at home as well as at school. Two critical teaching strategies that may improve student achievement were indicated by the participants. These strategies were teaching to the participants preferred learning styles, and allowing the participants to participate in cooperative learning activities.

Limitations to this study may be cited as the small number of participants and their varied levels of reading proficiency. Some of the participants were over-aged for their current grade assignment. Some participants had repeated primary grades due to their inability to read with comprehension by the end of the third grade. This study was conducted in a rural Mississippi school district that was located in an economically oppressed environment where many adults did not value education.

School, Family, and Community Partnership

Community involvement is deemed beneficial for children, schools, and society as a whole. Traditionally schools and families have had the greatest impact on the development of children. Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence emphasizes that schools, families, and communities are major institutions that socialize and educate children (Sanders, 2001). Academic excellence is best achieved through the cooperation and support of the major institutions. However, Heath and McLaughlin, (1987) argued that "the problem of educational achievement and academic success demands resources beyond the scope of the school and of most families" (Heath et al., 1987, p.579). According to the researchers, the changing family structure, workplace demands, and the growing diversity among students are some of the reasons that schools and families alone cannot provide sufficient resources for children to be successful in the world today.

Community partnerships can differ greatly in their focus, scope, and content (Ascher, 1988). Partnerships can be a vital facet in a school's improvement plan. Although variations exist among school-community partnerships, there are seven key steps for building successful collaborations. Sanders states these steps include "(a) identifying issues or goals to address; (b) defining the focus and scope of the partnerships; (c) identifying community assets (potential partners); (d) selecting partners; (e) monitoring progress; (f) evaluating activities; and (g) sharing success stories" (Sanders, 2001, p. 21).

Sanders sought to provide specific guidelines for effective partnership program development through analysis of survey data collected from the National Network of Partnership Schools [NNPS], in order to provide detailed information on how schools can develop effective community partnerships. Sanders conducted an analysis to "(a) identify and categorize the community agencies and organizations with whom the schools partnered; (b) document the focus of their partnership activities; (c) identify obstacles to the implementation of their school-community partnerships and strategies to overcome these obstacles; and (d) examine factors that influenced schools' satisfaction with their community involvement activities" (Sanders, 2001, p.23).

The sample population consisted of 443 schools that were members of NNPS John Hopkins University before December 1997. The NNPS provides theory-driven and research-based assistance, support, and training to schools, districts, and states that are committed to

building permanent school, family, and community partnership programs (Epstein, 2001; Sanders, 2001). Each participating school must use an Action Team for Partnership (ATP) and Epstein's framework of six types of involvement. Each school was also required to complete an annual end-of-year survey.

The schools in the NNPS possess diverse demographic characteristics. From the 434 schools in the sample, 34 percent are located in large cities, 27 percent are in suburban areas, 20 percent are located in small cities, and 19 percent are located in rural areas (Sanders, 2001). A majority (70 %) of the schools in the sample serve elementary aged students. Sixty-five percent of the sample schools receive some Title I funds and 43 percent are school wide Title I programs (Sanders, 2001).

According to the data from returned surveys, 70 percent of the school's reported at least one community partnership activity. Three-fourths (75%) of the schools indicated that their schools were developing ways for schools, families, and students to contribute to the larger community. The research findings also revealed that schools that had active community partners were more likely to be satisfied with the quantity and quality of the partnership. There was a significant negative correlation between schools located in large urban cities and their satisfaction with the quality of their community partnership activities. When a regression analysis was conducted the results indicated that urban schools, elementary schools, and schools facing a greater number of obstacles to partnerships did not report an overall satisfaction rating with their community partnership activities. A cross sectional analysis indicated that an additional variable such as longitudinal patterns may provide a better explanation of schools' overall satisfaction with their community partners.

The study suggests the district and school support for elementary partnerships may influence the number of obstacles schools face when establishing partnership activities. Additional quantitative research on factors that promote and impede school- community partnerships would inform both policy and practice. Research in this area would help educators to integrate comprehensive school, family, and community partnership programs that support student achievement of the at- risk learner.

Recent research on school, family, and community partnership programs and student performance on state-mandated achievement tests was conducted by (Sheldon, 2003). Utilizing Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres and six types of involvement as a framework, Sheldon

examined the relationship between the quality of school, family, and community partnership programs and student achievement on state assessments. The school, home, and community environments have been conceptualized by Epstein as “spheres of influence” (Epstein, 2001). Institutional policies and individual beliefs and practices impact the relationship between these overlapping spheres.

Sheldon, (2003) contends that the greater the overlap of the spheres of influence means that “schools are more family-like, families are more school-like, and community support schools, students, and families”. “School outreach to involve families and the community in children’s education is an important strategy for increasing the number of families involved and the consequences of their efforts” (Sheldon, 2003, p.151).

Epstein, Sanders, and other faculty members from John Hopkins University established the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). The purpose of the NNPS is to assist educators in researching results while developing programs of school, family, and community partnerships (Sanders, 2001; Sheldon, 2003). The NNPS provides guidance “to develop leadership structures and processes for partnership programs that encourage families and communities to become involved in students’ schooling” (Sheldon, 2003, p.151).

Establishing an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) that consist of school administrators, teachers, parents, community members, and, students who are in high school, is a requirement for NNPS members. The ATP is charged with “planning and conducting family and community involvement activities, evaluating progress, and sustaining the school’s program of partnerships” (Sheldon, 2003, p.152). The ATP is expected to employ all six types of involvement and coordinate involvement activities that support school improvement goals.

According to Sheldon, an abundance of research conducted on the impact of school, family, and community partnership programs did not exist in 2003. Therefore, he examined the relationship between the quality of school, family, and community partnership and student achievement on criteria-referenced standardized achievement tests used in many states throughout the United States.

In this study, the researcher gathered information from NNPS for 113 public schools in one large urban school district that assessed the characteristics of the quality of the schools’ partnership programs in each school from 1998-1999. However, only 82 schools provided complete data on their respective partnership programs. Sheldon combined these data with 1997-

1998 and 1998-1999 achievement data from third and fifth grade students' performance on the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP). The MSPAP is a performance-based, criteria-referenced test that is required by Maryland's law for all third, fifth, and eighth graders. The students are assessed in the subjects of Reading, Language Usage, Writing, Math, Science, and Social Studies. The results of the tests are a primary indicator of school performance through out the state of Maryland (Sheldon, 2003). The elementary schools investigated in this study had large student enrollments in excess of 500 students. The schools served a mostly low-income and mobile student population. Approximately 80 percent of the students receive free or reduced price meals. Mobility was also an issue for the selected schools, because 41 percent of the students did not complete a full school year at one particular school.

The leaders of the sample elementary schools used in this study were asked to complete a survey, UpDATE to evaluate the quality and progress of their school's partnership program for the 1998-1999 school year. Completion of the annual survey with members from the Action Team for Partnerships and program leaders from each respective school was required. In this study, 86 percent of the surveys were completed by two or more people at their respective schools. Sheldon, (2003) indicates that nearly half of the surveys were completed with the collaboration of the team leader and assistance from a school administrator. Almost three-fourths of the surveys were completed with the assistance of teachers, and about half of the surveys were completed with the input of a parent or parent liaison. Using a six-point scale, schools rated the quality and provided an in-depth description of their partnership program. The ratings included: not yet started, start-up program, fair/average program, good program, very good program, and excellent program. According to Sheldon, (2003) an example of a fair/average program was indicative of the following characteristics:

An Action Team was formed and a One Year Action Plan was written for 1998-1999. A few activities were implemented for some of the six types of involvement. Schools' program meets a few challenges to include all families. Several teachers involve families at several grade levels. Some teachers, parents, and students know that our school is working to improve school, family, and community partnerships, and some know that our school is a member of the National Network of Partnership Schools" (Sheldon, 2003, p. 154).

A pairwise t- test analysis was conducted to compare the 82 schools that returned the UpDATE survey with the 31 schools that did not return surveys. The results indicated that the two groups of schools did not differ in size, mobility, or income. It is important to note that the schools that returned their surveys had slightly higher percentages of fifth-grade students scoring satisfactory or above on the Math subtest ($t = 2.46, p \leq .02$). Overall, both groups of schools were similar in background and achievement test scores. High mobility schools had significantly lower percentages of students who scored satisfactory or above on the MSPAP Reading and Math tests. This result pattern also held true for Writing, Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies.

The researcher used ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analyses that were conducted to investigate the impact of the quality of schools' partnership programs predicted MSPAP achievement, after controlling for school size, income, and student mobility. Schools in this sample with a high percentage of students receiving free and reduced-priced lunches reported significantly lower percentages of third graders scoring at least satisfactory in Reading ($\beta = -.295, p < .004$), Writing ($\beta = -.261, p .016$), and Language Usage ($\beta = -.215, p .049$). With the school factors of mobility, size, and income taken into account, the results indicated that students scored satisfactory or above in Reading ($\beta = .260, p \leq .009$), Writing ($\beta = -.249, p \leq .019$), Math ($\beta = .248, p \leq .008$), Science ($\beta = .283, p \leq .011$), and Social Studies ($\beta = .281, p \leq .009$).

Based upon the findings from Sheldon's research, school programs to involve families and communities are important to students' achievement. After accounting for mobility, school size, and income of the school population, the results indicate the degree to which schools are working to overcome several challenges to increase the level of parent involvement is associated with students' performance on state tests (Sheldon, 2003). This study provides vital programmatic information that predicts students performance on achievement tests are directly linked to the schools efforts to meet challenges to family and community involvement. One such challenge that schools must improve upon is providing better communication about the school and student progress with parents who do not speak or read English well. Another challenge to overcome is finding ways for parents who cannot visit the school to help their children at home. According to Sheldon, "the data suggest that schools that do not address these types of

challenges are less likely to have family and community involvement programs that affect students' achievement on tests such as the MSAP" (Sheldon, 2003, p .16).

There are several limitations cited in this study. A casual relationship between program partnership outreach and student achievement cannot be presumed. The cross-sectional survey data is a limitation to this study. The low scores and low variation of student performance on the MSPAP prohibited the use of longitudinal data that was collected. Lastly, although the regression analyzes controlled some school factors, the available data did not measure variables such as classroom instructions, teachers' years of experience, and levels of teacher training and licenses.

The results of this study suggest that school partnerships that reach all families and the community are vital to schools located in low-income urban environments. This partnership is important because students are more likely to perform at higher levels on state-mandated achievement tests. This study provides recent empirical data that supports school programs to involve all families may be one useful reform strategy to help improve student achievement.

In addition to Sheldon's research on the partnerships that connect families' and the community's involvement to school improvement, Epstein provides a case study of Partnership Schools-Comprehensive School Reform. The Partnership Schools-CRS is a current model that is designed for implementation to bring about change within the entire school. Utilizing the work of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at John Hopkins University, the Comprehensive School Reform was created. It is based on Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence. Epstein maintains "that students learn more when home, school, and community work together to support students' learning and development". Epstein, (2005, p.152).

In the Partnership Schools-CRS model that was used in this study, several action teams consisting of teachers, administrators, and community leaders were organized to link school improvement to specific goals. Leadership on each action team was shared. There were specific structures, processes, tools and approaches developed to enhance the action teams' planning, implementation, evaluation and continuation to improve their programs (Epstein, 2005). Under the guidance of the principal and school improvement team, all action teams were accountable for their plans, work, and results. The action teams' plans must include activities for six types of

family and community involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community).

In addition, the Partnership Schools- CRS model was designed to meet the requirements for federal funding. Funded CRS programs must meet the following criteria: (1) effective, research-based, replicable methods and strategies for improvement; (2) comprehensive design with aligned components; (3) professional development; (4) measurable goals and benchmarks;

(5) support for the program within the school' (6) support for teachers and principals; (7) parental and community involvement; (8) external technical support and assistance; (9) to evaluation strategies; (10) coordination of resources and (11) strategies improve student achievement. The National Network of Partnership Schools provided services to the CRS to meet these criteria through continuous support from an on-site Partnership Schools-CRS facilitator.

Epstein's case study was the first longitudinal examination to determine if the Partnership Schools-CRS model could be implemented and what were the school's results on the state's standardized achievement test (Epstein, 2005). The CSR School selected in this three-year research was an elementary school located in an urban school district in Connecticut. Cityside Elementary School was designated as a school-wide Title 1 program that was attended by approximately 375 students in grades K-5. About 51% of the students received free or reduced-price lunch. Cityside Elementary was a neighborhood school that served a diverse population that spoke many different languages. The students and their families were highly mobile. Some families removed their children mid-year to visit other countries did or did not return to the school. Most parents were not actively involved at the school or with their children on schoolwork at home.

The school's administration and faculty sought to change this lack of parental involvement. Therefore, they organized action teams that included administrators, faculty, families and community partners to focus on the fourth grade reading, writing, and mathematics achievement assessments of the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT). In addition, the action teams focused on the eight essential elements of high-quality programs of school, family, and community partnerships: leadership, teamwork, plans for action, implementation of plans, funding, collegial support, evaluation, and networking (Epstein, 2005).

The results indicated that CRS, Cityside Elementary increased connections with families on seven out of eight indicators of family and community involvement for the 3-year period of

the study. Data collected from Cityside and a comparison school on the fourth grade Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) yielded the following results: In reading Cityside increased the percentage of students attaining the Level 4 proficient scores from 38% to 45% over the 3 year period. During the same period, the comparison school's reading data decreased from 39% to 37% of its fourth grade students attaining the Level 4 proficient scores. The data revealed that the fourth grade students at Cityside showed the most improvement in writing. During the 3 year period, the students performing at Level 4 increased from 21% to 43%. The students performing at Level 4 in math also increased during this period from 54% to 66%. The gaps between the Cityside students' test scores and the district's scores were closing during this 3 year period.

In summary, the results of Partnership School-CRS increase in achievement scores are encouraging. However, more research should be conducted to extend this work. In addition, the implementation of the Partnership Schools Comprehensive School Reform appears to be paramount to increasing family and community involvement as well as fourth grade student achievement. According to Epstein, "If a school improvement model is not well implemented, there is no justification for analyzing its effects on achievement". (Epstein, 2005, p. 164).

