

Comparing the Viewpoint: Understanding New and Experienced High School Teachers'
Perceptions of Parent Involvement in Students' Educational Experiences

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

Doctor of Education

In

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

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May 6, 2014

Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: Parental Involvement, School Collaboration, Student Success, Teacher Perception

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the high school teacher's perceptions of parent involvement and how viewpoints differ based on years of experience and the population served. The study consisted of a survey with open-ended questions given to teachers and administrators and other non-classroom instructional personnel at a high socio-economic school and at a low socio-economic school. The surveys were analyzed and data were presented based on the viewpoints of teachers with fewer than six years of experience, between six and fourteen years of experience and greater than fifteen years of experience. Responses were also presented from non-classroom educators such as guidance counselors and administrators.

There were five findings emerging from this study. The first finding revealed that teacher perceptions of parent involvement varied between low and high socio-economic schools. Another finding discovered that the group of students being taught may play more of a role in teacher perception of parent involvement than the socio-economic status of the school. The third finding was teacher perceptions of key characteristics of parent involvement don't necessarily align with ways teachers say parents are involved. The next finding revealed that teachers communicate with parents via various forms of technology. The final finding exposed that teachers feel that school related involvement at home is important.

Dedication

This paper is dedicated to my little man, AJ. I hope that as you grow you enjoy learning and find that nothing is too hard or impossible to achieve.

Acknowledgement

I'd like to begin by acknowledging my chairperson, Dr. Cash, and my committee members, Dr. Twiford and Dr. Rogers, for having faith in me since the beginning of my journey towards being a school administrator in the Education Specialist program. Without your help, confidence in me, and guidance, I would not have been successful. I'd also like to thank Dr. Price for sharing your ideas and excitement as I progressed in the doctoral program. I'd also like to thank my doctoral cohort who has been a motivating group behind my success. Thank you to my parents who have instilled a love of learning in me by never pressuring me to do well, but by silently knowing that I would achieve great things because of how you raised me. And last, but certainly not least, I must thank my husband, Chip. Words cannot express how much I have appreciated all the extra time you spent with our little man as I attended class and spent my Sundays researching and writing. Though you may not understand how much work this involved, you took it all in stride and did what was needed. I love you and truly appreciate you and our little man!

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Chapter One

Introduction

Schools are often criticized by the media and parents for not preparing students for the real world. It is hard to read the newspaper and not see where teachers and administrators are being blamed for low test scores and problem behaviors exhibited at schools. The rebuttal argument is that students are only in school part of the day, and schools cannot control what happens at home during the remainder of the day. In Cole-Henderson's (2000) study, parental involvement in schools has been consistently associated with school success in areas including achievement, behavior, absenteeism, and positive attitude towards school.

Many studies have been done on types of parental involvement and the effects of parent involvement on student success. Some of the more recent studies were done by Sheldon and Epstein (2002), Leon (2003), Jeynes (2005), and Williams and Sanchez (2012). However, not many look at the teacher viewpoint of parent involvement. In a Phi Delta Kappa poll done in 2000, elementary and secondary teachers said they felt a lack of parental involvement was the second-largest hindrance to school improvement. A lack of funding was considered the largest obstacle (Rosf & Gallup, 2000). More research needs to be conducted on how teachers perceive parental involvement.

Research by Machen, Wilson, and Notar has shown that schools can also reflect on the neighborhoods. People often choose where they want to live based on the reputation of the schools. Parents play an important part in improving schools, and giving parents an effective voice in the decision making at the school is helpful. As a result, collaboration between parents and schools is increasingly important (Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2005). A study by Cucchiara and Horvat (2009) found that middle-class parent involvement could bring resources to urban schools that could be a catalyst for change.

Statement of the Problem

Attempts at investigating the impact of parental involvement on student success is most often researched at the elementary school level. The way parents can influence student success as children get older can change. Therefore, it is important to look at this information at all levels. In addition, much of the research is not very recent.

Obstacles to definitive findings about the relationship between parental involvement and student success have included a lack of research from the administrator's and teacher's points of view. Many researchers refer to Epstein's six types of parent and community participation when evaluating parent involvement in schools. Moreover, much of the research has been based on large questionnaires such as the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1992 (NELS) that are over 20 years old. These questionnaires ask students and parents to respond to multiple choice questions (Falbo, Lein, & Amador, 2001).

Research Questions

The available research and literature were examined for evidence relative to the following research questions:

1. What do teachers in high and low socio-economic (SES) high schools see as the value of parent involvement?
2. How do teachers' perceptions of parent involvement at low SES high schools compare with teachers' perceptions of parent involvement at high SES high schools?
3. How do new teachers' perceptions of parent involvement at high and low SES high schools compare with more experienced teachers' perceptions at high and low SES high schools perceptions?

Significance

At the national, state, and local level, the push for school improvement includes aspects of parent involvement. As a required part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and Title I, these laws have served as an impetus for including parent involvement. In addition, states are creating their own methods of including parents. For example, during his tenure, former Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell created a rating system for schools that will grade them with a letter grade of A through F. A news release from his office stated

The new report cards will recognize schools for challenging all students to reach high levels of achievement. They will also give schools a tool to encourage more parental and community involvement. When parents and community members have a clear understanding of school performance, all students benefit (Commonwealth of Virginia, Office of Governor Bob McDonnell, 2013).

Furthermore, Governor McDonnell stated, “A-F school grading will be a catalyst for parents and community leaders to get more involved in the success of their schools” (NRV News, 2013).

Educators have argued that parental involvement in schools is important and related to student success. Even social scientists have argued that especially in urban areas, parental involvement is even more important. This is because of the larger number of two-parent working families and high divorce rates and single parent homes and their effects on students (Jeynes, 2005).

Research has shown that parent involvement can positively influence their child’s performance. According to research by Gonzalez (2000), parental involvement in the form of helping with homework, attending school events, watching student sports or other extracurricular activities, helping choose school courses, and keeping current on student progress in school can lead to higher grade point averages for the student. There is also a positive correlation that leads to the students’ seeking challenging tasks and being satisfied with their schoolwork (Gonzalez, 2000).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the high school teacher’s perceptions of parent involvement and how viewpoints differ based on years of experience and the population served. It identified whether or not teachers at schools with varying socio-economic levels experience different issues when it comes to parent involvement, and whether or not they sought similar things from parents. This research also identified if years of experience teaching influenced the teachers’ viewpoints on parent involvement.

Definitions of Key Terms

Several key terms were used throughout the study and are defined here to facilitate understanding of their usage.

Impact. *Impact* can be defined as the change delivered by a program and its measure is the comparison of the observed end-point with some measure of what would have happened in the absence of the program or activity (Avvisati, Besbas, & Guyon, 2010).

Parent. According to Johnson (2013), *parent* is defined as any person taking care of a student by providing the basic necessities of shelter, food, and clothing, as well as physical and mental support. This person can be a mother, father, grandparent, sibling, aunt, uncle, or friend.

Parental involvement. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will use Abdul-Adil and Farmer's definition "which consists of any parental attitudes, behaviors, styles, or activities that occur within or outside the school setting to support children's academic and/or behavioral success in their currently enrolled school" (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006).

Student achievement. The process wherein students reach an academic goal created by the teachers, parents, school division, and/or students (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

Summary

Parent involvement is a factor of a child's educational success. Though the type and frequency of the involvement may be different as the child progresses through school, research shows it is important. Government officials and legislators also find parental involvement to be significant and include it in various educational laws.

Chapter Two

Review of Relevant Literature

Purpose of the Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to review parental involvement in education and its effects on student success. In addition, previous research showing the educational benefits of various forms of parent involvement in a child's education are reviewed. Viewpoints of students, parents, administrators, and teachers are analyzed.

Search Process

Various search methods were used to produce a comprehensive search of relevant literature. Background reading related to parental involvement and school success helped provide the broad base for the current study. Research was found by using the Virginia Tech Library program called Summons to search various scholarly journal articles and dissertations. Search terms included *parental involvement*, *student success*, and *teacher viewpoint of parent involvement*. The search parameters also included publication dates after the year 2000 and results that were only available in full text format. In addition, online research databases such as EBSCO and LexisNexis provided some useful scholarly articles. Several additional articles and sources were also found by looking at the works cited by others.

Historical Perspective of Parental Involvement

The documentation of parental involvement in schools goes back to 1966 when the Coleman Report was published (Kiviat, 2000). This report, based on data from over 600,000 students and teachers across the United States, showed that family background was a bigger indicator of student success than the school itself or teacher's characteristics on why there was a disparity in the quality of education at Black and White schools (Kiviat, 2000). That same year, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) and Title I were signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson. One of the important goals of the legislation was to increase parental involvement in the education of children so that children could have every possible chance for academic success (Armstrong-Piner, 2008).

One of the purposes of the Head Start program, which was established as part of the ESEA Act, was to encourage parents to learn parenting skills and become decision-makers in

schools. Parents were even encouraged to get jobs at the Head Start centers. The legislation also required schools to develop programs and activities that encouraged parent and school partnerships to help increase students' academic success (Armstrong-Piner, 2008).

In 1983, *A Nation at Risk: A Report to the Nation* was published. This document revealed the country's educational flaws. It also challenged parents to expect the best from their child, actively participate in their child's education through monitoring homework, encouraging good study skills, nurturing curiosity, and participating in the student's learning. It also recommended that parents to be a good living example for their children and make sure they know the importance of intellectual and moral integrity, hard work, and commitment (Armstrong-Piner, 2008).

In 1990, President George H. Bush and governors from all of the states created six goals that should be reached by the year 2000. One of the goals stated that all children would start school ready to learn. This put an emphasis on the home and family as an indicator of a student's success. Congress then created Goals 2000 in 1992 which added more goals. The last goal stated, that by the year 2000, every school would promote parent partnerships that would increase parental involvement and participation in promoting social, emotional, and academic growth for children (Goals 2000).

In 1994, the Improving America's Schools Act gave Title I challenged schools to develop programs for all parents, not just those of low income status. Schools were required to communicate with and involve families (Epstein & Hollifield, 1996). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 required that schools would only receive federal funds if they had a parent involvement policy that was written with, and input given by, parents. Parents also had to be informed of the policy. Within the No Child Left Behind Act, parents are mentioned over 300 times. Section 1118 of the Act provides the majority of the information regarding the parent involvement provisions of No Child Left Behind (National Coalition for Parent Involvement, 2004). In addition, Title I funds could be used to develop parent involvement programs (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Furthermore, school divisions cannot qualify for the funds if they do not implement the parent involvement piece, but they are rarely penalized for not complying with the provisions (National Coalition for Parent Involvement, 2004).

One of the more recent changes in legislation is the move to more school choice. The George W. Bush Administration and recent Congresses paved the way for more school choice. In

some states, parents are given the option to choose the school or school district where their child attends. This is especially true for students attending low performing schools (Ramirez, 2000).

Types of Parental Involvement

People may consider parental involvement to mean or include different things. It can include, but is not always limited to, actual participation in school events, being supportive of the child's education outside of school, and communication with the school. In addition, different kinds of parental involvement may be effective at different years during the student's school life.

According to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), parent involvement is defined as

The participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities including assisting their child's learning; being actively involved in their child's education at school; serving as full partners in their child's education and being included, as appropriate, in decision making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and the carrying out of other activities such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA. (National Coalition for Parent Involvement, 2004, par. 5)

Epstein, the Director of the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships and the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS), is well known for her research regarding parent and community involvement in schools. She has defined six types of parent and community participation which many researchers use as the basis for their research. The six types of participation are as follows

- Type 1- Parenting: Assist families with parenting skills and setting home conditions to support children as students. Also, assist schools to better understand families.
- Type 2- Communicating: Conduct effective communications from school-to-home and from home-to-school about school programs and student progress.
- Type 3- Volunteering: Organize volunteers and audiences to support the school and students. Provide volunteer opportunities in various locations and at various times.
- Type 4- Learning at home: Involve families with their children on homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions.

- Type 5- Decision making: Include families as participants in school decisions, and develop parent leaders and representatives.
- Type 6- Collaborating with the community: Coordinate resources and services from the community for families, students, and the school, and provide services to the community (Epstein et. al, 2009, par. 1).

Bower (2011) did a case study in an urban elementary school to assess the effectiveness of the Epstein Model in a high poverty and minority area. The study looked at a 347 student elementary school in a large urban district in the southeastern United States with a high poverty rate, low student achievement, and high population of African American and Latino students. Two administrators and five teachers participated in interviews as part of the study. Though the school already used the Epstein Model, Bower's research showed that the school needed to create new parent involvement approaches that better met the needs of their school population and continue with the initiatives despite teacher frustration. The research showed that the cultural gap among families needed to be addressed and parental involvement efficacy needed to be improved based on the high-minority and poverty population of the school (Bower, 2011).

In 1992, Bloom proposed seven roles for parents at three different levels. The three levels were involvement with the child's education, participation in school life, and advocacy. At the involvement level, parents can be spectators and monitor the child's progress and assist the child with homework and instruction routines. At the participation level, parents can act as accessory volunteers and go on field trips and help with non-classroom support. They can also be an educational volunteer and help in the classroom. Parents can also be an employee and work for the school and help as an educational or accessory volunteer. At the advocacy level, parents can be a decision maker or policy maker and become an important part of the school's administrative structure, or the parent can independently initiate changes in the school (Bloom, 1992).

In a study conducted by Williams and Sanchez (2012) of parents and staff of an inner-city public high school, both the parents and school personnel agreed that a physical connection between the parents and school was important in order for them to better understand the child and his/her high school experience. The survey respondents also felt it served as an accountability tool. However, both parents and school personnel interviewed also admitted that a parent's presence outside of school was beneficial to a child's academic achievement, and

possibly more so than the physical connection at school. They also acknowledged that if children's basic needs are met and they come from a stable home, they are more likely to come to school on time. In considering parental involvement at home, 80% of the school personnel interviewed felt the most logical way for parents to be involved in the child's education at home was by checking or pretending to check their child's homework. Most parents (67%) said they tried to help their child with homework but were often unable to do the work because of their own low education level. Because of this, some of the parents sought out tutors, mentors, and workbooks to help their children (Williams & Sanchez, 2012).

In the study by Williams and Sanchez (2012), the researchers also sought to define why parents were uninvolved. They found parents fell into three groups: unconcerned parents, busy parents, and previously involved parents. According to their research, unconcerned parents had little interest in their child's attendance or performance at school and low expectations for their child's overall well-being. Busy parents were defined as those parents who may have wanted to participate but other things, including work, substance abuse problems, additional childcare issues, and partner/spouse preoccupation consumed the parents' time. Previously involved parents were described as those who were involved with the school at one point but consistently negative interactions led to exhaustion or frustration with the school and caused them to become uninvolved parents.

According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sadler's psychological model of parent involvement, there are three reasons that influence a parent's involvement decisions. The first reason is their understanding of their role in the child's life. If a parent thinks they should be involved, they will become involved. The second reason is a parent's sense of usefulness for helping their child succeed in school. The third reason parents decide to be involved in schools is the general opportunities, invitations, and demands for involvement by the child and the school. In addition, this model has three primary mechanisms of how parents can influence child outcomes through involvement. They are modeling, which says children will imitate the behaviors of their parents, reinforcement, which is the way parents show interest, attention, and praise towards their children's behaviors, and direct instruction (Avvisati, Besbas, & Guyon, 2010).

A study of 6,400 high school students from diverse backgrounds, by Gonzalez (2002) examined parental involvement in the form of helping with homework, attending school events, watching student sports or other extracurricular activities, helping choose school courses, and

keeping up to date on student progress in school. The data showed that children had higher grade point averages when parents were more involved in their education. Moreover, the students whose parents were involved conveyed higher levels of effort, concentration, and attention in the core subject areas.

In a study by Gonzalez (2002) of 196 Florida high school students, the participants were asked how active their parents were in helping with homework, attending school events, choosing classes, and staying informed on how the student is performing in school. The data showed a positive correlation between parent involvement in the child's education and the students seeking challenging tasks and being satisfied with their schoolwork. According to the researcher, students may be encouraged by seeing their parents take an active interest in their schooling, therefore resulting in more student motivation.

The National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) prepared by the National Center for Educational Statistics in 1992 was evaluated by Sui Chi and Willms in 1996 to find that eighth grade students and parents viewed parent involvement in four clusters. They included the extent to which school was discussed at home, parents' communication with the school regarding their children, supervising the student's life outside of school, and participation in school events. Of the four clusters, parents' discussing school at home had the highest positive correlation with student success, whereas communications with the school had a negative relationship with student success. The researchers found that the negative correlation was because parents of students with learning or behavior difficulties received more school communications but their children were still more likely to do poorly on achievement tests. Supervision and participation by parents also had small positive effects (Falbo, Lein, & Amador, 2001).

Falbo, Lein, and Amador (2001) conducted their own study to determine which types of parental involvement were most effective for students transitioning to high school. They conducted in-home interviews with 26 students and their parents before and after they entered high school. Success of student transition was determined by final grades, credits earned, and attendance. Their research concluded that there were five types of parental involvement that helped students succeed: monitoring the student's social and academic life, evaluating information they received about the student, helping with schoolwork, creating positive peer networks, and participating at the school.

Three common parental activities amongst the students who transitioned successfully were monitoring, evaluating, and intervening. The researchers discovered that through monitoring, parents were more able to discover if their children were having any difficulty early enough to prevent big problems. When parents evaluated the information they received through daily monitoring, they were more able to identify possible problems. Parents who used this information to intervene by having an active role in schoolwork, aiding the teen in finding a desirable peer network, and becoming directly involved in the school, had students who had a more successful transition to high school (Falbo et al. 2001).

Anguiano (2004) conducted a study to determine the effects of different types of parental involvement on students' high school completion as it related to ethnic background. For his research, Anguiano used data from the 1988 NELS which included information from parents, school personnel, and 25,000 eighth graders followed throughout high school. In his research, Anguiano only used data from students and parents that identified themselves as Native American, Latino, European American, or Asian American. The findings showed that the type of parental involvement, traditional or parental advocacy, that was most important for students varied depending on ethnicity. For example, Asian Americans had a stronger relationship between traditional parent involvement and high school involvement than any of the other groups. In addition, the relationship between parental advocacy and high school completion was stronger for Asian Americans than European Americans, but there was a stronger relationship regarding parental advocacy for European Americans than for Latinos. Traditional parental involvement included the frequency of parent contact with the school and school personnel including attendance at student events and parent-teacher conferences. Parental advocacy included involvement in school policies and parent-teacher organizations.

In a longitudinal study from 1998 through 2006, Froiland, Peterson, and Davison (2012) used a nationally representative sample of 7,600 children who started in kindergarten and their parents. The study followed the students through eighth grade to “examine the extent to which parental expectations (in both kindergarten and eighth grade) effect both children’s expectations in eighth grade and their achievement” (p. 38). The study started with families equally distributed among all five levels of socio-economic status. The researchers found that parent involvement in the home at the kindergarten level was a predictor of parent expectations in eighth grade and parent homework and grade checking in eighth grade. The data also showed

that parent expectations early on greatly predict their expectations later on, much more so than the relationship between kindergarten achievement and eighth grade expectations. The study showed that parent and child expectations did have a positive correlation to eighth grade achievement. On the contrary, parent involvement and homework checking in eighth grade affected eighth grade performance slightly negatively. Conversely, the researchers did find a significant relationship between the indirect effect of home literacy at the kindergarten level and eighth grade achievement (Froiland, Peterson, & Davison, 2012, p. 43).

Another form of parental involvement that is often overlooked is parent involvement in school decision-making. Schools have often been accused of being closed organizations that don't involve the community in decisions concerning school policies and programs. Many people feel that if there was greater community involvement in the decisions, the result would be better education for students (Khan, 1996). Khan reported that Wolfendale (1983) felt that instead of viewing parents as clients, they need to be seen as partners. As such, parents would be active in decision-making and execution, have like strengths and corresponding expertise, share in contributing and receiving services and share accountability as well as responsibility with the school's professionals (Khan, 1996).

Importance of Parental Involvement

Parental involvement in education is important to student success. It has been associated with students receiving higher grade point averages, increased achievement in the core subject areas, lower dropout rates, fewer student retentions and less special education placements (Williams & Sanchez, 2012). Parent involvement could also lead to better student attendance (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002).

Parental involvement is an area that teachers and administrators agreed was lacking. In a Phi Delta Kappa poll in 2000, elementary and secondary teachers agreed a lack of parental involvement is the second largest obstacle to improving schools, following a lack of funding (Gonzalez, 2002).

Aside from students achieving successful grades in school, parental involvement is also necessary to help form their social decisions as well. Student attitudes form during school years and often determine some of their life success. Since school is often where students are most

social and also where they experience temptations to experiment with drugs and sex, parent involvement in and out of the school is very important (Leon, 2003).

Studies regarding race have also been done. Research has shown that parental participation is critical to the academic success of minority students. Studies show that regardless of income level, minority students can have high academic success when parents are involved (Anguiano, 2004).

Henderson and Mapp (2002) completed a synthesis report of 51 studies related to parent involvement and student achievement. The researchers concluded that student achievement was positively influenced by family involvement. Moreover, they found that family involvement led to positive results regardless of economic, racial, cultural, educational background, or student age. In addition, their research showed that when families talk with children about school and their educational future, they have an encouraging influence on children's learning.

Not only can parental involvement influence student academic success, but it can also influence the schools' climate and safety. Studies have shown that certain parenting styles can be predictors of juvenile delinquency. As a result, interventions used to improve relationships between parents and children may result in fewer behavior problems in schools (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002).

Sheldon and Epstein (2002) conducted baseline and follow-up surveys with 47 schools working to improve student behavior through school, family, and community partnerships. The baseline survey, conducted at the beginning of the 1998-1999 school year, asked for information about the number of disciplinary actions the previous year, seriousness of the behavior problems, partnership activities planned on being used, and overall quality of the school, family, and community partnership programs at the school. The follow-up survey, conducted at the end of the year, asked similar questions regarding the school year's discipline, and about the effectiveness of the new program. The study showed that schools that used Epstein's partnership practices found them to be effective at improving student behavior at their schools. In addition, the schools that implemented more activities to share school goals about student behavior, parent involvement, and the effects of the home environment on student behavior with parents also had fewer students earning detention and trips to the principal's office. Moreover, schools that involved parents in policy making decisions and the evaluation of the programs also had a lower rate of student detention. In addition, the two types of involvement that showed the highest rates

of success at reducing the number of students who received disciplinary actions over time were increasing parents' support of good behavior at home and volunteering.

William H. Jeynes (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of 41 studies to examine the relationship between parental involvement and academic success of urban elementary school children. His analysis showed that not only is there a relationship between parental involvement and student achievement for urban elementary students, but parental involvement also correlates with increased achievement levels for minority students and both boys and girls.

Jeynes' research found that when the mother and/or father read with the child, there were better academic outcomes. In addition, communication between the parent and child also had positive outcomes. In contrast, parents checking homework did not prove to be statistically significant (Jeynes, 2005).

The data also showed that programs aimed at increasing and encouraging parent support for their child's academics are positively related to urban children's achievement. Moreover, the research showed that newly initiated programs for parental support of struggling students could be a way of reducing the achievement gap (Jeynes, 2005).

Another benefit of family and community involvement is improved student attendance. This is important because poor attendance is often a predictor for students' dropping out of school and other negative results in school. Without being in class, it is difficult for students to master the concepts they are taught (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002).

In a study of eighteen schools (twelve elementary and six secondary) conducted by Sheldon and Epstein in 2002, data about schools' daily attendance and chronic absenteeism were collected. Then, the researchers collected data on the partnership practices the schools implemented and whether they had an effect on student attendance. Results of the study indicated that there was an increase in daily attendance and/or a decrease in chronic absenteeism. In addition, all of the partnership practices used by the schools were considered to be at least "a little helpful" in regards to improving student attendance. Researchers concluded that at the elementary school level, student attendance can be improved through family and community involvement activities (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002).

Some of the successful practices found in Sheldon and Epstein's study included providing parents with a designated person at the school to discuss attendance and other issues. Workshops about attendance related matters were also effective at positively influencing student

attendance. After school programs also helped decrease absenteeism amongst students in their study. Student attendance also increased by giving students awards for improved attendance rates. The daily attendance rate was also positively influenced by referring students to counselors and truant officers. Home visits influenced chronic absenteeism positively (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002).

Though important, there are numerous obstacles for parents when it comes to being involved with their children's schools. These barriers need to be considered when developing parent involvement plans. According to the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE), the challenges that need to be considered include

Differing ideas among parents and teachers on what constitutes involvement, a less than welcoming atmosphere toward parents and other visitors in schools and classrooms, insufficient training for teachers on how to reach out to both mothers and fathers, lack of parental education and parenting skills, time and job pressures, and language barriers. (National Coalition for Parent Involvement, 2004, par. 12)

Parental Involvement in Elementary and Secondary Schools

As students move through school, there is a decline in overall parental involvement. Parent contacts at the secondary level are often limited to upsetting discussions about students' serious problems (Epstein, 2001). Information collected by the National Center for Education Statistics shows that the number of parents attending a regularly scheduled conference for a high school student was much lower than for students in elementary or middle school (Williams & Sanchez, 2012). In addition, research by the Search Institute found that discussions about homework, school and school work, help with homework, and attending school meetings decline greatly between middle and high school (Sanders, 2001).