Summary

The literature review for this study is on-going. However, the literature reviewed thus far indicates that teacher's instruction and parental involvement are the two most important factors that influence the reading achievement of the African American male. The review of literature emphasizes the evolvement of parental involvement wherein the focus is not placed on the parents, but on student success. In addition, the literature provides insight into how school, family, and community partnerships can be utilized to effectively improve school programs, and collaborations with families and community partners to positively affect reading achievement. Most of all, the literature review reiterates the need for the researcher's current study.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Parental involvement in schools has evolved from being about parents to student success (Epstein, 2001). An overview of the literature revealed that specific school programs and teacher practices encourage parental involvement at school and provides guidance to parents as to how they can help their children at home (Epstein, 2001; Henderson et al., 2002; Sheldon, 2003). School leaders and teachers can help change the home learning environment by facilitating activities that develop and maintain partnerships with the families that they serve (Epstein, 1995, 2001). The literature also revealed that parental involvement is a consistent factor that influences student achievement (Baker, 1999; Epstein, 1995, 2001; Henderson et al., 2002; Sheldon, 2003; Wilson, 2003). The parental involvement component is so vital that it is required in many federal and state education programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2002; U. S. Department of Education, 2003). Epstein suggests that principals and teachers need to plan for parental involvement just as they do for curriculum, professional development, and other facets needed to produce and maintain a successful learning environment for all students.

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which reading achievement of fourth grade African American male learners improve with school, family, and community partnerships. This study focused on a sample of fourth grade African American males from the Tidewater region of Virginia who are enrolled in Title 1 schools within one urban school district. The goals of this study examined the relationship between school, family, and community partnerships and the reading achievement of the African American male. Secondly, the study was to identify which types of parental involvement have the greatest influence on the reading achievement of African American males. Thirdly, the study was to identify parental involvement activities that significantly influence the reading achievement of the fourth grade African American male learner.

Research Questions

The literature review identified parental involvement as a key factor that influences the reading achievement of African American males in elementary schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia and it was used to frame this study. The following research questions guided this study:

1. Is there a significant relationship and difference between particular parental involvement activities and the reading achievement of African American males?
2. Is there a significant relationship and difference between a specific type of parental involvement and the reading achievement of African American males?
3. Is there a significant relationship and difference between school, family, and community partnerships and the reading achievement of African American males?

Research Design

This study utilized quantitative research methods to collect data from teacher and principal surveys and Virginia Standards of Learning reading assessment tests. Historically, educational research has been dominated by quantitative methodology. Quantitative research uses “objective measurement and statistical analysis of numeric data to understand and explain phenomena”,(Ary et al., 2002, p.23).

Research Site

The participants selected for this study are from elementary schools within one urban school district located in the Tidewater region of Virginia. The school district is a member of the National Network of Partnership Schools. All of the surveyed schools have similar demographic characteristics and serve a diverse population of students. The majority of the student population studied qualifies for free or reduced cost lunch. The schools are designated with Title 1 status and receive funding for additional Language Arts and Mathematics instruction. Pseudonyms are given to the district and all schools to preserve confidentiality.

Population

The participants in the study are all fourth grade teachers and principals in the selected schools. There were 49 potential participants. Forty-six participants responded to the survey for a return rate of 93.87%. The classroom teachers and principals in this study have various years of classroom teaching and administrative experience. The teachers may have or may not have had experience serving on the school’s action team to plan and write measurable objectives to improve the reading achievement of African American males.

Instruments

The researcher utilized two data sources to conduct the study. Epstein's research on the six types of parental involvement, the instrument included questions designed to measure which type of parental involvement teachers deem effective in increasing the level of parental involvement in their African American male students' academic and home learning environments. The participants in the study were administered a Likert type survey that was abbreviated by the researcher from Joyce Epstein's School-Family-Community Partnerships. The researcher has permission to use Epstein's survey in this study. The permission letter to use Epstein's survey is included in appendix D. The survey includes many Likert type items that require variations in responses to each section of the survey. The teacher and principal surveys included questions that provided information on their attitudes about involvement, school program, teacher practices to involve families, estimates of family involvement, and estimates of support for involvement by other educators, parents, and the community (Epstein, 1995). The survey also contained several open ended questions to assess which parental involvement activities and partnerships that teachers and principals ranked as significant in improving the reading achievement of the African American fourth grade male.

The criterion referenced Standards of Learning [SOL] test is an outcome based assessment that measures the reading achievement of all fourth grade students who are enrolled in Virginia's public school districts. The 2006, spring assessment of this instrument was used to determine the reading achievement level of the fourth grade males. The researcher obtained the scale scores for each school surveyed from the Virginia Department of Education. The achievement levels are identified as: (a) non-mastery with scores from 0-399; (b) proficient with scores from 400-499; and (c) advance proficiency with scores from 500-600. Six hundred on a Standards of Learning test is a perfect score.

Validity

The researcher used an instrument that is an abbreviated version of Epstein's School, Family, and Community Partnerships Survey. The researcher did not use the six- page parent section of the survey. The researcher included a section of promising practices for reading achievement to Epstein's original survey. The promising practices were compiled from the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) *Promising Partnership Practices*, (2006).

A pilot study was conducted on the promising practices section of the survey. The School-Family-Community Partnership survey has been used many times in research studies. It has been reviewed by several experts in the field. The researcher referenced other research that supports the theory and evidence.

The Standards of Learning assessment was developed with the cooperation of a Content Review Committee composed of Virginia educators who have experience and expertise in the content area and grade level of the test. The Content Review Committee in conjunction with the Virginia State Department of Education [VDOE], and the testing contractor, review each test question before it is field tested (Virginia Department of Education, 1999).

The pilot testing for the Promising Practices section of the School-Family-Community Partnership survey was conducted at an urban elementary school located in the Piedmont region of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Joyner Elementary School serves students from a large public housing development. More than eighty-nine percent of the student population receives free or reduced price lunch. The school holds the status of a Title 1 school. Despite Joyner Elementary School's Title 1 status, this is a high performing school. This school has made adequate yearly progress and has been fully accredited as measured by the No Child Left Behind benchmarks, and Virginia's Standards of Learning assessments for the last seven consecutive years.

Twenty highly qualified teachers and one principal participated in the pilot study. The teachers' professional years of experience varied. Most of the teachers are certified to teach grades kindergarten through fifth grades. The principal is a veteran administrator who has an earned a doctoral degree.

The pilot testing for the Promising Practices was conducted to examine the clarity of the directions, practice statements, time to complete, other concerns not foreseen. The respondents stated the required time to complete this section of the survey to be approximately five to seven minutes. Three respondents commented on the choices of importance: (1) Not Important, (2) A Little Important, (3) Pretty Important, and (4) Very Important. However, these terms are in keeping with Epstein's terminology. One typographical error was noted and corrected. After the survey was collected, several conversations erupted amongst the teachers as to how they could incorporate some of the Promising Practices at their school.

Reliability

The instrument used was an abbreviated version of Epstein's School, Family, and Community Partnership Survey. The researcher did not use the six- page parent section of the survey. Each section of the survey was preceded by instructions to complete that section of the survey. The instrument has been tested many times for reliability and validity. It has been used in many research investigations. A pilot test of the Promising Practices was used to test for reliability.

Experts from outside of the state of Virginia and the Virginia Department of Education have conducted a review of procedures on the Standards of Learning assessment. Evidence gathered over the years indicates that all questions are tested for reliability before they are included on the assessment.

Data Collection

The researcher obtained the appropriate permission and authorization to conduct the study. The researcher submitted an Institute Review Board application and obtained approval (see Appendix F) from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University to conduct the study. Then the researcher submitted an application to conduct research in the Honeydew Heights School Division. When the permission to access the participants from the school division's superintendent was granted (see Appendix G), the researcher made contact with the schools' principals. The researcher asked for permission to have the teachers' and principals' survey completed during the school day. The completed surveys were collected by the principal's designee in each respective school building and placed in an envelope that was sealed immediately. This study was conducted over a three week period to provide ample time for all participating schools to complete and return the teacher surveys. Due to the length of the survey, a few principal respondents did not respond within the three weeks time frame. Because of the population size of principals, the researcher was advised to exhaust all means of cooperation from the reluctant principals. Therefore, the researcher made numerous contacts through telephone calls, emails, and school visits to persuade the principals to complete the survey. The researcher visited one principal five times before she completed the survey while the researcher waited.

Data Analysis

In this study, a Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was utilized. The Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used to measure the linear association between two variables that have been measured on interval or ratio scales. This method helped the researcher investigate the relationship between two quantitative continuous variables that are not scored right or wrong (Ary et al., 2002).

To further analyze the data in this study, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the data collected from the teachers' and principals' surveys. An analysis of variance was used to test hypotheses about differences between and among groups. An ANOVA can test the difference between two or more means (Ary et al., 2002, p.193). For this study, an ANOVA was used to analyze the data, because the study is designed with more than one independent variable or more than two levels of an independent variable (Ary et al., 2002, p.193). In this study, the dependent variable was the reading achievement of African American males. The independent variables are the six types of parent involvement, the parental involvement activities and partnerships that teachers perceive as influencing reading achievement. The variables assessed from the questionnaire were the six types of parent involvement and which parental involvement activities influence reading achievement.

Summary

This study used quantitative research methods to collect data. Instruments used to collect data were Epstein's School, Family, and Community Partnerships Survey and the Virginia Standards of Learning reading assessment. Both instruments have been well researched for reliability and validity. Both instruments are consistently used in research by experts in the field of education. A Pearson's Correlation was used to investigate any relationships, and an Analysis of Variance was used to investigate the difference in the data for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which reading achievement of fourth grade African American male learners improves with school, family, and community partnerships. The present study focused on a sample of fourth grade African American males from the Tidewater region of Virginia who are enrolled in Title 1 schools within one urban school district and the perceptions of their teachers and principals. The goals of this study were to examine the relationship between school, family, and community partnerships and the reading achievement of the fourth grade African American male. Second, the study was to identify which type of parental involvement significantly influenced the reading achievement of African American males. The third goal was to identify parental involvement activities that significantly influenced the reading achievement of the African American male learner. Data gathered included responses to surveys of teachers and principals and reading scores of fourth grade African American males.

The current research study was conducted within the Honeydew Heights School Division. According to the measures of No Child Left Behind benchmarks and the Virginia Standards of Learning assessments, this is a high performing urban school division that serves a large population of fourth grade African American males. There are 24 elementary schools within the school division. Fourteen elementary schools hold the status of Title 1. In addition, the Honeydew Heights School Division received a 2007 Partnership District Award from the National Network of Partnership Schools [NNPS] at John Hopkins University. This award demonstrated “that research-based approaches can be used to increase family and community involvement in ways that contribute to student success in school” (Epstein, 2007, p. 1).

Table 2

Demographic Profile of Participants

		N	%
Position	Principal	11	24
	Teacher	35	76
Years of Experience	1-3	13	28
	4-10	12	26
	11-39	21	46
Years at School	1-3	28	61
	4-32	18	39
Taught in 06-07	Did not teach	10	29
	Did teach	25	72
	Principal	11	0
Gender	Male	5	11
	Female	40	87
	No Response	1	2
Degree	Bachelor's	6	13
	Bachelor's +	19	41
	Master's	5	11
	Master's +	14	30
	Doctorate	2	4
Ethnicity	African American	23	50
	White	21	46
	Other	1	2
	No Response	1	2

Forty-six principals and teachers at 13 Title 1 schools responded to the survey. One Title 1 school chose not to participate in the research study. Table 2 summarizes their background and demographic information.

The sample was predominantly female (87%) and African American (50%) and had four or more years of experience (72%). One participant did not specify ethnicity. There are five males

and 40 female participants in this study. One participant did not specify gender. Overall, 85 percent of the Title 1 elementary schools' principals participated in the research study. Twenty-four percent of the study's participants were principals. The number years of experience for participating principals range from four to 32 years, for an average of 23 years in education. The education levels of the principal participants varied. There were two principals who had earned a doctorate degree, six who had earned a master's degree and additional credits, and three who had earned a master's degree.

Seventy-six percent of the respondents ($n = 35$) were Title 1 elementary school teachers. The years of experience for the participants ranged from one year to 39 years. Twenty-five (71%) of the teacher participants taught fourth grade during the 2006-2007 school year. Ten (28%) teacher participants did not teach fourth grade during the 2006-2007 school year. However, 7 of the 10 teachers who did not teach fourth grade during the 2006-2007 school year were veteran teachers with experience ranging from four to 32 years. Only three teacher participants who did not teach fourth grade during the 2006-2007 school were novice teachers with three years or less teaching experience.

The teachers' educational background ranged from a bachelor's degree to a master's degree plus additional credits. Fifty percent of the teachers earned a bachelor's degree plus additional credits. Twenty-three percent of the fourth grade teachers earned a master's degree plus additional credits.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. Is there a significant relationship and difference between particular parental involvement activities and the reading achievement of African American males?
2. Is there a significant relationship and difference between a specific type of parental involvement and the reading achievement of African American males?
3. Is there a significant relationship and difference between school, family, and community partnerships and the reading achievement of African American males?

A survey, adapted by the researcher from Joyce Epstein's School, Family, and Community Partnerships Survey, was hand delivered to survey participants. The survey addressed the six types of parental involvement and teachers' perceptions of the importance of each of these types: Type 1 Parenting; Type 2 Communicating; Type 3 Volunteering; Type 4 Learning at Home; Type 5 Decision Making; and Type 6 Collaborating with the Community.

The survey was composed of the following sections: (a) promising practices; (b) teacher attitudes about family and community involvement; (c) teacher views family strength; (d) ways teachers contact families; (e) importance to teachers of communicating activities (Type 2); (f) how volunteers are involved in classrooms; (g) how volunteers are involved in the school; (h) importance to teacher of learning at home activities (Type 4); (i) importance to teacher of decision making activities (Type 5); (j) importance to teacher of collaborating with community activities (Type 6); (k) importance to teacher of all practices to involve families; (l) teacher reports of total school program to involve families; (m) teacher reports of school program of parenting; (n) teacher reports of school program of communicating activities (Type 1); (o) teacher reports of school program volunteering activities (Type 3); (p) teacher reports of school program of learning at home activities (Type 4); (q) teacher reports of school program of decision making activities (Type 5); (r) teacher estimates of parents' involvement; (s) teacher estimates of parents' activities supporting learning at home (Type 4); (t) teacher reports of parent responsibilities; (u) teacher views of support for partnerships; and (v) demographical information

Research Question 1

The Promising Practices section of the survey (part a) was used to answer the first research question: Is there a significant relationship and difference between particular parental involvement activities and the reading achievement of African American males?