There are many possible reasons for the decline in parental involvement as students get older. In the elementary level, many people would consider parental involvement activities to include volunteering at the school, helping with homework, and attending school activities. However, as students get older, the number of parents participating in these events does start to decline. Not only are high schools often a further distance from many homes than elementary schools, the course material is also much more difficult, often making parents feel inadequate at helping. In addition, students have more teachers at the secondary level than in elementary

school, making it harder for parents and teachers to build relationships. Another reason for the decline in involvement could be the natural shift in parent-child relationships as children grow older and seek independence (Leon, 2003).

As children mature, they have different needs in regard to their education. Parent and family involvement in the area of direct instruction and support start to decline once the child leaves elementary school. However, at this stage, involvement may increase in monitoring school performance and discussing high expectations. In addition, as students get older, students and teachers are less likely to invite parents to activities (Avvisati et al. , 2010).

According to research by Gotts and Purnell (1987), the parent contact in urban and rural schools changes as students get older. At the secondary level, urban and small town teachers often have more contact with parents about grades. However, rural teachers contact secondary school parents less about grades than they do elementary school parents. The same decline occurs for rural teachers contacting parents about absences. The researchers felt the decline may occur because at that level, rural parents are concerned more with overall behavioral conformity as opposed to irregularities of school.

The Gotts-Purnell Models of School-Family Relations is a model that compares parental involvement in elementary and secondary schools. However, in the elementary model, parents are enticed to the school by its activities, whereas in the secondary model, emphasis is placed on communication from the school to the parent. In his research, Leon (2003) tested the validity of secondary school theories of The Gotts-Purnell Models of School-Family Relations by conducting interviews with parents in 51 families. He asked the interviewees about whether their previous interactions with high schools aligned with the model and whether following the model would result in valuable parental involvement.

Table 1

The Gotts-Purnell Models of School-Family Relations

	Elementary	Secondary
Essential Characteristics	Relations are physically close; involvement is expressed by being present	Relations occur at a distance, with parent monitoring; involvement is being present when needed
Group Involvement	General purpose parent groups (PTA/PTO)	Special purpose groups (athletics, band)
Monitoring School Programs	Visits school and reviews student work	Reads newsletter; visits only as needed
Teacher Contact	Regularly visits teacher to discuss progress	Visits teacher if special need is identified
Academic Focus	Basic skills, adjustment, and social integration	Graduation credits and progress, specialized programs
Conduct and Discipline	Problems require parent-teacher discussion; child not routinely present	Problems require parent teacher-student-other (counselor, principal) with negotiation and agreement
School Events and Outcomes	Events have a general focus for all parents of a classroom or school; the parent is to view all children's work as well as their own child's; strengthens the sense of neighborhood and school	Parents are drawn by interest or the child's involvement in sports, music, etc. ; their child may be seen as an independent performer; strengthens the sense of a broader community and school ownership
Attendance Focus	Child is present at school unless excessively ill	Child is present in each class and on time (no cuts)

Note. Reprinted from "Parents and secondary schools," by Leon, L. , 2003, *Principal Leadership*, p. 35. Copyright 2014 National Association of Secondary School Principals. For more information on NASSP products and services to promote excellence in middle level and high school leadership, visit www.nassp.org.

As a result of his research, Leon made some changes to the model. Leon's 2003 research found that essential characteristics of secondary school parental involvement include staying informed, keeping relations at a distance, often by phone, and the parent monitoring work. Contrary to the Gotts-Purnell Model, Leon found group involvement to be unimportant. In regard to monitoring school programs, both models found the newsletter to be helpful but Leon's

research also shows parents believe school visits are very valuable. The new model also shows that parents want contact with teachers via telephone or mail and that they will initiate contact when the need arises. According to Leon, parents check report cards and monitor homework and they show some interest in preparing for schooling after high school. Leon’s research also shows that parents want schools to contact them quickly regarding any inappropriate behavior, and they feel it is the parent’s job to handle serious discipline but a team approach should often be used to find a solution. In both models, parents attend school events when their child is involved. In Leon’s model, parents also rely on the school to report attendance issues.

Table 2

Leon’s New Secondary School Model of Parent Involvement

Essential Characteristics	Relations occur at a distance with parent monitoring work; involvement is staying informed, often by phone
Group Involvement	Parents find this involvement unimportant and, at best, will support special groups in which the child participates.
Monitoring School Programs	Parents find the newsletter helpful; believe visits are a very valuable way to communicate; visit the school when the school invites parents to talk to the teachers.
Teacher Contact	Parents want telephone and mail contact with the teachers and they will initiate this contact when there is a particular need or to assess student performance.
Academic Focus	Parents check report cards and monitor student homework; some parental interest in college-prep programs and postsecondary preparation.
Conduct and Discipline	Parents want to be quickly informed of any inappropriate behavior; believe it is the parents’ job to handle serious discipline problems; believe problems require a team approach to find a solution.
School Events and Outcomes	Parents attend sport, musical, or other events when their child is involved.
Attendance Focus	Parents rely on the school to report on attendance.

Note. Reprinted from “Parents and secondary schools,” by Leon, L. , 2003, *Principal Leadership*, p. 37. Copyright 2014 National Association of Secondary School Principals. For more information on NASSP products and services to promote excellence in middle level and high school leadership, visit www.nassp.org.

Table 3 shows examples of parent involvement at grades 8 and 12 when divided into Epstein's six types of parent involvement. The examples for grade 8 are similar to examples for elementary schools as well. The largest differences between grades 8 and 12 appear for parenting, communicating, learning at home, and collaborating with the community.

In a study using data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88), Simon (2001) conceptualized secondary school partnerships using Epstein's framework of six forms of community involvement. She found workshops were a popular activity for parents with over half of the high schools responding that they offered workshops on drug and alcohol abuse prevention. About one third of the parents who responded attended college planning workshops. The research found that communication between the home and school at the high school level was intermittent and infrequent aside from report cards. Parents were likely to attend school activities and most parents said they volunteered their time by attending school activities with their child. Although 75% of parents said schools never contacted them about helping their children with homework, two thirds of the parents responded that they help their teenagers with homework or school projects sometimes or frequently (Simon, 2001).

In Simon's study, many principals reported collaborating with the community. Most said employers asked the schools to recommend students for jobs and to post job listings. In addition, half of the principals said they had a local business organization involved in promoting a drug free environment at the school. In contrast, less than half of the principals said their school had a community service program. In addition, approximately one third of the principals said their schools did not have a parent-teacher organization such as a PTA or PTO (Simon, 2001).

In addition to analyzing the forms of parental involvement from the NELS:88, Simon (2001) also examined the relationships between the partnership activities and student outcomes. The data showed that when controlled for race, ethnicity, gender, family structure, previous achievement, and socio-economic status, the teenagers scored higher grades and completed more course credits in English and math and had better attendance and behavior when their parents were involved in various ways.

Table 3

Types of Parent Involvement for Grades 8 and 12

TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT	IN GRADE 8	IN GRADE 12
Parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing expectations about student’s education • Limiting television watching • Overseeing use of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing school • Spending time together socially • Supervising behavior • Knowledge of student’s schedule • Overseeing academic work
Communicating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent inquires about academic performance • School inquires about student’s academic courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School inquires contacts about academic performance • Parent inquires about student’s academic courses • Parent and school communicate about plans for after high school
School Support	Fundraising and volunteering at school	Attending and volunteering at school activities
Learning at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutoring outside of school • Extracurricular involvement such as music or dance lessons • Communicating about academics and future plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting college • Promoting high school graduation • Inquiring about education options for after high school • Paying for private educational expenses
Making Decisions	Participating in parent organizations such as PTSA	Participating in parent organizations such as PTSA
Community Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking advantage of educational opportunities such as museums and libraries • Participating in community groups and sports 	Communicating with other parents

Note. Adapted from “A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement,” by Henderson, A. and Mapp, K., 2002, Center for Family Community Connections with Schools, p. 22. Copyright 2002 by the Southeast Educational Development Laboratory.

Contrary to what some previous studies have revealed Simon found that when parents contacted the school about their teenager's attendance and behavior, it was negatively associated with student success. However, Simon did point out that this does not mean the contact caused the students to do poorly. Rather, the parents contacted the school because of the student's struggling (Simon, 2001).

Teacher Viewpoint of Parental Involvement

As part of his research, Jeynes (2005) found that teachers felt reaching out to parents to be more involved would have little effect, but these data showed the opposite. The research also showed that parental involvement impacts teacher decisions. A higher degree of parent involvement often influences how a teacher views and even grades a student. Grades can be affected by an encouraging show of teamwork and communication between the parent and teacher as well as an acknowledgement of the parent's efforts.

In research conducted by Leitch and Tangri in 1988, teachers cited eight barriers to parental involvement. They were parents' unrealistic expectations of the school's role, large families, parent attitudes about taking time off from work for school, parents' inability to help with school work, parents' jealousy of the upward mobility of teachers, apathy of long-time teachers along with their lack of receptiveness to parents, absence of appealing activities to recruit parents, and teachers' resentment or distrust of involved parents (Khan, 1996).

Research by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory in 1998 found teachers at the secondary level appreciated parent involvement. However, very few of the teachers felt it was their obligation to recruit the parents. Other research also shows teachers were concerned about the possibilities associated with volunteers' observations of teachers' abilities and their classroom management styles. They were also concerned with how to manage partnerships and still control the educational program's quality. As a result of these concerns, it is important for administrators to train teachers on how to recruit and interview volunteers. Administrators should also recruit and train volunteers on appropriate policies and procedures for their participation activities (Burke, 2001).

Gotts and Purnell (1987) conducted a survey of 446 teachers from seven states served by the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL). The survey included questions about teachers' preparation for and experience with school and family relations. In addition, the questionnaire

asked for views on the subject. In addition to the questions, mentions of interactions with homes were also combined to make a participation scale. The data showed that urban teachers were significantly more likely to mention involvement with homes than other groups and also less likely to ever call parents on the phone. Data also showed that more teachers attended PTA/PTO meetings regularly in small towns and not at all in rural areas. The research showed that urban parents relied more on formal contacts such as attendance at conferences and other scheduled school functions while other groups relied more on informal contact such as phone calls. However, small towns and rural areas also relied on school functions for teacher contact with parents. The data collected also suggested that rural settings often had greater participation because of the number of opportunities provided and because the attendees are also needed to help put the events together, thus urging people to participate.

In order to properly conduct school, family, and community partnerships, it is important for teachers and administrators to be properly trained. The reason family and community involvement programs often are ill organized in schools and ineffective is often blamed on the lack of pre-service education on partnership programs (Epstein, 2005). It is also increasingly important for teachers and administrators to work well with families as schools are becoming more diverse. Many education reform groups, including the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), and Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), feel knowledge of school, family, and community partnerships is crucial and there should be college coursework focusing on the topic (Epstein & Sanders, 2006).

In a study conducted by Epstein and Sanders (2006), surveys were sent to 500 college and university deans whose schools offer degrees in education. The vast majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that all teachers should know how to conduct practices of school, family, and community partnerships with all families. Respondents also felt more strongly that principals and counselors should have those skills. Many respondents also felt knowledge and practical skills in partnerships was also important for student teaching.

Although many people who responded to the Epstein and Sanders survey felt it was important for educators to know how to work with parent and community partnerships, most also felt recent graduates from their programs were not well prepared in this area. About two thirds of the respondents said they feel the topics should be more prominent in their curricula. Some

felt that it would require them to increase the required courses offered at the graduate level while others felt they should include more coverage of the topics during existing courses (Epstein & Sanders, 2006).

Methods and Programs for Improving Parental Involvement

Abdul-Adil and Farmer researched parental involvement in schools among inner-city African Americans. They found that a variety of approaches might be effective to increase parental involvement among that demographic. Their first suggestion is that a more extensive framework might be necessary to depict the parental involvement taking place. They also found that higher rates of collaboration between parents and professionals could increase parental involvement. Opportunities for participation should also emphasize relevant methods of supporting their child's school success. Empowerment, outreach, and indigenous resources are three strategies for increasing parent involvement among inner-city African American parents identified by Abdul-Adil and Farmer. They suggest offering parents training and skills to be more involved in their child's education, making services more accessible to parents, and using programs that exist within the family and community settings (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006).

A successful parent involvement program has been studied. The Supporting Parents on Kids' Education in School (SPOKES) program is an intervention program that combines an adult literacy program concentrated on reading readiness with parenting support. When evaluated, this program, used in South London, England, results showed that parents had increased levels of sensitivity, child-centered parenting, and calm discipline responses. Results also included increased time on task for the children (Avvisati et al. , 2010).

In the United States, the Even Start program has also been evaluated. This program, targeted at low-income families, is an ongoing family literacy program. Families involved with the program are provided with activities that are interactive for the parent and child. The program also includes parenting, adult, and early childhood education components. In a study of 463 families, no significant improvements associated with the program were found (Avvisati et al. , 2010).

Patrikakou (2008) found that in order to build a successful school and family partnership, schools must make the partnership a priority and include parents as collaborators in their mission statement. In addition, the partnership must be prudently planned and there must be continuous

communication between the school and parents throughout the year. Moreover, his research found that it is important for teachers to call home for positive reasons to help create an encouraging home-school relationship. Schools should also contact families in a more personalized manner about their specific students.

Simon (2001) found the following activities are good examples of how high school outreach programs can be positively related to family support of their teenagers as learners.

- School staff members contacting parents to discuss the teenager's post-secondary plans
- School staff members contacting parents about volunteering
- School staff members informing parents about how to help teenagers study
- School staff members contact parents about school-related issues including the student's course selection, academic classes, and plans for after graduation

The Action Team for Partnerships is a research-based model schools can use to make sure stakeholders, including families, staff, and community members are involved in creating and implementing a comprehensive partnership program. The goal of the team should be to have a permanent program at the school that reaches all the families of all the students. Action Teams should be comprised of six to twelve people including various staff members, administrators, students, family members and community members, all of whom commit to two-year terms (Sanders, 2001).

The Action Team has three steps. First, they must identify the school's current partnership practices. Then, they must create a three-year outline that explains the goals of the partnership program. Finally, they must complete a one-year action plan listing activities that will be conducted and assessed during that school year. These plans are usually more successful when they are linked to the school's goals. In addition, the Team must determine how they plan to evaluate the events to see if they met their goals and to reflect on the quality of the collaborations (Sanders, 2001).

In order for any partnership plan to be successful, it is important to know the audience well. Activities cannot be scheduled until organizers know when the majority of families are able to come to the school. Money must also be available when necessary to ensure the activities are funded and advertised well to the families. Since not everyone can attend events, it is more

equitable to provide the workshop and event information to all families, even if they could not attend. The information could be disseminated via a school newsletter, web site, phone services, fliers in the school lobby or parent room, and school bulletin boards (Sanders, 2001).

Burke's research in 2001 found it very important that middle and high school principals create a learning environment that will lead to academic success for all students, regardless of their culture or economic diversity. Some activities that can be included in school volunteer programs are literacy programs, meet-and-greet volunteer recruitment programs, volunteer training on cultural relevancy, education classes on child development, training on how to participate in classrooms, meetings about academic content by grade level or subject, service learning projects, training on how to serve on school advisory committees and how to create new community partnerships, and how to write grant proposals (Burke, 2001).

In addition to the activities for school volunteer programs, it is first important to recruit volunteers. Some ways to recruit parent and community volunteers in secondary schools include inviting volunteers to observe classrooms until they feel comfortable helping, providing grade level training classes, networking with current parents and volunteers and their employers, recruiting through local colleges, students' siblings, job training programs, and creating culturally sensitive recruitment programs for all volunteers and school stakeholders (Burke, 2001).

Khan (1996) has some suggestions for effective ways to combat the barriers to parental involvement. He feels mandatory involvement will empower the parents and make them equal partners in decision making, while also requiring them to gain the knowledge and skills needed to deal with educational issues. Support of administrators is also paramount to the success of programs, as is the need for them to be aware of current research on the topic. In order for the programs to be successful, parents must be empowered by asking them what they would like to be involved in and then also training them to be involved in other areas. It's also important to reach out to newcomers and include anyone who previously felt underrepresented.

In their synthesis report of 51 studies on parent and community involvement, Henderson and Mapp (2002) had a number of the key findings related to programs. Their key findings included

- Programs and interventions that engage families in supporting their children's learning at home are linked to higher student achievement (p. 25).

- Programs that successfully connect with families and community, invite involvement, are welcoming, and address specific parent and community needs (p. 43).
- Parent involvement programs that are effective in engaging diverse families recognize, respect, and address cultural and class differences (p. 48).
- Effective programs to engage families and community to embrace a philosophy of partnership. The responsibility for children's educational development is a collaborative enterprise among parents, school staff, and community members (p. 52).

Synthesis and Conclusion

As student achievement continues to be the focus of schools across the country and an indicator of the quality of education a school provides, it is more important than ever for schools and parents to work together towards the educational success of children. Researchers have chosen various areas of parental involvement to research in regard to its effect on student success. However, the vast majority of research does show some sort of parental involvement will positively affect a student's success in school.

Research data varies when determining what could or should be considered parent and community involvement in schools. Moreover, parent involvement can also evolve as students get older and more independent. In addition, the role schools take in getting parents involved also varies greatly. There are several successful plans and programs available to help schools create an effective community and parent partnership program.

The review of literature presented above related to parent involvement and student success provides a basis and theoretical grounding for future research. The explanation of the historical background of parental involvement presents the context for recent research studies. The review identifies features of parental involvement and community partnerships in schools as described within the literature and presents an overview of research findings related to these features. A synthesis and critical review of previous research methodologies and findings reveal the need for further research. The fact that teachers need to be an integral part of involving the parents at the secondary level reveals the need for more research regarding their viewpoint and knowledge of involving parents in the schools.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine high school teachers' perceptions of parent involvement and how viewpoints differed based on years of experience and the population served. This qualitative study consisted of open-ended survey questions administered to educators at two different schools. The researcher chose open-ended surveys because they allowed participants to share their opinions without giving away the desired answers or the constraints of only certain choices.

According to Lempp and Kingsley (2007), interviews are one of the most popular kinds of qualitative methods used for research in the social sciences. This includes the use of interviews with individuals or groups, observations, field notes, and open-ended surveys. All of these methods have some similar characteristics:

Naturalistic (in everyday contexts) in their inquiry, drawn on interpretive theories (e. g. hermeneutics = interpreting human action; phenomenology = analysis and description of everyday life or experiences) and are systematic in the data collection of textual material through interaction with people. The researcher is an active participant in the development of knowledge, has a focus on the importance of people's experience over time, and accepts that scientific reality might look different from different perspectives (relativism) (Lempp & Kingsley, 2007, p. 859-860).

Surveys have several benefits when compared with other types of research. A survey is often less expensive than other forms of research. It is also less time consuming for the participants. Surveys can also be easily distributed to a large population in a short period of time, especially when delivered electronically. Because they can be responded to anonymously and not always instantly, more respondents may be willing to reply. However, because the researcher might not be present when requesting participation, people may not choose to take the time to participate in an anonymous survey because if they don't, no one would know (surveymethods. com, 2011).

Although surveys have a lot of positive benefits, there are concerns with this form of research as well. One of the major concerns when seeking information about behaviors is

participants' tendencies to portray themselves as thoughtful and reflective when they might not be. However, this concern exists for all research that includes interviews or any form of questions and answers (Krueger & Casey, 2009). In this study, the researcher chose to use triangulation to increase the internal validity of the study. It is the use of a combination of methods, theories, data, or researchers for the study of one issue (Flick, 2007). In this study, the researcher surveyed three groups of people at each school as multiple sources of data. In using multiple sources of data for triangulation, the researcher cross-checked data collected through the surveys given to each group and looked for common and different perspectives (Merriam, 2009). The researcher also used a combination of data by reviewing the school web sites for parent involvement goals and rules. The researcher also looked at school newsletters if they were available on the web site.

According to Merriam (2009), open-ended surveys are considered a basic qualitative study. In this type of study, the researcher is looking at, "(1) How people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences. The overall purpose is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 23).

In basic qualitative studies, data are collected through observations, interviews, or document analysis. The data analysis requires the researcher to find frequent patterns that describe the data. The recurring themes and the researcher's interpretations become the findings of the study (Merriam, 2009).

Prior to distributing the survey, the researcher created predetermined open-ended questions as well as a sequence for asking the questions. The survey also consisted of some simple demographic questions in order to assist in grouping the responses. The survey was conducted online using an approved survey site (www.survey.vt.edu) and was sent via email. Once the surveys were completed, the answers populated a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel. The researcher sorted the answers into the groups being surveyed and analyzed the answers and determined common themes and patterns. The researcher used color coding to identify similar answers among the responses. In addition, the researcher identified comments that included insight into the responder's thought process. The researcher compared and contrasted the data obtained from the groups (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The researcher then created tables to display some of the data.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed via the survey questions.

1. What do teachers in high and low socio-economic (SES) high schools see as the value of parent involvement?
2. How do teachers' perceptions of parent involvement at low SES high schools compare with teachers' perceptions of parent involvement at high SES high schools?
3. How do new teachers' perceptions of parent involvement at high and low SES high schools compare with more experienced teachers' perceptions at high and low SES high schools?

In order to organize the focus of the study into themes and answer the research questions, the participants were asked questions related to the topics below to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' views so comparisons could be made between the groups. The questions helped create a definition of parent involvement in the eyes of the participants.

1. What is the teacher's viewpoint of the role of parents in a student's education?
2. What specific activities do they feel parents should do? Why these activities over others?
3. What is the role of the teacher/school in parent involvement?

Instrument Design

The survey questions (Appendix A) used for this study were developed as focus group questions by Wilson (2011). The study looked at the perception of parent involvement by parents and teachers and she used different focus group questions with each group. Although the two studies are not exactly identical, the focus group questions that Wilson used for teachers in her study were useful for this research because they gave insight into this study's research questions. For this study, the researcher used seven of Wilson's questions and made some slight revisions to the wording for clarity as survey questions.

The researcher field tested the questions with a group of teachers currently enrolled in a principal preparation program. The teachers were given the survey in the same format it was used for this study. In addition, the teachers were asked to validate if the survey questions were related to the research questions for this study.

The researcher created the survey using Virginia Tech's survey site (www.survey.vt.edu). The survey consisted of seven open-ended questions and three demographic questions. The responses populated a Microsoft Excel document.

Site Selection

In order to maintain privacy, pseudonyms were used for the names of the state, schools and participants. The researcher chose two high schools in the southeastern United States. The state was referred to as South East State and the school division as South East Public Schools. According to the school division's web site, its schools service over 68,000 students through 85 schools. There were over 15,000 employees. The ethnic breakdown of students division-wide was as follows: 52.1% Caucasian, 23.8% Black/African American, 9.8% Hispanic, 7.9% multiracial, and 5.6% Asian. Approximately 33% of the students were economically disadvantaged and approximately 10% had disabilities. The school division also served a high military population (South East Schools, 2013). The researcher chose this school division based on its location, the large number of employees, and the variety of students served.

The researcher selected two different schools from the division based on the socio-economic status (SES) of the students. For the purpose of this study, low SES was more than 40% of the student body identified as economically disadvantaged and high SES was less than 20% of the students identified as economically disadvantaged. School A had a population of predominantly low and middle SES families and School B had a population of predominantly middle and high SES families. Both schools in this study were ranked in the top 2,000 American high schools in the country according to *Newsweek* magazine and thedailybeast.com in 2013. This ranking took into account the graduation rate, college acceptance rate, advanced placement tests taken per student, advanced placement test scores, and the percentage of students enrolled in advanced placement courses. Both schools had made the list in previous years as well (2013 America's best high schools, 2013).

School A had approximately 130 instructional staff members and 1,785 students. The school had a 33% mobility rate and an average daily attendance rate of about 94%. The average class size was about 22 students. Approximately 45% of the students were economically disadvantaged. In 2012, 53% of the graduates received an advanced diploma, 35% received a

standard diploma, and 13% received a special or modified diploma (South East Public Schools, 2013).

School B had approximately 126 instructional staff members and 1,920 students. The school had a 16% mobility rate and an average daily attendance rate of 94%. The average class size was about 25 students. Approximately 18% of the students were economically disadvantaged. In 2012, 67% of the graduates received an advanced diploma, 24% received a standard diploma, and 9% received a special or modified diploma (South East Public Schools, 2013).

The researcher emailed both schools a link to the online survey. The responses to the survey were completely anonymous since the surveys were completed on the web site rather than via email responses. The researcher asked for participation by all teacher and non-classroom educators, including administrators, specialists and guidance counselors. The demographic questions that were part of the survey enabled the researcher to group responses based on each of those categories at each school. In addition, the respondents were asked to choose whether they have been teaching zero to five years, six to 14 years, or 15 or more years. The demographic groupings enabled the researcher to best answer the research questions while analyzing the responses.