The Promising Practices are a compilation of activities from members of the National Network of Partnership Schools used to develop effective and goal-oriented programs of family and community involvement. The activities are planned and implemented by teams of educators, parents, and community partners who help create an inviting school culture and increase student achievement and development (NNPS, 2006). The researcher compiled a list of twenty elementary level reading activities for this research. The Promising Practices are comprised of activities from each of the six types of parental involvement (Type 1 Parenting; Type 2 Communicating; Type 3 Volunteering; Type 4 Learning at Home; Type 5 Decision Making; and Type 6 Collaborating with the Community).

The participants identified which practices may improve the reading achievement of fourth grade African American male students. The participants rated the promising practices in importance on a four-point scale as (1) not important; (2) a little important; (3) pretty important;

and (4) very important. Table 3 orders the promising practices from the highest to the lowest ratings of “very important” as determined by the participants.

Table 3

Ranking of Promising Practices from Highest to Least in Terms of Importance

Type of Promising Practice	N	%
2 Communication- Sending home folders of student work for parent review and comments.	36	78.3
1 Parenting-Providing courses for parents to earn GED.	32	69.6
4 Learning at home- literacy night to educate parents about components of literacy: independent reading reading aloud, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension.	31	67.4
3 Volunteering-Providing a parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings, and literacy resources for families.	30	65.2
2 Communicating-Conducting formal parents-teachers-students conferences to discuss reading goals at beginning of the school year and end of the first semester.	30	65.2
4 Learning at home-Providing students with books to take home to read with their parents.	26	56.5
2 Communication-Sponsoring family literacy workshops to help parents better understand curriculum.	26	56.5
4 Learning at home-Conducting a family reading week, when families read together, record their reading materials and hours. Students return reading logs to school.	24	52.2
4 Learning at home-Providing reading extended days/nights where students participate in ten week after school reading program emphasizing reading comprehension. During evening sessions, parents of students participate in activities they can do at home to promote reading.	22	47.8

(table continued)

Table 3 (continued)

Type of Promising Practice	N	%
4 Learning at home-Utilizing technology, teachers and administrators use automated telephone and computer programs to send detailed communication about school programs.	21	45.7
2 Communication-Utilizing technology, teachers and administrators use automated telephone and computer programs to send detailed communications about children's progress.	21	45.7
6 Collaborating with the Community-Creating partnerships with local college to provide parents opportunity to earn college credits.	19	41.3
6 Collaborating with the Community-Sponsoring a public library card registration for students and their families to promote use of public library after school.	18	40.0
1 Parenting-Reaching out to families by going to neighborhood center to encourage and engage families in home learning reading activities.	18	39.1
3 Volunteering-Organizing class parents or neighborhood volunteers to link with all parents.	18	39.1
3 Volunteering-Providing individual learning prescription and activities that pair high school student or community volunteer with the student.	18	39.1
5 Decision Making-Having parent representatives are on district-level reading advisory committees.	15	32.6
5 Decision Making-Involving parents in revising school and/or district language arts curriculum.	14	30.4
2 Communication-Listening to teacher read a novel to class for at least 10 minutes per day.	13	28.3
6 Collaborating with the Community-Celebrating Dr. Seuss's birthday by having guest readers read and discuss variety of genres to fourth grade students.	6	13.0

The highest Promising Practice identified was the Type 2 Communicating activity. Seventy-eight percent of the participants identified *sending home folders of students' work weekly or bi-weekly for parent review and comment* as very important. Parenting, *that parents earned a GED*, and learning at home, *supporting parents with a literacy night to learn about the*

components of literacy such as independent reading and reading aloud, were the second and third most important items with 70% supporting education of parents and 67% supporting parents to be enabled to help their children read at home. The three least Promising Practices identified were: Type 5 decision making wherein parents would be *involved in revising language arts curricula* (30%); Type 2 communication, where *teachers would read a novel in class for at least 10 minutes per day*; and least important, a Type 6 collaborating with the community activity, where only 13% of the participants identified *celebrating Dr. Seuss’s birthday by having community guest readers to read and discuss a variety of genres to fourth grade students* as very important. Between the “very important” and “least important” promising practices, there was a broad range of rankings by the participants, from 78% to 13%.

The promising practices activities were categorized into Epstein’s six types of parental involvement: Type 1 Parenting, Type 2 Communicating, Type 3 Volunteering, Type 4 Learning at Home, Type 5 Decision Making, and Type 6 Collaborating with the Community, and scales were created for each. Table 4 summarizes the means and standard deviation for each of the scales for all respondents and those for the principals and teachers. Communication and learning at home received the highest mean ratings of 3.4, with parenting and volunteering close behind with mean ratings of 3.3. The least promising practices were decision making and collaborating with the community which earned a mean rating of 2.8.

Table 4

Mean and Standard Deviations for Responses for Promising Practices for All Respondents: Principals, and Teachers

Promising Practice Type	All			Principals			Teachers		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
1 Parenting	46	3.3	.61	11	3.4	.45	35	3.3	.65
2 Communicating	46	3.4	.42	11	3.5	.31	35	3.4	.46
3 Volunteering	46	3.3	.59	11	3.4	.38	35	3.2	.64
4 Learning at Home	46	3.4	.47	11	3.5	.52	35	3.4	.46
5 Decision Making	46	2.8	.95	11	2.7	.60	35	2.9	1.04
6 Collaborating with Community	45	2.8	.55	11	2.5	.59	34	2.9	.50

Table 5 presents summaries of ANOVA tests to analyze the data for differences between ratings of principals and teachers on the promising practices. No significant differences were found for the first five types. However, the results yielded significant differences between principals and teachers in their rating of Type 6 Collaborating with the Community practices. The mean rating for teachers ($M = 2.9, SD = .50$) was significantly higher than the mean rating of principals ($M = 2.5, SD = .59$) for the Type 6 practices ($F = 5.854, (df = 1), p = .020$). However, the effect size was small, $\eta^2 = .12$.

Table 5

Findings for ANOVA Tests of Differences Between Mean Ratings of Principals and Teachers on the Promising Practices Scales

Type of Promising Practice	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Partial Eta Squared</i>	<i>Power</i>
1 Parenting	.373	1	.544	.008	.092
2 Communicating	.031	1	.861	.001	.053
3 Volunteering	.378	1	.542	.009	.092
4 Learning at Home	.272	1	.605	.006	.080
5 Decision Making	.381	1	.540	.009	.093
6 Collaborating with Community	5.854	1	.020*	.120	.657

* significant at $\alpha = .05$

There were two schools (9 respondents) in the Honeydew Heights School district that did not meet the Virginia Standards of Learning benchmarks for full accreditation. There were eleven schools (37 respondents) that did meet the Virginia Standards of Learning benchmarks for full accreditation. Therefore, the data were separated by respondents at the non-accredited and accredited schools. Table 6 summarizes the means and standard deviations of the Promising Practices for all respondents at accredited and non-accredited schools. Communicating and learning at home received the highest mean rating of 3.4, with parenting and volunteering close behind with mean ratings of 3.3. The least promising practices were decision making and collaborating with the community which earned a mean rating of 2.8.

Table 6

Mean and Standard Deviations for Responses for the Promising Practice Scales for All Respondents, Those at Accredited and Non-Accredited Schools

Type	All			Non-Accredited			Accredited		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
1 Parenting	46	3.3	.61	9	3.4	.70	37	3.3	.59
2 Communicating	46	3.4	.42	9	3.5	.43	37	3.4	.43
3 Volunteering	46	3.3	.59	9	3.3	.72	37	3.3	.56
4 Learning at Home	46	3.4	.47	9	3.3	.59	37	3.4	.44
5 Decision Making	46	2.8	.95	9	3.0	$\frac{1.0}{9}$	37	2.8	.92
6 Collaborating with Community	45	2.8	.55	9	2.6	.39	36	2.9	.57

Table 7 summarizes results of ANOVA tests used to analyze the data for differences between ratings of respondents at accredited and non-accredited schools on the promising practices scales. The results yielded no significant difference in the mean ratings between respondents at non-accredited and accredited schools.

Table 7

Findings for Tests of Differences between Ratings of Respondents at Accredited and non-Accredited Schools on the Promising Practices Scales

Type	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Power
1 Parenting	.058	1	.810	.001	.056
2 Communicating	.360	1	.551	.008	.090
3 Volunteering	.002	1	.960	.000	.050
4 Learning at Home	.433	1	.514	.010	.097
5 Decision Making	.325	1	.571	.007	.086
6 Collaborating with Community	2.955	1	.093	.064	.390

Pearson correlations were explored to determine if there was a relationship between promising practices and performance of African American males on the English SOL. The purpose of Table 8 is to summarize the Pearson correlations between the promising practices scale items with the school mean scores of the fourth grade students in regular education and with the fourth grade African American males' mean scores enrolled in the Honeydew Heights School System on the fourth grade English Standards of Learning test. There were no significant correlations found.

Table 8

Pearson Correlations between Promising Practices and School Mean and African American Mean Score on English SOL

Type	Correlation with School SOL Mean			Correlation with African American SOL Mean		
	N	Corr.	Sig.	N	Corr.	Sig.
1 Parenting	46	.019	.901	46	-.008	.960
2 Communicating	46	-.161	.285	46	-.153	.310
3 Volunteering	46	-.184	.220	46	-.145	.335
4 Learning at Home	46	.051	.735	46	-.054	.720
5 Decision Making	46	-.193	.200	46	-.160	.289
6 Collaborating with Community	45	.095	.534	45	.090	.555

Research Question 2

Epstein's scales from the School, Family, and Community Partnership Survey overlap just as her "spheres of influence" do. In survey question five, there are three scales drawn from the one section. Therefore, data from survey question five was used to answer research questions two and three.

The second research question investigated if there was a significant relationship and difference between a specific type of parental involvement and the reading achievement of African American males. Survey questions 2, 3, 5, and 6 addressed types of parental involvement. Question 2 explored the way teachers contacted families of their students. Teachers were given eight methods of contact and were asked to report percent of contacts made in the various methods—0, 5, 10, 25, 50, 75, 90, 100%. Table 9 summarizes the responses of methods teachers used to contact families. The researcher combined the responses from the 75% to 100% columns to calculate the preferred and least used methods to contact families. The preferred method of communication was letter or memo with over 78% using it 75% or more of the time. The least used methods were home visits, meeting in the community, and report card pick-up.

Table 9

Summary of Estimates of Percent of Contacts Teachers Made with Families of Their Students

Method of Contact	N	Missing	0	5	10	25	50	75	90	100
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Letter or memo	46	2.2	2.2	0	4.3	4.3	8.7	13.0	21.7	43.5
Telephone	46	26.1	0	2.2	4.3	8.7	17.4	13.0	28.3	26.1
Meeting at school	46	2.2	2.2	8.7	4.3	6.5	28.3	30.4	13.0	4.3
Scheduled parent-teacher conference	46	19.6	2.2	10.9	8.7	6.5	10.9	15.2	19.6	6.5
Home visit	46	28.3	43.5	15.2	4.3	4.3	0.0	2.2	2.2	0.0
Meeting in the community	46	34.8	28.3	13.0	4.3	2.2	2.2	8.7	2.2	4.3
Report card pick-up	46	30.4	37.0	10.9	4.3	13.0	2.2	0.0	2.2	0.0
Performances, sports, or other events	46	23.9	15.2	13.0	6.5	13.0	8.7	6.5	8.7	4.3

Question 3 addressed two dimensions of volunteering: in the classroom and in the school. Responses to question 3 are summarized in Table 10. The most frequent utilization of volunteers in the classroom was *to help on trips or at parties* with over 60% of the time. The least frequent use of volunteers in the classroom was 15.2% *chose not to have volunteers in the classroom*. Volunteers were used in schools over 56% *to work in the parent room*. The next preferred use of volunteers was 52% *chose to have volunteers work in the library, computer lab, or other area*. The least preferred use of volunteers was 10.9% *to teach mini-courses*.

Table 10

Summary of Use of Volunteers in Classroom and in School

Used in Classroom			Used in School		
Use of volunteer	N	%	Use of volunteer	N	%
I do NOT use classroom volunteers	7	15.2	Are NOT USED in the school now	0	0.0
Listen to children read aloud	17	37.0	Monitor halls, cafeteria, or other areas	17	37.0
Read to the children	20	43.5	Work in the library, computer lab, other area	24	52.2
Grade papers	8	17.4	Teach mini-courses	5	10.9
Tutor children in specific skills	22	47.8	Teach enrichment or other lessons	12	26.1
Help on trips or at parties	28	60.9	Lead clubs or activities	14	30.4
Give talks (e.g., on careers, hobbies, etc.)	13	28.3	Check attendance	9	19.6
			Work in parent room	26	56.5

Question 5 addressed the respondents judgement about specific ways of involving families at their school. There were 12 specific ways of involving families at school and the respondents identified each way as not important, needs to be developed, needs to be improved, and a strong program now. The most specific way was *communications about report cards so that parents understand students' progress and needs* were identified by 72.7% as a strong program in the school. *Communications from the school to the home that all families can understand and use* was identified as the second highest with 68.9% as a strong program in their school. *Parent-teacher conferences with all families* was identified as the third highest with 68.2% as a strong program in their school. *Programs for AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, recreation, and homework help* was identified as the fourth highest with 60% as a strong program in their school. Most respondents 64.4% identified *involvement by families in PTA/PTO leadership, other committes, or other decision-making roles* as needs to be improved in their school. *Information for parents on HOW TO HELP their children with specific skills and subjects* was second highest, 57.8% identified it as needs to be improved in their school.