Data Collection and Design

Approval for this research project was obtained, as required, through the Virginia Polytechnic Institute's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix D). All participants in the survey received information about the project via the email and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. Prior to initiating the survey, approval was also obtained from the school division's administration. Finally, approval was solicited from principals of the two schools.

Possible participants were contacted via email. The email explained the purpose and objectives of the study and asked recipients to respond to the survey via an interactive link in the email if they were willing to participate. The original request for participation asked that qualified people wishing to participate respond to the survey within one week. One follow-up email was sent to each school to gain additional responses. If more than fifteen people responded for any one group, the participants were selected in the order in which they responded.

The survey was conducted through a password protected web program. The researcher was the only person with the password. The participants were never asked their name as part of the survey. As a result, the participants remained anonymous. Any materials printed out or saved from the password protected site remained on a password protected computer in the researcher's home office or in a locked file cabinet at the researcher's home when they were not being analyzed.

Survey responses were kept in Microsoft Excel. The researcher coded the responses based on the school and grouped the participants so the researcher could recognize which school and group the participant and responses belonged to. Once the information was completely analyzed and after defense of the dissertation, the information will be deleted from the web site and computer and all printed files will be shredded.

Data Analysis

Data collected from this study were analyzed by looking for recurring meaningful patterns and themes. The researcher created tables to display common trends among the responses. After analyzing the responses to each question, the answers were compared and contrasted among school groups and teacher groups in order to answer the research questions.

Validity and Limitations

Prior to beginning this research study, there were some possible biases. As an educator, the researcher believed that teachers value parental involvement. Though this bias was present, the structure of the selection process and survey questions ensured that the bias was both acknowledged and controlled. Bias was limited in this form of research because the questions were presented to all of the participants in the same way. The researcher could not influence responses via verbal and non-verbal cues.

This research study also had some limitations and delimitations. The sample size for this study was small. School A had a response rate of 15% and School B had a response rate of 23%. Also, the fact that this was a qualitative study prevented the results from being generalized. It could have resulted in some misrepresentation of the true feeling of a larger group of teachers. In addition, because the participants responded via the computer, the researcher could not be sure the answers were not formed collaboratively.

In addition, the researcher previously worked at School A. While this position was not related to parental involvement, the respondents might have tailored their responses to what they felt the researcher wanted to hear. To address this issue, the researcher made sure the respondents knew they should be honest in their responses and not worry about their perceptions of the researcher's opinions. Anonymity of the participants should have helped limit the bias responses.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the high school teacher's perceptions of parent involvement and how viewpoints differ based on years of experience and the population served. The researcher conducted a survey consisting of seven open-ended questions and three demographic questions. The survey was emailed to teachers and non-instructional educators from two different high schools with differing socio-economic statuses. The researcher analyzed the results and found common themes and trends among the responses in each school and then compared the results between schools. The responses were also analyzed based on the respondents' experience levels. The researcher used the responses to answer the research questions.

Chapter Four

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present a detailed analysis and results of the data gathered during the collection process of this study. The data collection process included a survey sent to employees at two high schools. One of the schools had a predominantly low socio-economic population and one had a predominantly high socio-economic population.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the high school teacher's perceptions of parent involvement and how viewpoints differ based on years of experience and the population served. The following research questions were answered via the research.

1. What do teachers in high and low socio-economic (SES) high schools see as the value in parent involvement?
2. How do teachers' perceptions of parent involvement at low SES high schools compare with teachers' perceptions high SES high schools?
3. How do new teachers' perceptions of parent involvement at high and low SES high schools compare with more experienced teachers' perceptions at high and low SES high schools?

School Web Sites

In order to triangulate the study, the researcher also reviewed each school's web site and the items linked through each site. The school division does have certain requirements that must be included on each site. This includes information about the administration, faculty (with email links), school mission statement, calendars, Internet safety, location information, and links to the division's parent handbook and alert/communication methods. Both sites also included information about the guidance department, morning announcements, and extracurricular activities offered at each school.

There were various similarities between the information available on the web sites for School A and School B. Although each school is responsible for creating its own mission statement, the wording for the mission of School A and School B vary by just a few words.

School A's statement says, "We are empowering all students to become lifelong learners and responsible, productive citizens in a global society" (School A, 2014). School B's similar mission statement says, "The mission of School B is to empower everyone to become a lifelong learner and responsible, productive citizen of a global society" (School B, 2014).

One area where the schools' web sites differ is the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) information. School A's web site links to a PTSA page with links about membership dues, information about the food pantry run by the group, bylaws, a volunteer form, and meeting dates (School A, 2014). School B's web site has a similar link to a PTSA page but from the homepage, there is also a link to a seasonal newsletter. (School B, 2014).

School Newsletters

Both schools create parent newsletters but they are shared with parents differently. The principal of School A makes a newsletter that is sent home via the mail to the parents of all students at the beginning of the school year. After that, mass phone calls, letters about specific events such as standardized testing, and some weekly mass email newsletters are sent home. School B also uses some mass phone calls and letters about specific events such as standardized testing. However, School B also posts seasonal PTSA newsletters on the school's web site. The newsletter includes information on various groups and activities being held at the school (School B, 2014).

Sample Population and Study Participants

All of the instructional staff, including administrators, guidance counselors, specialists, and teachers received two email invitations to participate in the survey. At School A, at the principal's request, the emails were sent to the staff by the Office Manager. At School B, the principal sent the emails to the staff. Table 4 shows the number of responses received from each school.

Table 4

Survey Responses from School A and School B

Respondents	School A (Low SES)	Percent of School A Total	School B (High SES)	Percent of School B Total
Non-classroom Educators (administrators, specialists, counselors), 15+ years of experience	1	5%	2	7%
Teachers with 0-5 years of experience	5	25%	2	7%
Teachers with 6-14 years of experience	9	45%	8	27.5%
Teachers with more than 15 years of experience	5	25%	15	52%
No response given to number of years experience	0	0%	2	7%
Total Responses	20		29	

Presentation of the Survey Data

The responses were compared between schools and by the respondents' years of experience. Answers were evaluated based on the research questions that were asked. Analysis of the open survey questions was used to identify emerging themes. Respondents may have given answers that would be included in several themes for one question.

Respondents were coded based on the order they responded and the school where they worked. For example, if a respondent worked at School A and was the tenth response, the respondent was named TA10. If a respondent worked at School B and was the twentieth response received, the respondent was named TB20.

After the demographic questions, there were seven open-ended survey questions. The first survey question (SQ1) was, "Are the majority of your parents involved in their child's education? Why do you think that is? Please give examples of how they are involved or why they are not involved." Table 5 shows the responses to the first question.

Table 5

Are Parents Involved?

Theme	Experience	School A (Low SES)	School B (High SES)
Parents Are Not Involved	0-5 years	2	0
	6-14 years	9	2
	15+ years	4	4
	No response given	NA	1
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	75%	24%
Parents Are Involved	0-5 years	0	1
	6-14 years	0	2
	15+ years	0	7
	No response given	NA	1
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	0%	38%
Some Parents Are Involved	0-5 years	2	0
	6-14 years	0	3
	15+ years	3	4
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	25%	24%
Not Sure If They Are Involved	0-5 years	0	0
	6-14 years	0	0
	15+ years	0	1
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	0%	3.5%
No Answer Given	0-5 years	0	1
	6-14 years	0	1
	15+ years	0	1
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	0%	10%

Seventy-five percent of the respondents at School A felt that parents at their school were not involved. The remaining 25% felt that some parents at the school were involved. No respondents from School A responded that all parents are involved. All of the respondents with between six and 14 years of experience responded that parents were not involved.

The respondents who did say some parents are involved explained their response in their comments. Respondent TA4 responded,

I teach in the Academy program. Many of these families have made sacrifices to send their child here – they live far away and they are invested in the academic success of their child. They have instilled a love of learning and an appreciation for a solid academic education. (TA4)

Another teacher said her students' parents are very involved because she teaches special education students (TA10). However, in contrast, Respondent TA3 said,

I think most parents are sick and tired of SpEd paperwork once their children reach high school. I have called numerous parents over the years and have woken many of them up at like 10 or 11 am in the morning. I also believe that our School A parents think that education is only the teachers[sic] responsibility. (TA3)

Several teachers shared their opinion of why parents of students at School A are not involved. Respondent TA3 said, “Unfortunately parents do not understand the importance of their involvement. Many parents feel the school system is responsible for raising their children.” Along the same lines, many of School A’s teachers’ comments below display how they felt that parents didn’t see the need to be involved.

- “I believe parents are busy or believe that their teen is responsible enough to take their education into their own hands. Many times, I think parents could be of great help to any child's education if they were simply there and involved in their schooling” (TA11).
- “Some of these parents do not care about the success of their child. If the child does not feel invested in at home, then it will directly reflect with their academic performance and behavior at school” (TA12).
- “The current generation of parents seems to think that education happens only in the classroom and therefore, should not involve them at all. Many parents try to be their child's friend not an actual parent leading to students who have every new tech gadget but zero sense of the world around them” (TA13).
- “I think they have too many other responsibilities in their lives to worry about their children's progress--especially since the kids are older” (TA14).
- “Many parents are not involved in ‘parenting’ they would rather be the child’s best friend. Lack of structure in the home leads to lack of structure in the child. Some

parents do not see education as necessary and cannot be bothered with maintaining the resolve it requires to be an active participant. Parental expectations are also low” (TA28).

Some teachers felt the location of the school might play a role in the amount of parent involvement. Respondent TA2 said, “In a low socio-economic area, priorities are different and education unfortunately is not one of the highest. ” Respondent TA7 felt that maybe it was the neighborhoods that go to School A because she feels that the involvement at the high school where her children attend has more parent involvement.

In large contrast to the responses from School A, only 24% of School B respondents felt that parents were not involved. The majority of School B’s respondents, 38%, felt parents were involved. An additional 24% of the teachers said some parents are involved and 14% were not sure or did not respond to the question.

A common theme amongst the respondents who felt parents were not involved was that parents were too busy working (TB32, TB37, TB42). Another concern was the parent’s inability to help the students (TB35, TB37, TB45). One respondent said, “There are times parents are at a loss as to what to do and ask me what to do because they don't know what to do” (TB45).

Respondent TB21 said, “There is no way that a majority of my students (1/3-3/4 depending on the class) should be missing multiple assignments (3, 4, 5 assignments in a row) without parents being aware of it. ” She, like some of the other respondents felt that parents should be using the Parent Portal website available for parents to check grades. Moreover, many of the responses of teachers who felt parents were involved said the parents used Parent Portal (TB35, TB42, TB43, TB47, TB49, TB51).

There were several themes that emerged from the responses to survey question two (SQ2), “How, or in what ways, should parents be involved in the education process? Please be as detailed as possible. ” Table 6 displays some of the common themes that emerged of examples of how parents should be involved.

Table 6

How Parents Should Be Involved

Theme	Experience	School A (Low SES)	School B (High SES)
Contact/Communicate with the Teacher	0-5 years	3	1
	6-14 years	4	4
	15+ years	4	3
	No response given	NA	1
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	55%	31%
Help with Homework	0-5 years	2	0
	6-14 years	2	1
	15+ years	0	1
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	20%	1%
	Parent Portal/Grades	0-5 years	3
6-14 years		3	0
15+ years		3	4
No response given		NA	1
TOTAL PERCENTAGE		45%	17%
At Home Discussion/Monitor Activities	0-5 years	2	0
	6-14 years	2	4
	15+ years	1	5
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	25%	31%
	Join PTSA	0-5 years	0
6-14 years		1	0
15+ years		1	0
TOTAL PERCENTAGE		10%	0%
Attend School Events		0-5 years	1
	6-14 years	2	2
	15+ years	1	2
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	20%	14%
	Know What the Child is Learning	0-5 years	2
6-14 years		2	1
15+ years		0	2
TOTAL PERCENTAGE		20%	10%

Responses for SQ2 varied greatly. Some responses included involvement from home such as knowing what the child is learning, discussing school at home, and helping with homework. Other responses required the parent to take a more active role with the school such as contacting teachers, attending school events, and joining the PTSA.

The responses from both schools about how parents should be involved were similar. The biggest difference was that nine respondents at School A said parents should use the Parent Portal web site to view student grades and only five respondents from School B included that in their response. In addition, no one from School B mentioned the PTSA, and two respondents at School A did mention it.