Table 11

Number and Percent of Responses of Summary of Teacher Reports of Total School Program to Involve Families

	Not Important		Needs to be Developed		Needs to be Improved		A Strong Program Now	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	a. WORKSHOPS for parents to build skills in PARENTING and understanding their children at each grade level.	0	0	9	20.5	21	47.7	14
b. WORKSHOPS for parents on creating HOME CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING.	0	0	15	34.1	19	43.2	10	22.7
c. COMMUNICATIONS from the school to the home that all families can understand and use.	0	0	1	2.2	13	28.9	31	68.9
d. COMMUNICATIONS about report cards so that parents understand students' progress and needs.	0	0	0	0	12	27.3	32	72.7
e. Parent-teacher CONFERENCES with all families.	0	0	1	2.3	13	29.5	30	68.2
f. SURVEYING parents each year for their ideas about the school.	1	2.3	1	2.3	21	47.7	21	47.7
g. VOLUNTEERS in classrooms to assist teachers and students.	0	0	8	18.2	23	52.3	13	29.5
h. VOLUNTEERS to help in other non-classroom parts of the school.	0	0	9	20.5	21	47.7	14	31.8

(table continued)

Table 11 (continued)

	Not Important		Needs to be Developed		Needs to be Improved		A Strong Program Now	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	i. INFORMATION on how to MONITOR homework.	0	0	12	27.3	23	52.3	9
j. INFORMATION for parents on HOW TO HELP their children with specific skills and subjects.	1	2.2	8	17.8	26	57.8	10	22.2
k. Involvement by families in PTA/PTO leadership, other COMMITTEES, or other decision-making roles.	0	0	2	4.4	29	64.4	14	31.1
l. Programs for AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, recreation, and homework help.	0	0	1	2.2	17	37.8	27	60.0

Question 6 addressed the teacher’s choice of activities to assist students and families. The respondents were given 18 activities to assist their students and families and asked to identify the practice as not important, a little important, pretty important, and very important. The most preferred activities with 93.5% were *have a conference with each of my students’ parents at least once a year, and inform parents when children do something well or improve*. The second preferred activity identified by 91.3% was *contact parents about their children’s problems or failures. Inform parents of the skills their children must pass in each subject I teach* was the third preferred activity with 87%. It is worthy to note that 78.3% identified *ask parents to listen to their children and ask parents to listen to a story or paragraph that their children write*, as activities that are very important. Only 13% identified *provide ideas for discussing TV shows as very important*. These data are shown in Table 12.

Table 12

Number and Percent of Responses to Importance to Teachers of All Practices to Involve Families

	Not		A little		Pretty		Very	
	Important		Important		Important		Important	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
a. Have a conference with each of my students' parents at least once a year.	0	0	0	0	3	6.5	43	93.5
b. Attend evening meetings, performances, and workshops at school.	0	0	2	4.3	17	37.0	27	58.7
c. Contact parents about their children's problems or failures.	0	0	0	0	4	8.7	42	91.3
d. Inform parents when their children do something well or improve.	0	0	0	0	3	6.5	43	93.5
e. Involve some parents as volunteers in my classroom.	2	4.3	5	10.9	19	41.3	20	43.5
f. Inform parents of the skills their children must pass in each subject I teach.	0	0	0	0	6	13.0	40	87.0
g. Inform parents how report card grades are earned in my class.	0	0	0	0	12	26.1	34	73.9
h. Provide specific activities for children and parents to do to improve students' grades.	0	0	3	6.5	16	34.8	27	58.7
i. Provide ideas for discussing TV shows.	11	23.9	22	47.8	7	15.2	6	13.0

(table continued)

Table 12 (continued)

	Not		A little		Pretty		Very	
	Important		Important		Important		Important	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
j. Assign homework that requires children to interact with parents.	0	0	11	23.9	21	45.7	14	30.4
k. Suggest ways to practice spelling or other skills at home before a test.	0	0	4	8.7	21	45.7	21	45.7
l. Ask parents to listen to their children read.	0	0	0	0	10	21.7	36	78.3
m. Ask parents to listen to a story or paragraph that their children write.	0	0	1	2.2	9	19.6	36	78.3
n. Work with other teachers to develop parent involvement activities and materials.	0	0	7	15.9	15	34.1	22	50.0
o. Work with community members to arrange learning opportunities in my class.	1	2.2	9	19.6	22	47.8	14	30.4
p. Work with area businesses for volunteers to improve programs for my students.	5	10.9	6	13.0	22	47.8	13	28.3
q. Request information from parents on their children's talents, interests, or needs.	0	0	4	8.7	18	39.1	24	52.2
r. Serve on a PTA/PTO or other school committee.	0	0	6	13.0	20	43.5	20	43.5

Research Question 3

The third research question examined relationships and differences between school, family, and community partnerships and the reading achievement of African American males to

determine if there was a relationship. Survey items 1, 4, 7, and 8 were used to answer this research question.

Question 1 addressed the respondents' attitudes about family and community involvement. The respondents were asked to rate 18 statements about parent involvement as strongly agree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. Table 13 summarizes the respondents' responses. The highest strongly agree statement was *parent involvement is important for a good school* with 93.5%. The second highest strongly agree statement was *parent involvement is important for student success in school* with 87%. *Parent involvement can help teachers be more effective with more students* was the third highest strongly agree statement with 71.7%. The respondents identified the statement, *most parents know how to help their children on schoolwork at home* as the highest with 63% in the disagree category.

Table 13

Number and Percent of Responses to Teacher Attitudes About Family and Community Involvement

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree			
	Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
a. Parent involvement is important for a good school	1	2.2	0	0	2	4.3	43	93.5
b. Most parents know how to help their children on schoolwork at home	0	0	29	63.0	15	32.6	2	4.3
c. This school has an active and effective parent organization (eg PTA or PTO)	0	0	5	11.1	27	60.0	13	28.9

(table continued)

Table 13 (continued)

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree			
	Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
d. Every family has some strengths that could be tapped to increase student success in school	0	0	3	6.5	25	54.3	18	39.1
e. All parents could learn ways to assist their children on schoolwork at home if shown how	0	0	0	0	18	39.1	28	60.9
f. Parent involvement can help teachers be more effective with more students	0	0	0	0	13	28.3	33	71.7
g. Teachers should receive recognition for time spent on parent involvement activities	0	0	6	13.0	24	52.2	16	34.8
h. Parents of children at this school want to be involved more than they are now at most grade levels	0	0	18	39.1	26	56.5	2	4.3
i. Teachers do not have the time to involve parents in very useful ways	10	22.2	25	55.6	8	17.8	2	4.4
j. Teachers need in-service education to implement effective parent involvement practices	2	4.4	13	28.9	25	55.6	5	11.1
k. Parent involvement is important for student success in school	1	2.2	0	0	5	10.9	40	87.0
l. This school views parents as important partners	1	2.2	0	0	16	35.6	28	62.2

(table continued)

Table 13 (continued)

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	m. The community values education for all students	0	0	3	6.5	21	45.7	22
n. This school is known for trying new and unusual approaches to improve the school	3	6.5	7	15.2	12	26.1	24	52.2
o. Mostly when I contact parents, it's about problems or trouble	7	15.2	21	45.7	15	32.6	3	6.5
p. In this school, teachers play a large part in most decisions	2	4.3	8	17.4	26	56.5	10	21.7
q. The community supports this school	0	0	5	11.1	30	66.7	10	22.2
r. Compared to other schools, this school has one of the best school climates for teachers, students, and parents	2	4.3	5	10.9	24	52.2	15	32.6

Question 4 addressed teachers' estimates of parents' involvement. The respondents were given methods of involvement and asked to give the percentage from 0 to 100% of their parents participation. Combining the participation percentages 50 to 100%, the respondents identified 89.2% of their parents were *involved in checking daily that child's homework is done*. The respondents identified 63.1% of their *parents attending parent-teacher conferences 50 to 100%* of the time. When the respondents were asked if their parents understood enough to help their child at home with reading, writing, and math skills, the results are as follows. Combining the percentages of 50 to 100, the respondents identified 73.9 % of their parents with the *understanding to help their child with reading and math at grade level respectively*. The

respondents identified 69.6% of their parents with the *understanding to help their child with writing at grade level*. These data are shown in Table 14.

Table 14

Number and Percent of Responses to Agreement with Teachers' Estimates of Parents' Involvement

Method of Involvement	N	Missing		0	5	10	25	50	75	90	100
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Attend workshops regularly at school	46	8.7	17.4	13.0	2.2	23.9	10.9	13.0	6.5	4.3	
Check daily that child's homework is done	46	2.2	.0	.0	2.2	6.5	17.4	32.6	37.0	2.2	
Practice schoolwork in the summer	46	6.5	6.5	4.3	17.4	21.7	32.6	8.7	2.2	.0	
Attend PTA meetings regularly	46	2.2	4.3	23.9	10.9	30.4	17.4	6.5	4.3	.0	
Attend parent-teacher conference with you	46	10.9	4.3	2.2	10.9	8.7	19.6	19.6	21.7	2.2	
...reading skills at your grade level	46	10.9	.0	2.2	4.3	8.7	28.3	28.3	13.0	4.3	
... writing skills at your grade level	46	8.7	.0	2.2	2.2	17.4	28.3	30.4	8.7	2.2	
... math skills at your grade level	46	8.7	.0	2.2	2.2	13.0	37.0	23.9	13.0	.0	

Question 7 addressed teachers reports of parent responsibilities. The respondents were given 13 statements concerning parents' responsibilities and asked to rate them as not important, a little important, pretty important, and very important. All (100%) of the respondents identified, *send children to school ready to learn* as the highest parent responsibility. The second highest parent responsibilities with 93.5% were identified as *teach children to behave well and talk to children about what they are learning in school* respectively. The third highest parent responsibility with 87% was identified as *check daily that homework is done*. The fourth highest parent responsibilities with 84.8% were identified as *set up a quiet place and time for studying at home and know what children are expected to learn each year*. It is important to note that only 33% of the respondents identified *serve as a volunteer in the school or classroom as a very important parent responsibility*. This parent responsibility received the least very important responses. These data are shown in Table 15.

Table 15

Summary of Responses of Teachers Reports of Parent Responsibilities

	Not Important		A little Important		Pretty Important		Very Important	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Send children to school ready to learn.	0	0	0	0	0	0	46	100.0
Teach children to behave well.	0	0	0	0	3	6.5	43	93.5
Set up a quiet place and time for studying at home.	0	0	0	0	7	15.2	39	84.8
Encourage children to volunteer in class.	0	0	3	6.5	12	26.1	31	67.4
Know what children are expected to learn each year.	0	0	0	0	7	15.2	39	84.8
Check daily that homework is done.	0	0	0	0	6	13.0	40	87.0
Talk to children about what they are learning in school.	0	0	0	0	3	6.5	43	93.5
Ask teachers for specific ideas on how to help their children at home with classwork.	0	0	2	4.3	8	17.4	36	78.3
Talk to teachers about problems that children are facing at home.	0	0	2	4.3	12	26.1	32	69.6
Attend PTA/PTO meetings.	0	0	2	4.4	23	51.1	20	44.4
Serve as a volunteer in the school or classroom.	5	11.1	6	13.3	19	42.2	15	33.3
Attend assemblies and other special events at the school.	0	0	4	8.9	17	37.8	24	53.3

Question 8 addressed the teacher views of support for partnerships. There are 8 items in this scale and the respondents were asked to identify them as no support, weak support, some support, and strong support. The respondents identified *the principal* as providing the strongest support for partnerships with 84.4%. *Other administrators* were identified by 82.2% of the

respondents as the second highest source of providing the strongest support for partnerships. *You, personally* was identified by 66.7% of the respondents as the third highest source of providing the strongest support for partnerships. The two lowest sources of providing the strongest support for partnerships were identified as *parents* with 17.8% and *others in the community* with 15.6% respectively. These data are shown in Table 16.

Table 16

Number and Percent of Responses to Various Sources of Support

	Weak Support		Some Support		Strong Support	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
a. You, personally	0	0	15	33.3	30	66.7
b. Other teachers	1	2.2	23	51.1	21	46.7
c. The principal	1	2.2	6	13.3	38	84.4
d. Other administrators	1	2.2	7	15.6	37	82.2
e. Parents	12	26.7	25	55.6	8	17.8
f. Others in community	11	24.4	27	60.0	7	15.6
g. School board	8	17.8	16	35.6	21	46.7
h. District superintendent	8	17.8	13	28.9	24	53.3

Table 17 summarizes the means and standard deviations for responses for scale items for all respondents, principals, and teachers. The scale Importance of Teacher of Type 2 (Communicating) Activities received the highest mean ratings of 3.7. The scales Importance of Teacher of All Practices and Teacher Reports of School Program Type 2 (Communicating) received the second highest mean ratings of 3.6. The scales Teacher Views of Family Strength and Teacher Reports of Parent Responsibilities received the third highest mean ratings of 3.5. The scales Importance of Teacher of Type 6 (Collaborating with Community) Activities, Teacher Reports of School Program Type 1 (Parenting), and Teacher Reports of School Program Type 4 (Learning at Home) received the lowest mean ratings of 3.0.

The scales Ways Teachers Contact Families, Teacher Estimates of Parents' Involvement, and Teacher Estimates of Parents' Type 4 (Learning at Home) Activities have high mean ratings.

The responses to these scales were done in percentages. In addition, number of responses for each scale varied.