Communication was the most popular answer from both schools. Respondents at both schools felt that communication with the teacher was important (TA1, TA2, TA3, TA4, TA8, TA10, TA13, TA14, TA20, TA29, TA36, TB19, TB26, TB31, TB40, TB43, TB45, and TB51). Some people at School A also mentioned keeping in touch through the student's counselor (TA10, TA29).

- “Parents should be more proactive in setting up meetings, working with teachers and staff, etc. ” (TA1).
- “They should communicate with teachers about their students [sic] progress throughout the year, whether their child is doing poorly or well” (TA2).
- “Parents need to be... keeping in touch with the counselor of their student, and attending conferences when needed involving their student” (TA10).
- “Parents need to be available to teachers when they are contacted and realize that we, as teachers, are reaching out to help the student succeed or address an issue, not to attack the parent about the job they are doing” (TA13).
- “They should make contact with the teacher at the start of the school year and maintain contact throughout the year--discussing both strengths and weaknesses” (TA14).
- “They should serve as a team member with the teacher, guidance counselors, and administrators to help their children progress” (TA29).
- “Parents need to take the initiative! We have 150 students and less time than ever, and our to-do lists are bottomless. When parents contact me, that makes the child a

- priority. Also, in my experience, if a parent contacts me it is more likely that there will be a chance [sic] in the student's behavior than if I go to them” (TB31).
- “Email the teacher first when their student is slipping in grades or there are family problems at home the teacher should be aware that will effect [sic] the student's progress in school” (TB40).

In response to SQ2, Respondent TA5 said, “Parents need to take some responsibility [sic] in the education of their child, it seems that it is increasingly being put on the teachers.” Several other teachers at School A also had similar responses.

- “Parents should want to be involved in their child's education. When parents take an active role, their child can see how and why education is important. Some students are okay with just above failing grades because [sic] that is all that is required from them. If parents were involved I think grades would greatly improve. Students wouldn't have to work any harder, but just consistent effort would improve this students. From what I have noticed, parents are only interested in the end result. . . what did the teacher give my child. The fact of the matter is, teachers don't give grades they are earned. If parents would take and [sic] active role in the learning process all year round and not just at report card time, students [sic] grades would be better” (TA6).
- “At this point parents should not be hovering or expecting daily contact from a teacher, especially with the advent of technology that allows them to check their child's grades and attendance” (TA8).
- “Parents have this awesome chance to be able to learn with their child as well as offer other ways of learning the material. . . I think that if parents invested more time in understanding what their child is learning, it might also help the students be able to figure out things with the parent and not just with tutors inside the school building” (TA11).
- “They should serve as a team member with the teacher, guidance counselors, and administrators to help their children progress” (TA29).

Some teachers at School B felt the students should take a more active role in their education and parents should support as needed.

- “At this point, a parent should be a support to their child but I encourage students to come to me directly vs. going through their parent” (TB17).
- “By the time they are in high school they should be organized and prepared to be self-directed or they should be prepared to face the logical consequences they get from failure to complete assignments. Parents should be involved when they feel students need assistance they are not getting and when students have issues bigger than they can handle on their own” (TB18).
- “Parents should be involved in the daily activity of their children early in their children's high school career. Later they should let the student take more responsibility as they move to getting out of High School” (TB22).

Respondent TB30 said she thought parents should sit down at dinner and ask the student what new information they learned. Similarly, Respondent TB27 felt that discussion at home is what's most important. She said, “A dinner conversation about the content of something that the student has learned or been introduced to that day is far more meaningful than just making sure that the student keeps up with the mechanics of school work. ”

The next question, SQ3, asked the respondents, “What sorts of things do parents do that let you know they are involved? Please be as detailed as possible. ” Responses from both schools showed that a popular way parents show they are involved is by contacting the teacher. Sixty-five percent of the respondents at School A and 75% of the respondents at School B said parents contact the teacher via email and/or phone calls. Table 7 shows things parents do that show they are involved.

Table 7

Ways Parents Show They are Involved

Theme	Experience	School A (Low SES)	School B (High SES)
Contact the Teacher	0-5 years	4	1
	6-14 years	3	6
	15+ years	6	13
	No response given	NA	1
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	65%	72%
Attend School Events	0-5 years	0	0
	6-14 years	0	1
	15+ years	3	4
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	15%	21%
Attend Parent/Teacher Conferences	0-5 years	0	0
	6-14 years	3	0
	15+ years	2	6
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	25%	21%
Join PTSA	0-5 years	0	0
	6-14 years	0	0
	15+ years	1 ^a	2 ^a
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	5%	7%
Volunteer	0-5 years	0	0
	6-14 years	0	2
	15+ years	1 ^a	1
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	5%	10%
Sign Papers that were Sent Home	0-5 years	1	0
	6-14 years	0	0
	15+ years	0	0
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	5%	0%
Other	0-5 years	0	1
	6-14 years	0	6
	15+ years	0	1
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	0%	28%

Note. ^a This answer was give only by non-classroom educators.

One teacher at School A uses emails to communicate with parents a lot. He has a unique way to know whether the parents are reading his emails. “I will type typos [sic] and hidden messages waiting for they [sic] reply to see if my emails are being read. Most of the time, parents response [sic] and correct my typos [sic] or answer the messages (TA6).”

Several teachers at School B had additional ways they felt parents showed they were involved with their child’s education. Respondent TB31 provides parent codes for Edmodo accounts she sets up for her classes. Respondent TB21 said parents contact her with, “Retroactive attempts to bring up a grade through extra credit rather than proactive attempts to get students back on track and turning in assignments.” Respondent TB40 said parents show they are involved by encouraging students to stay after school for tutoring and by following up at home with missed assignments and behavior issues. Respondent TB32 said parents see her out in public and ask about the class.

SQ4 asked respondents about their opinion about the key characteristics of parental involvement. Common themes of responses included attending school events, monitoring student performance, communicating with the teacher, making school a priority, and talking about school with the students. Table 8 displays the results of this question.

There were some discrepancies between the responses of the most experienced teachers at School A and School B. For example, School B’s teachers with 15 or more years of experience thought monitoring student performance and communicating with the teacher were key characteristics of parental involvement, but School A’s teachers with that experience barely mentioned those characteristics in their responses. At School A, the newest teachers valued those characteristics more than the experienced teachers. In addition, 50% more School B teachers with the most experience than School A teachers with the same years of experience said making school a priority is an important characteristic.

Several teachers felt that communication was very important (TA2, TA6, TA7, TA11, TA14, TA36, TB18, TB23, TB31, TB32, TB34, TB35, TB37, TB42, and TB45). TA11 admitted that although she might be deficient in this area, it is still important. She said, “I know I lack in communicating with parents especially for my ‘good’ students. I tend only to contact parents with bad things to say about their child. But communication is key!”

Table 8

Key Characteristics of Parental Involvement

Theme	Experience	School A (Low SES)	School B (High SES)
Attend School Events	0-5 years	1	0
	6-14 years	1	1
	15+ years	1	2
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	15%	10%
Monitor Student Performance	0-5 years	3	0
	6-14 years	0	3
	15+ years	1	5
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	20%	28%
Communicate with the Teacher	0-5 years	2	1
	6-14 years	4	2
	15+ years	0	5
	No Answer Given	NA	1
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	30%	31%
Make School a Priority	0-5 years	0	1
	6-14 years	1	3
	15+ years	3	6
	No Answer Given	NA	1
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	20%	38%
Talk About School	0-5 years	1	0
	6-14 years	3	2
	15+ years	2	2
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	30%	14%

A response from respondent TA6 shows how good communication can lead to positive results in other areas.

Communication is vital with parent involvement. They need to know the who, what, when, why, how in order to be able to be involved, If parents know what is going on and how they can be involved - they are more likely to WANT to be involved. When I communicate with my parents I try to be consistent in my methods. I try not to ask the same group [sic] of parents to do everything. I am polite, but firm. I try to only add

things they need to hear and not all the additional fluff. Short, sweet, simple, to the point it [sic] my method (TA6).

The next question, SQ5, asked, “What kinds of things do parents do that you believe benefit the school/classroom? Why these characteristics? Please be as detailed as possible.” The responses for this question pertained to volunteering, tracking student progress, joining PTSA, giving donations, supporting students, and supporting the school. Table 9 displays the frequency of each response.

Aside from volunteering at the school (TB16, TB18, TB23, TB30, TB31, TB35, TB41, TB43, TB47, and TB51) and supporting students (TB21, TB 35, TB47, and TB51) and the school (TB17, TB21, TB31, TB39, TB45, and TB47), School B did not share many things that parents do to benefit the school. The importance of parent involvement was reflected in a statement by Respondent TB31 when she said, “Parents help make some extracurriculars [sic] function.” Some teachers commented on different ways supporting students can benefit them.

- “Parents who follow up with their child's grades by asking students how they did on tests, papers, homework are simple conversations that let kids know that grades are important and that their parents care about them and their success” (TB35).
- “Engaging their children in meaningful discussion about things learned or taught always help with teaching because it means that the student goes hom [sic] still thinking about the lesson” (TB27).
- “Parents that push their students to stay busy and work hard will ultimately ahve [sic] successful students” (TB21).
- “Parents make sure that their students have an [sic] set time to complete assignments, fill out planners and keep their materials organized” (TB26).

Table 9

Things Parents Do that Benefit the School

Theme	Experience	School A (Low SES)	School B (High SES)
Volunteer at the School	0-5 years	1	1
	6-14 years	2	1
	15+ years	2	7
	No Answer Given	NA	1
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	25%	35%
Track Student Progress	0-5 years	1	0
	6-14 years	2	0
	15+ years	2	2
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	25%	1%
Join PTSA	0-5 years	0	0
	6-14 years	2	0
	15+ years	0	2
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	10%	7%
Give Donations	0-5 years	1	0
	6-14 years	0	1
	15+ years	0	0
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	5%	3%
Support Students	0-5 years	2	0
	6-14 years	1	3
	15+ years	2	6
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	25%	31%
Support the School	0-5 years	1	1
	6-14 years	3	1
	15+ years	2	4
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	30%	21%

Note. Seven teachers from School B and four teachers from School A did not submit answers to this question.

Teachers at School A also shared similar ideas of things parents can do to benefit the school.

- “When students see that their parent wants to be involved then the students seems [sic] to want to do better” (TA6).
- “When a parent gets involved in the right way, I notice a positive change with the student. The student is more focused in class, turns in better work, and does not cause behavior problems” (TA12).
- “Assisting with discipline problems and follow through. Encouraging students to achieve in class and provide the support necessary to have that happen” (TA28).
- “Be a parent and involved with their children's lives (maybe even talk to them at home)” (TA3).

The next survey question asked respondents how they encourage or help parents be more involved. Six people at each school did not respond to this question or stated that they don't do anything (TA2, TA9, TA11, TA13, TA15, TA38, TB18, TB24, TB30, TB40, TB44, and TB46). The remainder of the respondents had answers such as providing opportunities to participate, encouraging communication, informing parents about Parent Portal, keeping parents informed about student progress, and emailing parents and keeping an updated web site. Table 10 shows the responses for SQ6.

At School A, more responses were given regarding encouraging communication than in any other area (TA3, TA4, TA10, TA12, TA14, TA20, TA28, TA29, TA36). However, at School B, the most popular response was emailing updates or keeping an updated web site (TB17, TB19, TB21, TB23, TB26, TB34, TB35, TB39, TB42, TB43, and TB49). Respondent TA20 does several things to encourage parent involvement.

I try to encourage and empower students to talk to their parents about certain topics. I send home course expectations with resources to support for success in class. I share community resources with parents at meetings. I also share school event dates with them via letters home or webpage updates. Te [sic] other thing that is important is building a relationship with students - the students transfer that to their home, for example, they might say, Ms. X is nice and a good teacher. Parents may feel less intimidated communicating with me. I send birthday cards home to let families [sic] know I care about their [sic] child and I just don't call for bad things, I try to call home just as much for positive things too (TA20).

Table 10

How Teachers Encourage Parent Involvement

Theme	Experience	School A (Low SES)	School B (High SES)
Provide Opportunities for Participation	0-5 years	0	0
	6-14 years	0	0
	15+ years	2	1
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	10%	3%
Encourage Communication	0-5 years	2	1
	6-14 years	3	2
	15+ years	4	3
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	45%	21%
Inform Parents About Parent Portal	0-5 years	0	0
	6-14 years	2	1
	15+ years	2	2
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	20%	10%
Keep Parents Informed of Student Progress	0-5 years	2	0
	6-14 years	1	0
	15+ years	1	3
	No Answer Given	NA	1
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	20%	14%
Email Updates/Class Web Site	0-5 years	0	0
	6-14 years	1	4
	15+ years	1	7
	No Answer Given	NA	2
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	10%	45%
No Response or "I don't. "	0-5 years	1	1
	6-14 years	5	2
	15+ years	0	3
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	30%	21%

Respondent TA6 said she has a motto, "If everyone does a little, no one has to do a lot. " TB27 commented that she tries harder to reach students than she does the parents. She said, "I

focus on the students, not their parents. I cannot control the parents. If they choose to get involved, it's icing on the cake, but the cake is getting baked nevertheless.” Respondent TB33 thinks the opposite is a good method of encouraging parents. She said, “I always encourage parents to talk with their child and to ask questions until they believe they know what is going on. Teenagers do not always communicate with their parents. Parents must ‘push’ for conversation.”