Table 17

Mean and Standard Deviations for Responses for Scale Items for All Respondents, Principals, and Teachers on the School, Family, and Community Partnership Survey

	All			Principals			Teachers		
	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Teacher Attitudes--family and community involvement	44	3.3	0.30	11	3.4	0.19	33	3.3	0.33
Teacher Views of Family Strength	46	3.5	0.44	11	3.6	0.44	35	3.4	0.44
Importance of Teacher of Type 2 Activities	46	3.7	0.27	11	3.8	0.23	35	3.7	0.27
Importance of Teacher of Type 6 Activities	46	3.0	0.80	11	3.3	0.60	35	2.9	0.84
Importance of Teacher of Type 4 Activities	46	3.3	0.44	11	3.3	0.50	35	3.3	0.42
Importance of Teacher of All Practices	44	3.6	0.37	11	3.8	0.34	33	3.6	0.38
Teacher Reports of total school program to involve families	44	3.3	0.38	11	3.1	0.30	33	3.4	0.38
Teacher Reports of school program Type 1 parenting	44	3.0	0.66	11	2.7	0.46	33	3.1	0.69
Teacher Reports of school program Type 2 communicating	44	3.6	0.36	11	3.5	0.34	33	3.6	0.36
Teacher Reports of school program Type 3 volunteering	44	3.1	0.62	11	2.8	0.60	33	3.2	0.60
Teacher Reports of school program Type 4 learning at home	44	3.0	0.63	11	2.5	0.42	33	3.1	0.63
Teacher reports of parent responsibilities	44	3.5	0.32	11	3.6	0.31	33	3.5	0.32
Teacher views of support for partnerships	45	3.4	0.40	11	3.6	0.28	34	3.3	0.42
Serve on a PTA/PTO or other school committee	46	3.3	0.69	11	3.4	0.67	35	3.3	0.71
Ways teachers contact families	24	41.8	20.20	7	49.8	10.82	17	38.5	22.42
Teacher estimates of parents' involvement	37	48.3	18.97	9	49.9	12.48	28	47.8	19.72
Teacher estimates of parents' Type 4 activities- learning at home	40	55.8	19.38	10	52.6	19.68	30	56.8	19.50

Table 18 presents summaries of ANOVA tests to analyze the data for differences between ratings of principals and teachers on the scales of the School, Family, and Community Partnership Survey. Significant differences were found between principals and teachers in their ratings of Teacher Reports of Total School Program to Involve Families and Teacher Reports of School Program Type 4 (Learning at Home). The mean rating for teachers ($M=3.4$, $SD=0.38$) was significantly higher than the mean rating of principals ($M=3.1$, $SD=0.30$) in their ratings of Teacher Reports of Total School Program to Involve Families ($F= 5.693$, $(df= 1)$, $p=.022$). The mean rating for teachers ($M=3.1$, $SD=0.63$) was significantly higher than the mean rating of principals ($M=2.5$, $SD=0.42$) in their ratings Teacher Reports of School Program Type 4 (Learning at Home) ($F=7.456$, $(df=1)$, $p=.009$).

There were two schools in the Honeydew Heights School District that did not meet the Virginia Standards of Learning benchmarks for a status of fully accredited. Therefore, the data were separated by respondents at the non-accredited and accredited schools. Table 19 presents the descriptive of scales by accredited and non-accredited schools.

Table 20 summarizes results of ANOVA tests used to analyze the data for differences between ratings of respondents at accredited and non-accredited schools on the School, Family, and Community Partnership scales. The results yielded no significant difference in the mean ratings between respondents at accredited and non-accredited schools.

Pearson correlations were explored to determine if there was a relationship between the scales of the School, Family, and Community Partnership, School Mean, and African American Males' Mean Score on the English SOL. Table 21 summarizes the Pearson correlations between the School, Family, and Community Partnership scale items and English SOL mean scores for the schools overall and for the subpopulation of fourth grade African American males. A significant correlation ($r=.417$, $p=.005$) between teacher reports of school program Type 3 volunteering and the school mean for fourth grade English SOL scores was found. Similarly, a significant correlation ($r=.457$, $p=.002$) between teacher reports of school program Type 3 volunteering and the mean SOL score for African American male fourth grade students was found. A significant correlation ($r= 0.328$, $p= 0.048$) between teacher estimates of parents' involvement and the mean SOL English score for African American male fourth grade students was found.

Table 18

Findings for Tests of Differences between Ratings of Principals and Teachers on the Scales of the School, Family, and Community Partnership Survey

	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Power
Teacher Attitudes--family and community involvement	.195	1	.661	.005	.072
Teacher Views of Family Strength	1.144	1	.291	.025	.182
Importance of Teacher of Type 2 Activities	1.393	1	.244	.031	.211
Importance of Teacher of Type 6 Activities	2.339	1	.133	.050	.322
Importance of Teacher of Type 4 Activities	.357	1	.553	.008	.090
Importance of Teacher of All Practices	1.151	1	.289	.027	.182
Teacher Reports of total school program to involve families	5.693	1	.022*	.119	.645
Teacher Reports of school program Type 1 parenting	3.561	1	.066	.078	.454
Teacher Reports of school program Type 2 communicating	.937	1	.339	.022	.157
Teacher Reports of school program Type 3 volunteering	3.549	1	.067	.078	.453
Teacher Reports of school program Type 4 learning at home	7.456	1	.009*	.151	.760
Teacher reports of parent responsibilities	.857	1	.360	.020	.146
Teacher views of support for partnerships	2.655	1	.111	.058	.357
Serve on a PTA/PTO or other school committee	.103	1	.750	.002	.061
Ways teachers contact families	1.609	1	.218	.068	.228
Teacher estimates of parents' involvement	.077	1	.783	.021	.058
Teacher estimates of parents' Type 4 activities-learning at home	.352	1	.557	.009	.089

* significant at $\alpha = .05$

Table 19

Mean and Standard Deviations for Responses for Scales on School, Family, and Community Partnership Survey for All Respondents Those at Accredited and Non-Accredited Schools

	All			Non-Accredited			Accredited		
	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Teacher Attitudes--family and community involvement	44	3.3	0.30	8	3.3	0.34	36	3.3	0.30
Teacher Views of Family Strength	46	3.5	0.44	9	3.4	0.46	37	3.5	0.44
Importance of Teacher of Type 2 Activities	46	3.7	0.27	9	3.7	0.34	37	3.7	0.25
Importance of Teacher of Type 6 Activities	46	3.0	0.80	9	2.8	1.00	37	3.0	0.76
Importance of Teacher of Type 4 Activities	46	3.3	0.44	9	3.2	0.60	37	3.3	0.40
Importance of Teacher of All Practices	44	3.6	0.37	9	3.6	0.52	35	3.7	0.33
Teacher Reports of total school program to involve families	44	3.3	0.38	8	3.3	0.41	36	3.3	0.38
Teacher Reports of school program Type 1 parenting	44	3.0	0.66	8	3.1	0.64	36	3.0	0.68
Teacher Reports of school program Type 2 communicating	44	3.6	0.36	8	3.5	0.27	36	3.6	0.38
Teacher Reports of school program Type 3 volunteering	44	3.1	0.62	8	3.1	0.64	36	3.1	0.62
Teacher Reports of school program Type 4 learning at home	44	3.0	0.63	8	3.0	0.60	36	3.0	0.65
Teacher reports of parent responsibilities	44	3.5	0.32	9	3.5	0.41	35	3.5	0.29
Teacher views of support for partnerships	45	3.4	0.40	9	3.3	0.42	36	3.4	0.40
Serve on a PTA/PTO or other school committee	46	3.3	0.70	9	3.1	0.78	37	3.4	.68
Ways teachers contact families	24	41.8	20.20	4	54.5	10.04	20	39.2	20.90
Teacher estimates of parents' involvement	37	48.3	18.97	6	49.9	20.95	31	48.0	18.92
Teacher estimates of parents' Type 4 activities	40	55.8	19.38	7	56.4	19.55	33	55.6	19.6

Table 20

Findings for Tests of Differences between Ratings of Principals and Teachers on the Scales for the Family, School, and Community Partnership Survey

	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Power
Teacher Attitudes--family and community involvement	.180	1	.673	.004	.070
Teacher Views of Family Strength	.030	1	.864	.001	.053
Importance of Teacher of Type 2 Activities	.047	1	.830	.001	.005
Importance of Teacher of Type 6 Activities	.477	1	.494	.011	.104
Importance of Teacher of Type 4 Activities	.324	1	.572	.007	.086
Importance of Teacher of All Practices	.303	1	.585	.007	.084
Teacher Reports of total school program to involve families	.043	1	.837	.001	.005
Teacher Reports of school program Type 1 parenting	.340	1	.553	.008	.088
Teacher Reports of school program Type 2 communicating	.977	1	.329	.023	.162
Teacher Reports of school program Type 3 volunteering	.003	1	.955	.000	.050
Teacher Reports of school program Type 4 learning at home	.028	1	.868	.001	.053
Teacher reports of parent responsibilities	.165	1	.687	.004	.068
Teacher views of support for partnerships	.191	1	.664	.004	.071
Serve on a PTA/PTO or other school committee.	.862	1	.358	.019	.149
Ways teachers contact families	1.997	1	.172	.083	.272
Teacher estimates of parents' involvement	.049	1	.827	.001	.055
Teacher estimates of parents' Type 4 activities-learning at home	.009	1	.023	.001	.051

Table 21

Pearson Correlations between Scales and School Mean and African American Mean Score on English SOL

	School Mean			African American Mean		
	N	Corr.	Sig.	N	Corr.	Sig.
Teacher Attitudes--family and community involvement	44	0.109	0.480	44	0.059	0.703
Teacher Views of Family Strength	46	-0.080	0.597	46	-0.148	0.327
Importance of Teacher of Type 2 Activities	46	-0.289	0.052	46	-0.177	0.240
Importance of Teacher of Type 6 Activities	46	0.018	0.905	46	0.056	0.713
Importance of Teacher of Type 4 Activities	46	-0.114	0.451	46	-0.203	0.175
Importance of Teacher of All Practices	44	-0.193	0.209	44	-0.201	0.191
Teacher Reports of total school program to involve families	44	0.201	0.191	44	0.176	0.254
Teacher Reports of school program Type 1 parenting	44	0.052	0.739	44	0.136	0.378
Teacher Reports of school program Type 2 communicating	44	0.030	0.847	44	-0.050	0.745
Teacher Reports of school program Type 3 volunteering	44	0.417*	0.005	44	.457*	0.002
Teacher Reports of school program Type 4 learning at home	44	0.134	0.387	44	0.087	0.573
Teacher reports of parent responsibilities	44	-0.230	0.133	44	-0.247	0.106
Teacher views of support for partnerships	45	-0.158	0.299	45	-0.028	0.855
Ways teachers contact families	24	-0.040	0.851	24	0.176	0.412
Teacher estimates of parents' involvement	37	0.215	0.201	37	0.328*	0.048
Teacher estimates of parents' involvement-part4	40	0.157	0.333	40	0.245	0.128
Serve on a PTA/PTO or other school committee	46	-0.178	.308	46	-0.178	0.236

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

Summary

The current research study was conducted within the Honeydew Heights School Division. According to the measures of No Child Left Behind benchmarks and the Virginia Standards of

Learning assessments, this is a high performing school division that serves a large population of fourth grade African American males. Forty-six administrators and teachers at 13 Title 1 schools responded to the survey. Eleven respondents were principals. Thirty-five respondents were teachers. The principals' years of experience ranged from four to 32 years. The teachers' years of experience for the participants ranged from one year to 39 years.

A survey, adapted by the researcher from Joyce Epstein's School, Family, and Community Partnerships Survey, was hand delivered to survey participants. The survey addressed the six types of parental involvement and teachers' perceptions of the importance of each of these types: Type 1 Parenting; Type 2 Communicating; Type 3 Volunteering; Type 4 Learning at Home; Type 5 Decision Making; and Type 6 Collaborating with the Community. The summary of scales for the School, Family, and Community Partnerships were analyzed using descriptive statistics, ANOVA tests, and Pearson Correlations.

The first research question investigated if there was a significant relationship between particular parental involvement activities and the reading achievement of African American fourth grade males. ANOVA tests to analyze the data for differences between ratings of principals and teachers on the promising practices. No significant differences were found for the first five types. However, the results yielded significant differences between principals and teachers in their rating of Type 6 Collaborating with the Community practices. The mean rating for teachers ($M = 2.9, SD = .50$) was significantly higher than the mean rating of principals ($M = 2.5, SD = .59$) for the Type 6 practices ($F = 5.854, (df = 1), p = .020$).

The data were separated by respondents at accredited and non-accredited schools. ANOVA tests were used to analyze the data for differences between ratings of respondents at accredited and non-accredited schools on the promising practices scales. The results yielded no significant difference in the mean ratings between respondents at non-accredited and accredited schools.

Pearson correlations were explored to determine if there was a relationship between the promising practices scale items with the school mean scores of the fourth grade students in regular education and with the fourth grade African American males' mean scores enrolled in the Honeydew Heights School System on the fourth grade English Standards of Learning test. There were no significant correlations found.

The scales of the School, Family, and Community Partnership Survey were used answer research questions 2 and 3. The second research question investigated if there was a significant relationship and difference between a specific type of parental involvement and the reading achievement of fourth grade African American males.

ANOVA tests to analyze the data for differences between ratings of principals and teachers on the scales of the School, Family, and Community Partnership Survey. Significant differences were found between principals and teachers in their ratings of Teacher Reports of School Program Type 4 (Learning at Home). The mean rating for teachers ($M=3.1$, $SD=0.63$) was significantly higher than the mean rating of principals ($M=2.5$, $SD=0.42$) in their ratings of Teacher Reports of School Program Type 4 (Learning at Home) ($F=7.456$, ($df=1$), $p=.009$). The data were separated by respondents at accredited and non-accredited schools.

ANOVA tests were used to analyze the data for differences between ratings of respondents at accredited and non-accredited schools on the School, Family, and Community Partnership scales. The results yielded no significant difference in the mean ratings between respondents at accredited and non-accredited schools.

Pearson correlations were explored to determine if there was a relationship between the scales of the School, Family, and Community Partnership, School Mean, and African American Males' Mean Score on the English SOL. A significant correlation ($r=.417$, $p=.005$) between teacher reports of school program Type 3 volunteering and the school mean for fourth grade English SOL scores was found. Similarly, a significant correlation ($r=.457$, $p=.002$) between teacher reports of school program Type 3 volunteering and the mean SOL score for African American male fourth grade students was found.

The third research question investigated if there is a significant relationship between school, family, and community partnerships and the reading achievement of fourth grade African American males. ANOVA tests were used to analyze the data for differences between ratings of principals and teachers on the scales of the School, Family, and Community Partnership Survey.

Significant differences were found between principals and teachers in their ratings of Teacher Reports of Total School Program to Involve Families. The mean rating for teachers ($M=3.4$, $SD=0.38$) was significantly higher than the mean rating of principals ($M=3.1$, $SD=0.30$) in their ratings of Teacher Reports of Total School Program to Involve Families ($F=5.693$, ($df=1$), $p=.022$).