The non-classroom educators had some other methods of encouraging parents. They set up opportunities for parents to participate (TA1) and attend as many functions, even within the community, as possible to support students and speak with parents (TA1, TB35). TB35 also said she would encourage and support parents considering taking on important roles such as PTSA officers. Respondent TB47 said she calls parents concerning student attendance and discipline.

The final survey question asked the respondents how they share information with parents. The respondents gave answers such as email, telephone, newsletters, web sites, notes or progress reports, Parent Portal, communicating in person, or text messages. Technology really plays a role in communicating with parents and email is the most popular way that respondents share information with parents. Eighty percent of the respondents from School A and 76% of the respondents from School B said they use email to share and exchange information with parents. Respondents gave several reasons for using email.

- “Easy way to communicate and it is not hindering the parents. Quick and Easy!” (TA6).
- “Email is the easiest method as phone calls can be time consuming and I don't always reach the parent I am trying to contact” (TA12).
- “The emails allow a quick response that can be kept as a record” (TA29).
- “I like being able to conduct communication during my business hours rather than play phone tag or have unpleasant conversations at home. I also like that both parties have a written record to consult, especially when the parents has [sic] requested or received detailed information” (TB31).
- “I choose email as my primary method of communication because I can put in writing the student's grade, missing assignments, behavior in class, etc. I think this is something the parents cannot ignore (whether they respond or not)” (TB21).

Telephone was the second most popular way respondents communicate with parents at both schools. Respondent TA8 said, “I call because it's personal. I feel a conversation can be completed better over the phone If I can't make a phone call (no working number, no phone available, no opportunity to call for various reasons), then I'll email. ” Three times as many respondents from School A (6) mentioned Parent Portal than at School B (2). However, more respondents from School B (7) said they use web sites than from School A (2).

Several respondents made comments about why they choose their method of contact. Many said time was a factor in their decisions.

- “Email and letters home. We don't have enough time to do it any other way, as much as I would rather make a phone call. We are all so overwhelmed. While we should have time to plan lessons and contact parents (the most important aspect of our jobs), we are too busy jumping through the ridiculous hoops that the school system keeps creating for us” (TB43).
- “Of course a parent conference face to face is much better, however we don't necessarily have the time to have the number of conferences we really need. When a child does below C work, I always request a conference on their progress [sic] reports and report cards. However, many of these requests fall on deaf ears, and I don't get the conference nor support I really need” (TB39).
- “My contact with parents tends to be through email, where possible. I generally do not initiate parental contact unless a problem arises in terms of behavior. The parents trust that I do my job here at school, and my work with their students leaves little time for parental contact. We are not one big, happy family. They may be the big, happy family, but I'm not part of that. My job is to teach and to challenge. When I get lucky, I can be part of the nurturing process, I suppose, but I leave the touchy feely stuff to parents. That is their role. I want students to understand and embrace their own capabilities and to independently question and challenge decisions that they make” (TB27).

Some respondents expressed that the way they choose to communicate with parents might vary depending on the family.

- “I have been teaching for 13 years and there is not 1 way that reaches all families, so I try as many ways as possible. You really don't know what a family's situation is until you get to know them” (TA20).
- “The problem with all of them is the parent must look at the portal, answer the phone, and answer email” (TA28).

All of the responses given for SQ7 are displayed in Table 11.

Table 11

How Teachers Share/Exchange Information with Parents

Theme	Experience	School A (Low SES)	School B (High SES)
Email	0-5 years	4	1
	6-14 years	7	7
	15+ years	5	12
	No Answer Given	NA	2
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	80%	76%
Telephone	0-5 years	4	0
	6-14 years	4	2
	15+ years	3	7
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	55%	31%
	Newsletter	0-5 years	0
6-14 years		1	0
15+ years		2	1
TOTAL PERCENTAGE		15%	4%
Web Site		0-5 years	0
	6-14 years	1	2
	15+ years	1	4
	No Answer Given	NA	1
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	10%	24%
Paper Note/Progress Report	0-5 years	1	0
	6-14 years	1	1
	15+ years	1	2
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	15%	10%
	Parent Portal	0-5 years	1
6-14 years		3	0
15+ years		2	2
TOTAL PERCENTAGE		30%	7%
In Person		0-5 years	1
	6-14 years	0	0
	15+ years	1	4
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	10%	14%
	Text Message	0-5 years	0
6-14 years		1	0
15+ years		0	3
TOTAL PERCENTAGE		5%	5%
No Response or "I don't have time. "		0-5 years	1
	6-14 years	2	1
	15+ years	0	4
	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	15%	21%

Summary of the Evidence

Regardless of the number of years of experience teaching or the socio-economic status of the respondents, there were several similarities amongst the survey responses. Each school has some respondents who feel parents are at least sometimes involved and some who are not. The expectations of parents at both schools are similar as well and include communication with the teachers, checking Parent Portal for student grades, attending school events, and talking with the students about their education and making school a priority. In addition, respondents at both schools felt that supporting the student and school and volunteering at the school benefit the school. In Chapter Five, the researcher summarizes the findings, presents implications for high schools, and makes suggestions for future studies.

Chapter 5

Summary of Findings

The researcher's purpose was to examine the high school teacher's perceptions of parent involvement and how viewpoints differ based on years of experience and the population served. The researcher surveyed teachers and non-classroom educators at two high schools in southeastern Virginia; one with a predominantly low socio-economic status population and one with a predominantly high socio-economic status population. The respondents received two emails requesting their participation in an open-ended survey. The sampling included 20 people with various years of experience from the low socio-economic high school (School A) and 29 people with various years of experience from the high socio-economic high school (School B).

Research Questions

The research was based on three overarching research questions and several sub-questions which were used as survey questions:

1. What do teachers in high and low socio-economic (SES) high schools see as the value of parent involvement?
 - Are the majority of your parents involved in their child's education? Why do you think that is?
 - How, or in what ways, should parents be involved in the education process?
2. How do teachers' perceptions of parent involvement at low SES high schools compare with teachers' perceptions of parent involvement at high SES high schools?
 - What sorts of things do parents do that let you know that they are involved?
 - What do you think are key characteristics of successful parent involvement?
 - What kinds of things do parents do that you believe benefit the school/classroom? Why these characteristics?
3. How do new teachers' perceptions of parent involvement at high and low SES high schools compare with more experienced teachers' perceptions at high and low SES high schools perceptions?
 - How do you encourage or help parents to be involved?

- In what ways do you share and exchange information with parents? Why do you choose these particular methods?

Findings

Finding One: Teachers' perceptions of parent involvement varied between low and high socio-economic schools. Seventy-five percent of respondents at School A said parents are not involved where as only 25% of respondents at School B said parents were not involved. No one at School A said parents were involved, but 11 respondents (38%) at School B said parents were involved. In addition, there was no obvious difference between responses of teachers with different levels of teaching experience when it comes to teacher perception of parent involvement. For example, 100% of respondents at School A said none or some of the parents are involved, regardless of years of teaching experience. At School B, 25% of the teachers with 6 to 14 years of experience and 24% of teachers with 15 or more years of experience said parents were not involved. Similar percentages of respondents, 50% of teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience and 25% of teachers with 15 or more years of experience, at School B said parents were involved. Moreover, there is no recent data to suggest there is a difference in perception based on a teacher's level of experience.

Finding Two: The group of students being taught may play more of a role in teacher perception of parent involvement than the socio-economic status of the school. Some respondents identified specific groups of students they teach within their responses to the survey questions. For example, Respondent TA4 mentioned working with Academy students, a competitive program for which students apply, and said the parents of her students were more involved than other parents. Two respondents who worked with special education students also said parents were involved and they had frequent communication (TA10, TB34). However, a band teacher (TA6), who mentioned a need for parent volunteers to help with uniforms, concessions, and chaperoning during football and competition season said only a handful of his parents were involved. Respondent TA12 said she feels her parents are not involved because she only teaches core English (as opposed to honors or academy level) and in one class, many of her students are repeating the class for the second time. Another respondent, TA14, felt that the parents of her students were not involved because she only teaches juniors and seniors.

Respondent TB18 felt that since she teaches an elective, parents don't think it is important and therefore, they are not involved.

Research supports that socio-economic status does not always matter when it comes to parent involvement. Anguiano (2004) found that regardless of income, minority students can have high academic success when parents are involved. Research by Henderson and Mapp (2002) suggested that family involvement led to positive results regardless of economic, racial, cultural, educational background, or student age.

Finding Three: Teacher perceptions of key characteristics of parent involvement don't necessarily align with ways teachers say parents are involved. In regard to tracking student progress, 28% of School B respondents felt that monitoring student progress was a key characteristic of parent involvement, but only 1% of the respondents at School B said it benefits the school. School A and School B respondents said communicating with teachers was the most important key characteristic of parent involvement with 30% and 31% respectively. However, when asked about things parents do to support the school, communication with teachers did not even appear as a common theme among the responses.

Research suggests that teachers don't always have the same perception as data they provide for surveys. In his research, Jeynes (2005) found that teachers felt reaching out to parents to gain involvement would have little effect on student performance. However, data collected showed the opposite was true.

Finding Four: Teachers communicate with parents via various forms of technology. Of School A's respondents, 80% communicate with parents via email and 76% at School B use email to share information with parents. Both schools also use school web sites to share information about school events, PTSA, clubs, resources, etc. Several respondents, 10% at School A and 24% at School B, also said they use class web sites share information with parents. At both schools, 5% of the respondents said they use text messages to share information with parents. In addition, Parent Portal is online and 30% of respondents from School A use it and 7% of respondents from School B said they use it to communicate with parents. Finally, 19% of all respondents said they use newsletters to communicate with parents. Although it is not clear whether all of those are sent home via paper, email, or posted to web sites, at least some of the respondents commented that they were shared with parents via online methods.

Research supports the thought that the number of conferences and other face to face interaction at the high school level decreases as students get older. A study by Williams and Sanchez (2012) shows the number of parents attending regularly scheduled conferences at high schools is lower than at elementary and middle schools. Similar results were found in research by the Search Institute which found that discussions about homework, school and school work, help with homework, and attending school meetings decline greatly between middle and high school (Sanders, 2001). Gotts and Purnell (1987) found that elementary school parents were attracted to attend school activities but the emphasis was moved to communication between the school and parents for parents of secondary school students.

Finding Five: Teachers feel that school related involvement at home is important.

Respondents said that key characteristics of parent involvement include monitoring student performance (20% at School A and 28% at School B), making school a priority (20% at School A and 38% at School B), and talking about school (30% at School A and 14% at School B). The fewest respondents said attending school activities (15% at School A and 10% at School B) was a key characteristic. A large number of respondents at each school also said communicating with teachers (30% at School A and 31% at School B).

This finding is supported by several researchers. Two of Epstein's Six Types of Parent and Community Participation involve parent involvement at home. Type one, parenting, includes assisting families with parenting skills and setting home conditions to support children as students. Type four, learning at home, involves families working with their children on homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions (Epstein et. al, 2009). Bloom (1992) created three levels of parent involvement. The involvement level included monitoring child progress and assisting with homework and instructional routines. Sui Chi and Willms (1996) created four clusters of parent involvement. According to their research, the extent to which school was discussed at home had the highest positive correlation with student success. Research by Williams and Sanchez (2012) showed that parents' presence outside of school was beneficial to a child's academic achievement.

Implications

Implication One: Schools should promote parent involvement at home via their school web sites. This is in regard to finding four. As one of the main ways schools and

teachers communicate with parents, links with ways parents can help their students at home should be provided on the school web sites. By adding a link to their web sites, schools can provide lists of ways parents can help their students at home and resources for additional assistance. Information relating to online grades that can be viewed by parents should also be promoted via this link since this study showed that respondents felt viewing student grades online was a way parents should be involved and a way teachers encourage involvement. Research shows parents think they cannot help students at home as the level of instruction becomes more difficult (Williams & Sanchez, 2012). However, regardless of the socio-economic status of the school, students will benefit from discussing school at home (Epstein et al, 2009, Bloom, 1992, Williams & Sanchez, 2012, Sui Chi & Willms, 1996, Falbo, Lein, & Amadoor, 2001).