ANOVA tests were used to analyze the data for differences between ratings of respondents at accredited and non-accredited schools on the School, Family, and Community Partnership scales. The results yielded no significant difference in the mean ratings between respondents at accredited and non-accredited schools.

Pearson correlations were explored to determine if there was a relationship between the scales of the School, Family, and Community Partnership, School Mean, and African American Males' Mean Score on the English SOL. A significant correlation ($r = 0.328$, $p = 0.048$) between teacher estimates of parents' involvement and the mean SOL English score for African American male fourth grade students was found.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The reading achievement of the fourth grade African American male is influenced by their experiences in school and at home. “When schools engage families in ways that are linked to improving learning, students make greater gains. When schools build partnerships with families that respond to their concerns and honor their contributions, they are successful in sustaining connections that are aimed at improving student achievement”. Henderson et al. (2002. p. 8). In addition, Epstein maintains “that students learn more when home, school, and community work together to support students’ learning and development”. Epstein, (2005. p. 152). This home, school, and community partnership is vital to the African American male learner. The African American male learner is often preoccupied with surviving in his environment, coping with misfortunes, hardships, and maneuvering school bureaucracy to think about literacy as a bridge to the future (Irvine, 1990; Tatum, 2005).

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which the reading achievement of fourth grade African American male learners improves with school, family, and community partnerships. The survey used to implement this study was adapted from Epstein’s School, Family, and Community Partnership Survey. The survey addressed the six types of parental involvement and teachers’ perceptions of the importance of each of these types: Type 1 Parenting; Type 2 Communicating; Type 3 Volunteering; Type 4 Learning at Home; Type 5 Decision Making; and Type 6 Collaborating with the Community. The survey was composed of the following sections: (a) promising practices; (b) teacher attitudes about family and community involvement; (c) teacher views of family strength; (d) ways teachers contact families; (e) importance to teachers of communicating activities (Type 2); (f) how volunteers are involved in classrooms; (g) how volunteers are involved in the school; (h) importance to teacher of learning at home activities (Type 4); (i) importance to teacher of decision making activities (Type 5); (j) importance to teacher of collaborating with community activities (Type 6); (k) importance to teacher of all practices to involve families; (l) teacher reports of total school program to involve families; (m) teacher reports of school program of parenting; (n) teacher reports of school program of communicating activities (Type 1); (o) teacher reports of school program

volunteering activities (Type 3); (p) teacher reports of school program of learning at home activities (Type 4); (q) teacher reports of school program of decision making activities (Type 5); (r) teacher estimates of parents' involvement; (s) teacher estimates of parents' activities supporting learning at home (Type 4); (t) teacher reports of parent responsibilities; (u) teacher views of support for partnerships; and (v) demographical information. Surveys were hand delivered to 14 Title 1 elementary schools within the Honeydew Heights School Division. Thirteen schools participated in the study. There were 46 respondents that included 35 fourth grade teachers and 11 principals. Honeydew Heights is a high performing urban school division that serves a large population of fourth grade African American males. In addition, the Honeydew Heights School Division received a 2007 Partnership District Award from the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at John Hopkins University. The fourth grade English Standards of Learning scores were obtained through written request from the Virginia Department of Education.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. Is there a significant relationship and difference between particular parental involvement activities and the reading achievement of fourth grade African American males?
2. Is there a significant relationship and difference between a specific type of parental involvement and the reading achievement of fourth grade African American males?
3. Is there a significant relationship and difference between school, family, and community partnerships and the reading achievement of fourth grade African American males?

Findings

Research Question 1

Is there a significant relationship and difference between particular parental involvement activities and the reading achievement of fourth grade African American males? Data analysis revealed no significant differences in the promising practices investigated in this study and the reading achievement of fourth grade African American males. These data are shown in Table 8.

An ANOVA showed a significant difference between principals and teachers in their ratings of the importance of Type 6 activities, collaborating with the community. The mean rating for teachers ($M = 2.9, SD=.50$) was significantly higher than the mean rating of principals ($M = 2.5, SD=.59$) for the Type 6 practices ($F= 5.854, (df = 1), p =.020$).

This is an area of research that has not been heavily investigated in this context before.

Research is needed to provide better empirical evidence of the effects of particular interviews and specific practices of family involvement on children's reading and other literacy skills. We need to know which practices with which families at which grade levels will produce which results in reading, writing, and other literacy skills for which students. These unknowns establish a broad and exciting research agenda. The results of such studies will be of immediate interest in practice (Sheldon et al., 2005b, p. 124).

Research Question 2

Is there a significant relationship and difference between a specific type of parental involvement and the reading achievement of African American males? A significant finding was that Type 3 (Volunteering) parental involvement activities are correlated with the reading achievement of the fourth grade African American male. Pearson correlations were explored to determine if there was a relationship between the scales of the School, Family, and Community Partnership, School Mean, and African American Males' Mean Score on the English SOL. A significant correlation ($r=.457, p= .002$) between teacher reports of school program Type 3 volunteering and the mean SOL score for African American male fourth grade students was found. Similarly, a significant correlation ($r=.417, p=.005$) between teacher reports of school program Type 3 volunteering and the school mean for fourth grade English SOL scores was found. These data are shown in Table 21.

The researcher's specific findings of a correlation between a Type 3 (Volunteering) activity and the reading achievement of an all urban fourth grade African American male population has not been heavily investigated. However, the findings of a correlation between parental involvement and an increase in reading achievement are well documented. These findings are in keeping with Desimone (1999), Epstein (2001), Epstein et al. (2002-2009),

Epstein (2005), Epstein (2007), Henderson et al. (2002), O'Sullivan (1992), Sheldon (2003), Sheldon (2005b), NCLB (2001), and Wilson (2003).

Significant differences were found between principals and teachers in their ratings of Teacher Reports of School Program Type 4 (Learning at Home). The mean rating for teachers ($M=3.1$, $SD=0.63$) was significantly higher than the mean rating of principals ($M=2.5$, $SD=0.42$) in their ratings of Teacher Reports of School Program Type 4 (Learning at Home) ($F=7.456$, $(df=1)$, $p=.009$). These data are shown in Table 18.

Research Question 3

Is there a significant relationship and difference between school, family, and community partnerships and the reading achievement of fourth grade African American males? A significant finding was that Teacher Estimates of Parents' Involvement is correlated with the reading achievement of the fourth grade African American male. A significant correlation ($r= 0.328$, $p= 0.048$) between teacher estimates of parents' involvement and the mean SOL English score for African American male fourth grade students was found. These data are shown in Table 21.

Significant differences were found between principals and teachers in their ratings of Teacher Reports of Total School Program to Involve Families. The mean rating for teachers ($M=3.4$, $SD=0.38$) was significantly higher than the mean rating of principals ($M=3.1$, $SD=0.30$) in their ratings of Teacher Reports of Total School Program to Involve Families ($F=5.693$, $(df= 1)$, $p=.022$).

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1

Is there a significant relationship and difference between particular parental involvement activities and the reading achievement of fourth grade African American males? Data analysis revealed no significant differences in promising practices and the reading achievement of fourth grade African American males. However, there was a significant difference between principals and teachers in their ratings of the importance of Type 6 activities, Collaborating with the Community. The promising practices from Collaborating with the Community are: (a) Creating partnerships with local college to provide parents opportunity to earn college credits; (b) Sponsoring a public library card registration for students and their families to promote use of

public library after school; and (c) Celebrating Dr. Seuss's birthday by having guest readers read and discuss variety of genres to fourth grade students.

Collaborating with the Community activities were more important to the teachers than principals. This collaboration is important because effective teachers of African American males understand that they must go beyond reading instruction to help their students. Tatum declares, "teachers must become personally invested in the African American male students in a way that moves beyond the existing curriculum" (p. 35).

The principals may have rated Collaborating with the Community of low importance, because they were not satisfied with the quality of their collaborating with the community activities. According to Sanders, elementary schools in large urban populations often are not satisfied with their community activities. Because, this is an area for concern, the principal should reevaluate the goals and objectives of school's improvement plan. The principal should establish a team of teachers, parents, and community stakeholders to address the concern. Effective community collaboration begins with the team (a) identifying goals; (b) defining the focus and scope of the partnerships; (c) identifying community assets (potential partners); (d) selecting partners; (e) monitoring progress; (f) evaluating activities; and (g) sharing success stories. (Sanders, 2001, 2003).

Sheldon's research, school programs to involve families and communities are important to students' achievement. The results of this study suggest that school partnerships that reach all families and the community are vital to schools located in low-income urban environments. This partnership is important because students are more likely to perform at higher levels on state-mandated achievement tests. Community involvement is deemed beneficial for children, schools, and society as a whole. Academic excellence is best achieved through the cooperation and support of the community partners, schools, and families.

Research Question 2

Is there a significant relationship and difference between a specific type of parental involvement and the reading achievement of African American males? The data to answer this question derived from survey question five. The scale items included: (a) Volunteers at the school; and (b) Volunteers in the classroom to assist teachers and students. An ANOVA showed a difference between principals and teachers in their rating of Teacher Reports of School Program Type 4 (Learning at Home). The scale items included: (a) Information to parents on

how to monitor homework; and (b) Information to parents on how to help their children with specific skills and subjects.

The academic reading success of the fourth grade African American male is correlated with the volunteering (Type 3) activities in school. Although many schools have volunteers on a daily basis, they are often monitoring the hallways, working in the parent resource room, the library, or assisting on a field trip or with a class party. Based on the findings of this research, schools need to find more opportunities to involve parents and community partners directly in the learning environment. This finding is in keeping with Wilson's research that when African American male students had an adult in their educational lives, they performed better. They made better grades, did their homework regularly, and listened more attentively in class.

Wilson's participants were proud to have their parents come to school and work with their teachers. The participants whose parents came to school for lunch or visited regularly had fewer behavioral referrals, better test scores and better grades than those who did not have parental support.

In addition, it is important to note that Desimone's earlier research supports the current researcher's findings. Volunteering at the school level for Caucasian and African American students affected student achievement. Desimone's findings indicate that participating in the PTO was a significant predictor for increased mathematical and reading scores for both African American and Caucasian students. Involvement in the PTO was a stronger predictor of grades for African American students than for any other racial-ethnic minorities or low-income students (Desimone, 1999, p. 20). Based on Desimone's and the current research, we now know that for African American parents participating in the PTO, volunteering at school in various capacities, and participating in the learning environment to assist the teachers and their children may empower them to eliminate some cultural barriers traditionally held by the school, teachers, and parents.

Significant differences were found between principals and teachers in their ratings of Teacher Reports of School Program Type 4 (Learning at Home). Teachers may value the learning at home activities more than the principals because, they are directly involved in the daily instruction of the students. Teachers may be more cognizant of the fact that volunteering at school fosters a relationship among the teachers and parents. This positive relationship between the teachers and parents promote learning at home activities. According to Desimone, the

relationship positively affects teacher perceptions of students' homework completion and attendance. In addition, historic research, (Morrow, 1983) has established that homes where parents like to read and share reading with their children in literature rich environments produce children who perform higher in reading than those children who do not share this experience.

Learning at home activities also gives the teacher many opportunities to provide "interactive homework"(Sheldon, 2005b) with the student and parent. Interactive homework allows the student to demonstrate, discuss, and celebrate reading skills with the parent or family member. Monitoring, participating, and sharing in the student's homework gives parents a direct link to the classroom curriculum.

Research Question 3

Is there a significant relationship and difference between school, family, and community partnerships and the reading achievement of fourth grade African American males? The data to answer this question was drawn from survey question four. The items on this scale included: (a) Attend workshops regularly at school; (b) Check daily that child's homework is done; (c) Practice schoolwork in the summer; (d) Attend PTA meetings regularly; (e) Attend parent-teacher conference with you; (f) Understand reading skills at your grade level; (g) Understand writing skills at your grade level; and (h) Understand math skills at your grade level.

A significant correlation between teacher estimates of parents' involvement and the mean SOL English score for African American male fourth grade students was found. This finding is in keeping with Epstein and Sheldon. According to Sheldon, school programs to involve families and communities are important to students' achievement. School partnerships that reach all families and the community are vital to schools located in low-income urban environments. This partnership is important because, students are more likely to perform at higher levels on state-mandated achievement tests. The current empirical data that supports school programs to involve all families may be one useful reform strategy to help improve the reading achievement of the fourth grade African American male.

The mean rating for teachers was significantly higher than the mean rating of principals in their ratings of Teacher Reports of Total School Program to Involve Families. This finding was appalling to the researcher because, the respondents schools' are apart of the National Network of Partnership Schools. The major thrust of the NNPS is to have the school, family, and community partnerships connect to help the students learn and grow. Epstein refers to the social

organizations of school, family, and community as “spheres of overlapping influences”. These spheres of influence directly affect student learning and development. The more these spheres interact, the more students are likely to receive common messages that emphasize the importance of “school, working hard, of thinking creatively, or helping one another, and of staying in school” (Epstein et al., 2002, p. 8). However, the rating differences in this study seem to suggest that Epstein’s spheres of influence are pushed apart instead of being drawn together. Therefore, it is imperative that the schools re-examine their school improvement plans. The implementation of the school, family, and community partnership is paramount to increasing parental involvement. According to Epstein, “If a school improvement model is not well implemented, there is no justification for analyzing its effects on achievement”. (Epstein, 2005, p. 164).

Implications

Data analysis revealed differences of ratings between the principal and teachers in the scales of (a) Promising Practices, Collaborating with the Community; (b) Teacher Reports of School Program Type 4, (Learning at Home); and (c) Teacher Reports of Total School Program to Involve Families. The differences in the ratings suggest that there is a disconnect among the implementation and of the school’s improvement plan and communicating the school’s vision to community stakeholders. For the sake of the children, the school, family, and community must work together to support and sustain the African American males’ reading achievement. Based on the evidence from this study, there is a need for the school and school district to continue to improve their family and community involvement programs. Technical support from the National Network Partnership needs continual funding to provide effective activities to involve parents and community stakeholders in the African American male learners’ reading development. It would also be beneficial to schools, family, and community partnerships to have an on-site parental involvement coordinator at each school.