Implication Two: Principals and school divisions who are interested in promoting parent involvement should seek opportunities for professional development for themselves, their faculties, and their division level personnel. This implication is in regard to findings three and five. Data from this study show that teachers value parent involvement at home. In addition, previous research shows that insufficient training for teachers on how to reach out to parents is one of the barriers to parent involvement (National Coalition for Parent Involvement, 2004, par. 12). In addition, providing a designated person at the school to promote parent involvement might lead to success the same way having someone devoted to attendance helped increase student performance in Sheldon and Epstein's (2002) research.

Implication Three: Principals and school divisions who are interested in promoting parent involvement should provide training for parents. This implication is in regard to findings three and five. According to data from this study, the respondents listed several ways parent involvement is beneficial to their students. Making sure parents know about several options for involvement would be beneficial. Abdul-Adil and Farmer's (2006) research suggests offering parents training and skills to be more involved in their child's education. Research has also showed that programs aimed at increasing and encouraging parent support for their child's academics are positively related to urban children's achievement. Moreover, the research showed that newly initiated programs for parental support of struggling students could be a way of reducing the achievement gap (Jeynes, 2005).

Recommendations for Future Studies

In reviewing responses from the survey for this study, the researcher realized additional information could be gained by using the themes developed from the responses. Future quantitative or mixed method surveys using a Likert scale with the responses from this study could provide additional information that could be used to promote parent involvement and student success. A controlled study with a set number of respondents could lead to significant information on the topic of parent involvement as it relates to high school students. Furthermore, the themes could be used in quantitative research to compare the perceptions of teachers at elementary and secondary schools.

Another possibility for future research would be to study student and/or parent viewpoints. Do they agree with the themes developed by teachers? Looking at how students perceive parent involvement at home and school could allow stakeholders to understand how parent involvement motivates students. In addition, research could expose whether student feelings influence the actions of parents. Also, more information on how parents perceive parent involvement could help schools approach parent involvement differently.

Conclusion

The researcher explored the perceptions of teachers as it relates to parent involvement at two high schools with different socio-economic populations. The researcher set out to gather data from teachers and other non-classroom educators with different levels of experience to determine their perception of parent involvement and how viewpoints differ based on years of experience and the population served. Results showed that teachers' perceptions of parent involvement varied between low and high socio-economic schools. In addition, certain groups of students may have parents that are more involved than others. That may have a greater impact on the amount of involvement by parents than socio-economic status. In addition, respondents' perceptions of key characteristics of parent involvement don't necessarily align with ways teachers say parents are involved. Also, teachers communicate with parents via several forms of technology. Finally, respondents felt that parent involvement at home played a large role in student success at school.

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Appendix A

Research Questions and the Survey Questions that Relate to Them

- 1. What do teachers in high and low socio-economic (SES) high schools see as the value of parent involvement?**
 - Are the majority of your parents involved in their child's education? Why do you think that is? Please give examples of how they are involved or why they are not involved.
 - How, or in what ways, should parents be involved in the education process? Please be as detailed as possible.

- 2. How do teachers' perceptions of parent involvement at low SES schools compare with teachers' perceptions of parent involvement at high SES high schools?**
 - What sorts of things do parents do that let you know that they are involved? Please be as detailed as possible.
 - What do you think are key characteristics of successful parent involvement? Please be as detailed as possible.
 - What kinds of things do parents do that you believe benefit the school/classroom? Why these characteristics? Please be as detailed as possible.

- 3. How do new teachers' at high and low SES high schools perceptions of parent involvement compare with more experienced teachers' at high and low SES high schools perceptions?**
 - How do you encourage or help parents to be involved? Please be as detailed as possible.
 - In what ways do you share and exchange information with parents? Why do you choose these particular methods? Please be as detailed as possible.

Appendix B
Demographic Information of All Respondents

Table 12

Demographic Information of All Respondents

Respondent Number	What school do you teach at?	How many years have you been teaching ?	Are you a classroom teacher?
1	A	15 or more years	No, I am a guidance counselor, specialist, or administrator.
2	A	6-14 years	Yes
3	A	6-14 years	Yes
4	A	15 or more years	Yes
5	A	15 or more years	Yes
6	A	0-5 years	Yes
7	A	6-14 years	Yes
8	A	0-5 years	Yes
9	A	6-14 years	Yes
10	A	15 or more years	Yes
11	A	6-14 years	Yes
12	A	0-5 years	Yes
13	A	0-5 years	Yes
14	A	6-14 years	Yes
15	A	6-14 years	Yes
16	B	No Answer Given	Yes
17	B	15 or more years	Yes
18	B	15 or more years	Yes
19	B	15 or more years	Yes
20	A	6-14 years	Yes
21	B	6-14 years	Yes
22	B	15 or more years	Yes
23	B	15 or more years	Yes
24	B	15 or more years	Yes
25	B	6-14 years	Yes
26	B	6-14 years	Yes
27	B	15 or more years	Yes
28	A	15 or more years	Yes
29	A	15 or more years	Yes
30	B	15 or more years	Yes

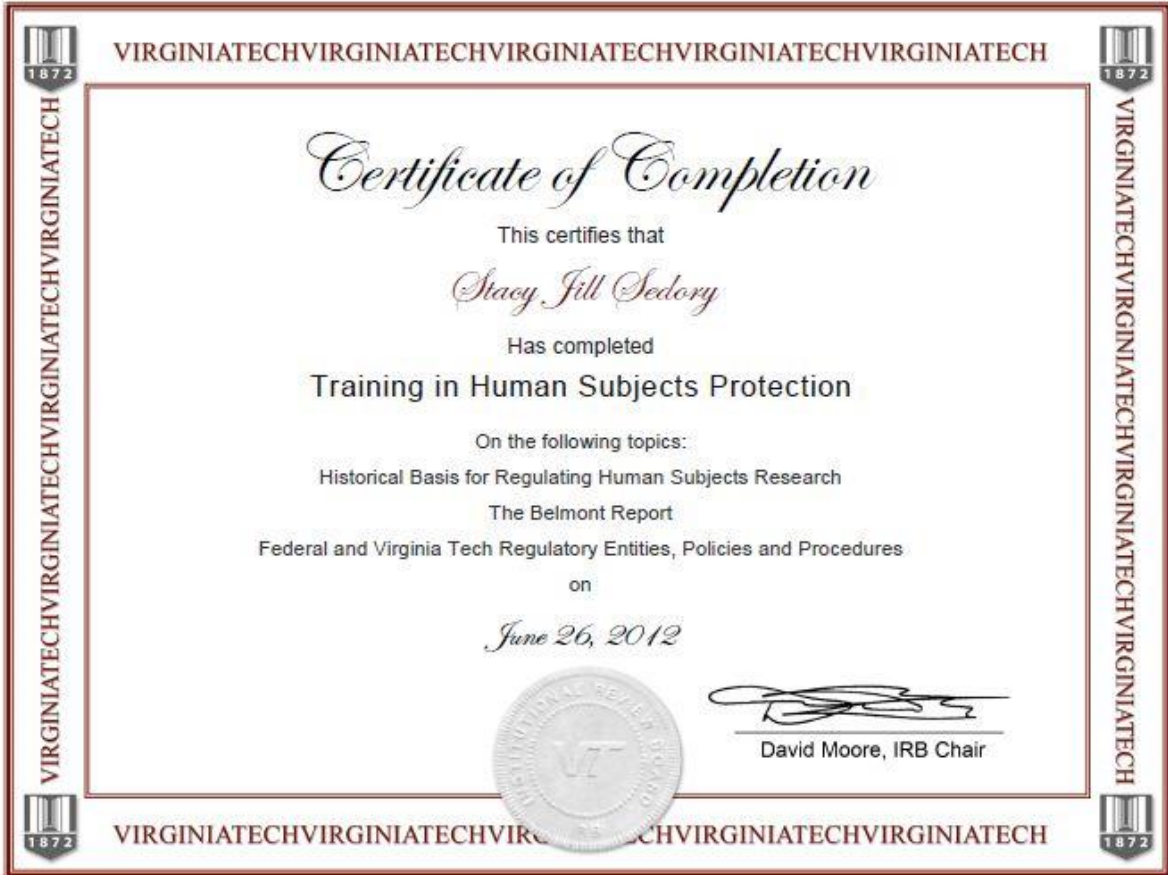
(continued)

Table 12 (continued)

Demographic Information of All Respondents

Respondent Number	What school do you teach at?	How many years have you been teaching ?	Are you a classroom teacher?
31	B	0-5 years	Yes
32	B	No Answer Given	Yes
33	B	15 or more years	Yes
34	B	15 or more years	Yes
35	B	15 or more years	No, I am a guidance counselor, specialist, or administrator.
36	A	0-5 years	Yes
37	B	6-14 years	Yes
38	A	6-14 years	Yes
39	B	15 or more years	Yes
40	B	6-14 years	Yes
41	B	15 or more years	Yes
42	B	6-14 years	Yes
43	B	6-14 years	Yes
45	B	15 or more years	Yes
46	B	6-14 years	Yes
47	B	15 or more years	No, I am a guidance counselor, specialist, or administrator.
49	B	15 or more years	Yes
51	B	15 or more years	Yes

Appendix C
Institutional Review Board Certificate



Appendix D
Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

VT IRB Protocol Management <irb@vt.edu>

Tue 11/12/2013 11:11 AM

To: Stacy Jill Sedory <sjsedory@vt.edu>; Carol S Cash <ccash48@vt.edu>;

Dear Researcher:

The VT IRB has approved the IRB application referenced in the attached approval letter for the protocol titled "Comparing the Viewpoint: Understanding New and Experienced High School Teachers' Perceptions of Parent Involvement in Students' Educational Experiences". Read the approval letter carefully as it contains IRB-related requirements and retain a copy for your records.

Retain research-related records in accordance with the VT IRB Policy for the Retention, Storage and Transfer of Human Subjects Research Records (http://www.irb.vt.edu/documents/data_retention_transfer_policy.pdf).

Appendix E
School Division Letter of Approval for Research

January 23, 2014

Ms. Stacy Sedory
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Sedory:

This letter serves as the [REDACTED] approval for your research study entitled "Comparing the Viewpoint: Understanding New and Experienced High School Teachers' Perceptions of Parent Involvement in Students' Educational Experiences." Your request to survey high school administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, and specialists has been approved with the understanding that all participation is voluntary, and you will not identify the names of the participants, schools, or the school division in any future reports. Your request has also been approved with the condition that the school principals disseminate the survey link to the school staff members, if they choose to participate. As always, the final decision to participate rests with the school principals, and you are expected to discuss your study with them prior to starting your research activities.

Our approval for your study will expire one year from the date of this letter. If there are any changes to your study, you must submit the changes to our office for review prior to proceeding. It is our expectation that you will submit an electronic copy of the final report upon its completion to the Department of [REDACTED]. Please send the report to [REDACTED]. If you have any questions, please contact me at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,



Appendix F
Permission to Use Survey Questions

René Wilson <rwilson@newyorkmills.org>
Fri 7/5/2013 9:29 AM

To: Stacy J. Sedory;

Hi Stacy,

Sure you can use those questions, please just acknowledge and cite my work as it was a lengthy and arduous process... as you know J

Good luck with your research, it sounds like it will yield interesting results. I look forward to reading it in the near future.

-Rene

Appendix G
Permission to Use Tables

West, Janet <westj@nassp.org>

Fri 2/21/2014 9:21 AM

To: Stacy J. Sedory;

Dear Ms. Sedory,

I apologize for the delay in responding to your request.

Permission is granted to use NASSP materials as requested. This is a one-time only permission, renewable upon request. Please credit material appropriately, and add to credit line: "Copyright 2014 National Association of Secondary School Principals. For more information on NASSP products and services to promote excellence in middle level and high school leadership, visit www.nassp.org."

Sincerely,

Janet West

Program Assistant II, Communications Department

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Appendix H
Email Request for Participation

Good morning.

My name is Stacy Sedory and I am requesting your help in completing the survey linked below as part of the data for my doctoral dissertation research. My study aims to help understand new and experienced high school teachers' perceptions of parent involvement in students' educational experiences. I will be comparing the responses of teachers and non-classroom educators with various levels of experience at a low socio-economic high school and a high socio-economic high school.

The survey should less than 10 minutes to complete and I really appreciate you being as detailed as possible in your answers.

When referring to parent involvement in your answers, please be as specific and descriptive as possible.

All responses will be completely anonymous!

Please click the link below and answer the survey if you are a classroom teacher, guidance counselor, specialist, or administrator.

Thank you!