The current research provides evidence for the need to educate African American parents about reading development and instruction. This will help them to have a better understanding of their children’s progress and to actively participate in the school system. Educating the African American parents would also allow parents a shared responsibility in educating their children rather than delegating this authority solely to the school. Parental knowledge about reading is crucial because, it supports, encourages, and guides reading developments in their children. Thus, positively influencing reading achievement of their children. Schools should conduct

numerous workshops on the reading curriculum for parents and community partners. Some of these workshops should take place during the early evening hours so that working parents can participate. It would also behoove the schools to hold a few workshops in the living environments of the students. Schools should collaborate with local colleges and universities to provide in-service training to parents about the literacy curriculum.

Parental involvement is a catalyst to improve school experiences and achievement for the African American fourth grade male learner. Schools should strategically utilize the untapped resource of the African American parent and community stakeholders by providing many meaningful opportunities for the parent and stakeholder to volunteer at school within the learning environment. This will promote positive relationships between the teacher and parent and a better understanding of some cultural differences. Volunteering at school will also extend the school's learning environment to the home. Therefore, school leaders should focus on collaborating with community agencies to volunteer to help the African American male. Because, it will help the learner co-exist in his social environment and successfully navigate a learning environment that has been viewed in the past as hostile and unpredictable for many of these students.

In addition, the findings from this study suggest that colleges and universities can educate aspiring teachers concerning the literary needs of the African American male. The literacy instruction must be presented as having value in the daily lives of African American males. Excellent training will help the teachers use the students' diverse cultural and experiences to engage them in rich literary readings and discussions.

Pre-service training provided by colleges and universities should be helpful to most school leaders by providing them with professional development topics that their teachers can utilize to improve the literacy instruction of African American male students. Ultimately, education is paramount in colleges and universities to enhance the abilities of the teacher and administrator to understand school, family, and community partnerships. Colleges and universities need to help local school districts develop effective programs of school, family, and community involvement linked to the improvement of the African American male reading achievement.

Future Research

Additional research is needed to extend this area of investigation. An in-depth study on the promising practices is needed to determine their influence on the reading achievement of the African American male. It will add to the research literature because, schools will know whether or not these practices are effective and should be continued as a part of school, family, and community partnerships.

The current study should be replicated using Title 1 and non Title 1 schools in urban, suburban, and rural communities. Researchers and educators need to know if the results of the findings will be the same or different. It is also important to know the teachers' and principals' perceptions of school, family, and community partnerships in other demographic areas.

Research on the principal's perceptions of the school's program of Collaborating with the Community to improve students' reading achievement should be conducted. This investigation will provide insight into the principal's satisfaction with specific activities. The investigation will provide insight into the teachers', parents', and community stakeholders level of participation in shared leadership decisions. It will examine the principal's level of "control" or his willingness to allow a team of teachers, parents, and community stakeholders to share the responsibilities to improve student achievement.

An investigation of minority parents' perceptions of school, family, and community partnerships is important research. It is important to give these parents a "voice" and to allow them to indicate their needs. The investigation will provide evidence to the school as to how the school could improve their parental involvement activities.

An in-depth case study comparing the students' reading achievement in a high performing Title 1 National Network Partnership Schools verses a high performing Title 1 schools that is not National Network Partnership Schools. This investigation will identify positive characteristics and activities that are present in both schools. It will examine the level of school, family, and community involvement. This information should provide a framework for educators to implement the characteristics and activities that may need improvement in their respective school's improve plan. This information should help educators to improve students' reading achievement.

REFERENCES

- Adams, M. J. (1990). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., & Razavieh, A. (2002). *Introduction to research in education*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth & Thomson Learning
- Ascher, C. (1988). *Urban school-community alliances*. New York: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education.
- Atkinson, J., & Urman, J. (1997). *Early reading interventions: What works?* Richmond, VA: Virginia Commonwealth University
- Baker, J. (1999). Teacher-student interaction in urban at-risk classrooms: Differential behavior, relationship quality, and student satisfaction with school. *The Elementary School Journal*, 100 (i1), 57-70.
- Bayer, N. (1994). *Early warning signs of functional illiteracy: Predictors in childhood and adolescence*. National Center on Adult Literacy Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
- Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement [CIERA]. (2002). *Reading First*. U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC.
- Clay, M. M. (1985). *The early detection of reading difficulties*. Exeter, NH: Heinemann.
- Collins, N. (1990). Motivating low performing adolescent readers. *Reading English and Communication Digest # 112*.
- Desimone, L. (1999). Linking parent involvement with student achievement: Do race and income matter? *The Journal of Educational Research*. 93(1), 11-29
- Epstein, J. L. (1995). School, family, community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Kappan*, May 701-712.
- Epstein, J. (2001). *School, family, and community partnership: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Epstein, J., Sanders, M., Simon, B., Salinas, K., Jansorn, N., & Van Voorhis, F. (2002-2009). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press
- Epstein, J. (2005). A case study of the partnership schools: Comprehensive school reform model. *The Elementary School Journal*, (106), 150-170.

- Epstein, J. (2007). *Honeydew Heights School Division: Wins national award for excellent partnerships*. <http://www.sbo.honeydewheights.k12.va.us>
- Flesch, R. (1955). *Why Johnny can't read*. Harper & Brothers.
- Heath, S. B., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1987). A child resource policy: Moving beyond dependence on school and family. *Phi Delta Kappan*, (68), 576-580.
- Henderson, A. J., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement. *Southwest Educational Development Lab.*, Austin, TX.
- Hettleman, K. (2003). *The invisible dyslexics: How public schools systems in Baltimore and elsewhere discriminate against poor children in the diagnosis and treatment of early reading difficulties*. Baltimore, MD: The Abell Foundation.
- Hiebert, R., Scott, E., Wilkinson, J., & Anderson, I. (1985). *Becoming a nation of readers: The report of the commission on reading*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Education.
- Hopkins, H. (2001). *Secondary African American male students' perceptions of factors, which influence their reading behavior*. (Doctoral Dissertation, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond).
- Irvine, J. (1990). *Black students and school failure: policies, practices, and prescriptions*. New York, New York: Greenwood Press.
- Juel, C. (1988). Learning to read and write: A longitudinal study of 54 children from first through fourth grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 80 (4), 437-47.
- Kennedy, M. M., Jung, B. E., & Orland, M. E. (1986). Poverty, achievement, and the distribution of compensatory education services. Washington, D C: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U. S. Department of Education.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lamb, C. E., & Lambert, W. J. (1980). *Reading instruction in the content areas*. Chicago, IL: Rand McNally
- Mapp, K. L., & Henderson, A. J. (2002). A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement. *Southwest Educational Development Lab.*, Austin, TX
- McPike, E. (1995). Learning to read: School's first mission. *American Educator*, 19(2), 3-6.

- Morrow, L. M. (1983). Home and school correlates of early interest in literature. *Journal of Educational Research* 76(4) 221- 230.
- National Network of Partnerships Schools. (2006). *Promising Practices*. John Hopkins University: Baltimore, Maryland
- Ogbu, J. U. (1992). Understanding cultural diversity and learning. *Educational Researcher*, (21), 5-14.
- O’Sullivan, J. T. (1992). *Reading beliefs and reading achievement: Development study of students from low income families*. Report Number 6. Summary Reports of Paths to Literacy in Newfoundland and Labrador. Newfoundland: Memorial University, St. Johns. (ERIC Document Number 354 - 505).
- Polite, V., & Davis, J. E.(1999). *African American males in school and society*. New York, New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sanders, M. (2001). The role of “community” in comprehensive school, family, and Community partnership programs. *The Elementary School Journal*,102(1), 19-40.
- Sheldon, S. (2003). Linking school, family, community partnerships in urban elementary schools to student achievement on state tests. *The Urban Review*, 35(2) 149-164.
- Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2005b). School programs of family and community involvement to support children’s reading and literacy development across the grades. In J. Flood and P. Anders (Eds.), *Literacy Development Students in Urban Schools: Research and Policy* (pp.107-138). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Stanovich, K. E. (1986). Matthew effects in reading. Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 21 360-407.
- Stanovich, K. E. (1991).Conceptual and empirical problems with discrepancy definitions. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 14, 269-282.
- Tatum, A. (2005). *Teaching reading to black adolescent males: Closing the achievement gap*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse.
- U.S. Department of Education. (1988). Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress.
- U.S. Department of Education. (1992). Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress. Trends in academic progress.

- U.S. Department of Education. (1994). Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress.
- U.S. Department of Education. (1998). Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2000). Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2002). Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2003). Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2005). Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress.
- U.S. Department of Education. (1997). *Evidence that tutoring works*. Washington, DC. Office of the Under Secretary Planning and Evaluation Service.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2000). National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2002). No Child Left Behind Act. Washington, DC.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2003). National Center for Education Statistics: Washington, DC.
- Virginia Department of Education. (1999). Standards of Learning Test Validity and Reliability Information. Richmond, VA
- Wang, M. C., Haertel, G. D., & Walberg, H. J. (1994). What influences learning? A content analysis of review literature. *Journal of Educational Researcher*, (84), 30-43.
- Wilson, E. (1999). Reading at the middle school levels: Building active readers across the curriculum. Educational Research Service. Arlington, VA.
- Wilson, L. (2003). *Factors that promote and inhibit the academic achievement of rural elementary African American males in a Mississippi school: A qualitative study*. Educational Research Association (Biloxi, MS, November 5-7, 2003).

APPENDIX A
TEACHER SURVEY LETTER
SCHOOLS AND FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS
Survey of Teachers in Fourth Grade

Dear Teacher:

The researcher is conducting a study to examine the extent to which reading achievement of African American male learners improves with school, family, and community partnerships. The survey was developed by teachers and administrators working with Dr. Joyce L. Epstein and other researchers at John Hopkins University. In addition to Dr. Epstein's survey, the researcher has included a section of promising practices for reading achievement. Completing this survey will help provide better empirical data of specific practices of family involvement that influences the reading achievement of the fourth grade African American male.

The information that you provide will be completely confidential. Your name is not required on the survey. Your school name will be given a pseudonym. The results of the survey will be analyzed and shared with your principal. Your participation is voluntary and greatly appreciated.

Participation in this research may provide data that will improve the reading achievement of the African American male as well as stronger school, family, and community partnerships. Please place your completed survey in the envelope that has been provided by the researcher. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Faye Covington-Bradley
Doctoral Student
VA TECH

APPENDIX B
 EPSTEIN'S SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP
 SURVEY PROMISING PRACTICES

Q-1. The first questions ask for your professional judgment about parent involvement. Please CIRCLE the choice for each item that best represents your opinion and experience.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. Parent involvement is important for a good school.	SD	D	A	SA
b. Most parents know how to help their children on schoolwork at home.	SD	D	A	SA
c. This school has an active and effective parent organization (e.g., PTA or PTO).	SD	D	A	SA
d. Every family has some strengths that could be tapped to increase student success in school.	SD	D	A	SA
e. All parents could learn ways to assist their children on schoolwork at home, if shown how.	SD	D	A	SA
f. Parent involvement can help teachers be more effective with more students.	SD	D	A	SA
g. Teachers should receive recognition for time spent on parent involvement activities.	SD	D	A	SA
h. Parents of children at this school want to be involved more than they are now at most grade levels.	SD	D	A	SA
i. Teachers do not have the time to involve parents in very useful ways.	SD	D	A	SA
j. Teachers need in-service education to implement effective parent involvement practices.	SD	D	A	SA
k. Parent involvement is important for student success in school.	SD	D	A	SA
l. This school views parents as important partners.	SD	D	A	SA
m. The community values education for all students.	SD	D	A	SA
n. This school is known for trying new and unusual approaches to improve the school.	SD	D	A	SA
o. Mostly when I contact parents, it's about problems or trouble.	SD	D	A	SA
p. In this school, teachers play a large part in most decisions.	SD	D	A	SA
q. The community supports this school.	SD	D	A	SA
r. Compared to other schools, this school has one of the best school climates for teachers, students, and parents.	SD	D	A	SA

Q-2. Teachers contact their students' families in different ways. Please estimate the percent of your students' families that you contacted this year in these ways:

a. Letter or memo	NA	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	All
b. Telephone	NA	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	All
c. Meeting at school	NA	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	All
d. Scheduled parent-teacher conference	NA	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	All
e. Home visit	NA	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	All
f. Meeting in the community	NA	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	All
g. Report card pick-up	NA	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	All
h. Performances, sports, or other events	NA	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	All

Q-3. Some teachers involve parents (or others) as volunteers at the school building. Please check the ways that you use volunteers in your classroom and in your school THIS YEAR. (CHECK all that apply in columns A and B.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>A. In my CLASSROOM, volunteers...</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (a) I do NOT use classroom volunteers</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (b) Listen to children read aloud</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (c) Read to the children</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (d) Grade papers</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (e) Tutor children in specific skills</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (f) Help on trips or at parties</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (g) Give talks (e.g., on careers, hobbies, etc.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (h) Other ways (please specify) _____</p> | <p>B. In our SCHOOL, volunteers...</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (a) Are NOT USED in the school now</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (b) Monitor halls, cafeteria, or other areas</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (c) Work in the library, computer lab, or other area</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (d) Teach mini-courses</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (e) Teach enrichment or other lessons</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (f) Lead clubs or activities</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (g) Check attendance</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (h) Work in "parent room"</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (i) Other ways (please specify) _____</p> |
|---|--|

THIS YEAR, how many volunteers or aides help in your classroom or school?

C. Number of different volunteers who assist me in a typical week = _____.

D. Do you have paid aides in your classroom? NO YES (how many? _____)

E. Number of different volunteers who work anywhere in the school in an average week = _____
(approximately)

Q-4. Please estimate the percent of your students' families who did the following THIS YEAR:

a. Attend workshops regularly at school	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	100%
b. Check daily that child's homework is done	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	100%
c. Practice schoolwork in the summer	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	100%
d. Attend PTA meetings regularly	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	100%
e. Attend parent-teacher conferences with you	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	100%
Understand enough to help their child at home:								
f. ...reading skills at your grade level	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	100%
g. ...writing skills at your grade level	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	100%
h. ...math skills at your grade level	0%	5%	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%	100%

Q-5. Schools serve diverse populations of families who have different needs and skills. The next questions ask for your judgment about specific ways of involving families at your school. Please **CIRCLE** one choice to tell whether you think each type of involvement is:

- NOT IMPORTANT => NOT IMP (Means this IS NOT part of your school now, and SHOULD NOT BE.)
- NEEDS TO BE DEVELOPED => DEV (Means this IS NOT part of your school now, but SHOULD BE.)
- NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED => IMPRV (Means this IS part of your school, but NEEDS TO BE STRENGTHENED.)
- A STRONG PROGRAM NOW => STRONG (Means this IS a STRONG program for most parents AT ALL GRADE LEVELS at your school.)

<u>TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT</u>	<u>AT THIS SCHOOL...</u>			
a. WORKSHOPS for parents to build skills in PARENTING and understanding their children at each grade level.	NOT IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
b. WORKSHOPS for parents on creating HOME CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING.	NOT IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
c. COMMUNICATIONS from the school to the home that all families can understand and use.	NOT IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
d. COMMUNICATIONS about report cards so that parents understand students' progress and needs.	NOT IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
e. Parent-teacher CONFERENCES with all families.	NOT IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
f. SURVEYING parents each year for their ideas about the school.	NOT IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
g. VOLUNTEERS in classrooms to assist teachers and students.	NOT IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
h. VOLUNTEERS to help in other (non-classroom) parts of the school.	NOT IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
i. INFORMATION on how to MONITOR homework.	NOT IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
j. INFORMATION for parents on HOW TO HELP their children with specific skills and subjects.	NOT IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
k. Involvement by families in PTA/PTO leadership, other COMMITTEES, or other decision-making roles.	NOT IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG
l. Programs for AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, recreation, and homework help.	NOT IMP	DEV	IMPRV	STRONG

6. Teachers choose among many activities to assist their students and families. CIRCLE one choice to tell how important each of these is for you to conduct at your grade level.

	HOW IMPORTANT IS THIS PRACTICE TO YOU?			
	NOT IMPORTANT	A LITTLE IMPORTANT	PRETTY IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT
Have a conference with each of my students' parents at least once a year.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
Attend evening meetings, performances, and workshops at school.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
Contact parents about their children's problems or failures.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
Inform parents when their children do something well or improve.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
Involve some parents as volunteers in my classroom.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
Inform parents of the skills their children must pass in each subject I teach.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
Inform parents how report card grades are earned in my class.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
Provide specific activities for children and parents to do to improve students' grades.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
Provide ideas for discussing TV shows.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
Assign homework that requires children to interact with parents.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
Suggest ways to practice spelling or other skills at home before a test.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
Ask parents to listen to their children read.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
Ask parents to listen to a story or paragraph that their children write.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
Work with other teachers to develop parent involvement activities and materials.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
Work with community members to arrange learning opportunities in my class.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
Work with area businesses for volunteers to improve programs for my students.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
Request information from parents on their children's talents, interests, or needs.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
Serve on a PTA/PTO or other school committee.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP

Q-7. The next questions ask for your opinions about the activities that you think should be conducted by the parents of the children you teach. Circle the choice that best describes the importance of these activities at your grade level.

PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES	NOT IMPORTANT	A LITTLE IMPORTANT	PRETTY IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT
a. Send children to school ready to learn.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
b. Teach children to behave well.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
c. Set up a quiet place and time for studying at home.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
d. Encourage children to volunteer in class.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
e. Know what children are expected to learn each year.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
f. Check daily that homework is done.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
g. Talk to children about what they are learning in school.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
h. Ask teachers for specific ideas on how to help their children at home with classwork.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
i. Talk to teachers about problems the children are facing at home.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
j. Attend PTA/PTO meetings.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
k. Serve as a volunteer in the school or classroom.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
l. Attend assemblies and other special events at the school.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
m. Take children to special places or events in the community.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP
n. Talk to children about the importance of school.	NOT IMP	A LITTLE IMP	PRETTY IMP	VERY IMP

Q-8. The next question asks how you perceive others' support for parent involvement in your school. Please circle one choice on each line. How much support does each give now to parent involvement?

	Strong Support	Some Support	Weak Support	No Support
a. You, personally	STRONG	SOME	WEAK	NONE
b. Other teachers	STRONG	SOME	WEAK	NONE
c. The principal	STRONG	SOME	WEAK	NONE
d. Other administrators	STRONG	SOME	WEAK	NONE
e. Parents	STRONG	SOME	WEAK	NONE
f. Others in community	STRONG	SOME	WEAK	NONE
g. The school board	STRONG	SOME	WEAK	NONE
h. The district superintendent	STRONG	SOME	WEAK	NONE

Q-9. YOUR EXPERIENCE AND BACKGROUND

A. What is your experience?

- _____ (a) Years in teaching or administration
- _____ (b) Years in **this school**
- _____ (c) Did you teach at the **fourth grade** level
in this school during the 2006-2007 school year?
_____ yes _____ no

B. What is your gender?

- _____ (a) Male
- _____ (b) Female

C. What is your highest education?

- _____ (a) Bachelor's
- _____ (b) Bachelor's + credits
- _____ (c) Master's
- _____ (d) Master's + credits
- _____ (e) Doctorate
- _____ (f) Other (describe) _____

D. How do you describe yourself?

- _____ (a) African American
- _____ (b) Asian American
- _____ (c) Hispanic American
- _____ (d) White
- _____ (e) Other (describe) _____

School and Family Partnerships
Joyce Epstein and Karen Salinas
National Network of School Partnerships
John Hopkins University

In your opinion, indicate which practice may improve the reading achievement of your African American male students. (1) Not Important, (2) A Little Important, (3) Pretty Important, and (4) Very Important.

___ (a) Providing an individual learning prescription and activities that a buddy (high school student or community volunteer) can work with the student to accomplish.

___ (b) Celebrating Dr. Seuss's birthday by having community guest readers to read and discuss a variety of genres to fourth grade students.

___ (c) Providing students with books to take home to read with their parents.

___ (d) Listening to the teacher read a novel to the class for at least ten minutes per day.

___ (e) Sponsoring a public library card registration for students and their families to promote use of the public library after school.

___ (f) Conducting a family reading week when families read together, record their reading materials and hours. The students return the reading logs to school.

___ (g) Having a literacy night to educate parents about the components of literacy: independent reading, reading aloud, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension.

___ (h) Reaching out to the families by going to a neighborhood center to encourage and engage families in home learning reading activities.

___ (i) Providing reading extended days and nights where students participate in a ten weeks after school reading program that emphasize reading comprehension. During evening sessions, the parents of the students participate in activities that they can do at home with their children to promote reading.

___ (j) Providing courses for parents to earn their GED during regular school and evening hours.

___ (k) Creating a partnership with a local college to provide parents the opportunity to earn college credits.

___ (l) Sponsoring family literacy workshops to help parents better understand the curriculum.

___ (m) Utilizing technology, teachers and administrators use automated telephone and computer programs to send detailed communications about school programs.

___ (n) Utilizing technology, teachers and administrators use automated telephone and computer programs to send detailed communications about children's progress.

___ (o) Conducting formal parents-teachers-students conferences to discuss reading goals at the beginning of the school year and the end of the first semester.

___ (p) Sending home folders of student work weekly or bi-weekly for parent review and comments.

___ (q) Providing a parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings, and literacy resources for families.

___ (r) Organizes class parents or neighborhood volunteers to link with all parents.

___ (s) Involving parents in revising school and/or district language arts curriculum.

___ (t) Having parent representatives are on district-level reading advisory committees

Promising Partnership Practices (2006)
National Network of Partnerships Schools
John Hopkins University

APPENDIX C
CORRESPONDENCE FROM DR. EPSTEIN

Subj: **Family Involvement and Reading**
Date: 12/8/2006 10:33:11 AM Eastern Standard Time
From: jepstein@CSOS.jhu.edu
To: cebrad22@aol.com

12-8-06

Faye,

See the attached reprint of a chapter that my colleague Steven Sheldon and I wrote.
The reference is:

Sheldon, S. B & Epstein, J. L. (2005b). School programs of family and community involvement to support child reading and literacy development across the grades. In J. Flood and P. Anders (Eds.), *Literacy Development of Students in Urban Schools: Research and Policy* (pp. 107-138). Newark, DE: International Reading Association (IRA).

You may want to see other chapters in the same book.

Good luck with your project.

Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D.
Director, Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships
and National Network of Partnership Schools
Research Professor of Sociology
Johns Hopkins University
3003 North Charles Street, Suite 200
Baltimore, MD 21218

tel: 410-516-8807
fax: 410-516-8890

jepstein@csos.jhu.edu
www.partnershipschools.org

Monday, December 18, 2006 America Online: CEBrad22

APPENDIX D

DR. EPSTEIN'S PERMISSION TO USE SURVEYS AND PROMISING PRACTICES

Subj: **Written Permission to Use the 1993 Survey**
Date: 6/22/2007 9:40:59 AM Eastern Daylight Time
From: jepstein@CSOS.jhu.edu
To: CEBrad22@aol.com



Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships

Johns Hopkins University
TEL: 410-516-8800

3003 North Charles Street Suite 200 Baltimore MD 21218
FAX: 410-516-8890 e-mail: jepstein @ csos.jhu.edu

6-22-07

To: Faye C. Bradley

From: Joyce Epstein
Signature for email

Joyce L. Epstein

Re: Permission to use surveys

This is to grant permission to you to use our survey of teachers on school, family, and community partnerships, and to compile examples from our books of *Promising Partnership Practices* for your dissertation study.

All that we require is that you provide references to both of these in your bibliography and in future publications so that readers of your work know where the surveys and examples originated.

Congratulations to you for completing your study!

Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D.
Director, Center on School, Family, and
Community Partnerships
and the National Network of Partnership Schools
Research Professor of Sociology
Johns Hopkins University
3003 North Charles Street, Suite 200
Baltimore, MD 21218

tel: 410-516-8807
fax: 410-516-8890

jepstein@csos.jhu.edu
www.partnershipschools.org

Monday, July 09, 2007 America Online: CEBrad22

APPENDIX E

DR. EPSTEIN'S PERMISSION TO USE SIX TYPES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND THEORETICAL MODEL

Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships

Johns Hopkins University
3003 North Charles Street
Suite 200
Baltimore MD 21218
TEL: 410-516-8800
FAX: 410-516-8890
e-mail: jepstein @ csos.jhu.edu

2-18-10

To: Faye Covington-Bradley
From: Joyce Epstein
Re: Permission to reproduce materials

This is to grant permission for you to reproduce materials (as attached to your e-mail request of 2-9-10) from my book for your dissertation.

All that we require is that you include a reference note with the diagram and chart and a full reference in your bibliography to show where the work originated.

Please change the citations for both items (diagram and chart) to the most recent reference:

Epstein, J. L. et al. (2009). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action, third edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Our Center is at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. The reference for the chart should be the same as given above – Epstein et al, 2009.

Best of luck in completing your dissertation..

Joce L. Epstein, Ph.D.

Director, Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships and the National Network of Partnership School
Research Professor of Sociology
Johns Hopkins University
3003 North Charles Street, Suite 200
Baltimore, MD 21218
tel: 410-516-8807
fax: 410-516-8890
jepstein@csos.jhu.edu
<http://www.partnershipschools.org>

APPENDIX F
IRB APPROVAL

An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution

Invent the Future

Office of Research Compliance

1880 Pratt Drive (0497)

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

540/231-4358 Fax: 540/231-0959

E-mail: ctgreen@vt.edu

www.irb.vt.edu

cc: File

DATE: August 9, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: Travis W. Twiford

Faye Bradley

FROM: Carmen Green

IRB Exempt Approval: “The Impact of Parental Involvement on the Reading Achievement of Fourth Grade African American Males in the Tidewater Region”, IRB # 07-391

I have reviewed your request to the IRB for exemption for the above referenced project. I concur that the research falls within the exempt status. Approval is granted effective as of August 9, 2007.

As an investigator of human subjects, your responsibilities include the following:

1. Report promptly proposed changes in previously approved human subject research activities to the IRB, including changes to your study forms, procedures and investigators, regardless of how minor. The proposed changes must not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.
2. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE UNIVERSITY AND
STATE UNIVERSITY

SUBJECT:

FWA00000572(expires 1/20/2010)

IRB # is IRB00000667

Office of Research Compliance

Carmen T. Green, IRB Administrator

2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497)

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

540/231-4358 Fax 540/231-0959

e-mail ctgreen@vt.edu

www.irb.vt.edu

APPENDIX G

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY IN HONEYDEW HEIGHTS SCHOOL DIVISION

August 16, 2007

Ms. Faye Covington-Bradley
605 Wellshire Place
Chester, VA 23836

Dear Ms. Bradley,

Thank you for your request to conduct research in ██████ City Schools. The Research Committee has approved your proposal on "The Impact of Parental Involvement on Influencing the Reading Achievement of Fourth Grade African American Males in the Tidewater Region of Virginia".

It is our hope that you will share your findings with the committee. We wish you success in your research.

Sincerely,

Sally B. I'Anson, Ed.D.
Director of Instructional Accountability

SBI:kjn

APPENDIX H

HONEYDEW HEIGHTS NATIONAL AWARD FOR EXCELLENT PARTNERSHIP PRESS
RELEASE

Page 1 of 1

██████████ School Division Wins National Award for Excellent Partnerships

The ██████████ School Division has won a 2007 Partnership District Award from the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University! This marks an important step in the school district's leadership in building strong partnerships.

██████████ was honored for making excellent progress in helping schools develop comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnerships to support school improvement goals. Essential elements included teamwork, leadership, plans for action, implementation, facilitation, evaluation, and network connections.

██████████ City Schools is demonstrating that research-based approaches can be used to increase family and community involvement in ways that contribute to student success in school," said Dr. Joyce L. Epstein, Director of NNPS.

Dr. Mildred Sexton, ██████████ Executive Director of Elementary School Leadership, stated that she was extremely pleased with the award, as *"it is a testament to the great work of Chanda Epps, the division's Title I Coordinator of Parent Involvement."* Epps says ██████████ Schools will *"continue to strengthen its leadership and programs of school, family, and community partnerships in all schools, to help more students succeed at high levels."*

For more information about ██████████ schools' partnership program, contact Chanda Epps at ██████████. For information on NNPS, please visit